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Poland, NATO and Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	iv
Introduction	1
Polish Security Concerns	3
Polish Foreign Policy: A New Strategy in the Making	6
Polish Policy on Nuclear Weapons and on the NSNW Debate in NATO	10
Conclusion	14
<i>Notes and References</i>	15
<i>About the Authors</i>	19

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Introduction

A lively debate about the future of non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) stationed in Europe has been ongoing within NATO since 2009.¹ This renewed interest comes after a lengthy period in which the issue lay dormant and at one level can be seen as the inevitable response to NATO formally re-thinking its mission and posture, first in the Strategic Concept Review and then in the ongoing Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (DDPR). This is only part of the story, however, as developments outside of formal NATO processes have served as the real political drivers of the debate.

President Obama's Prague speech, in which he articulated the desire to seek a world without nuclear weapons, his subsequent pursuit and achievement of the New START Treaty with Russia, and the US Nuclear Posture Review of April 2010, have combined to create a new political context within which NATO is reconsidering its nuclear policy. The full implications of this new context are not yet clear and ultimately may not prove entirely positive, depending on how the internal alliance politics play out, but the high level of engagement from the US President has undeniably put wind in the sails of those who would like to see NATO do more on nuclear disarmament.² Additionally, the need to focus on NSNW has been reinforced by US Senate demands – aired during the New START ratification process in Washington – that this category of weapons be included in the next round of US-Russia arms-control negotiations.

In parallel developments within Europe, military and financial arguments against retention of the current NATO NSNW on the continent have gained traction in some parts of the Alliance (especially in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway). It is now widely argued in these countries that the weapons, which are free-fall bombs designated to be delivered by now ageing aircraft, are of limited military value in relation to future threat scenarios. Even if a threat did emerge, moreover, it is often argued that the Alliance has more appropriate conventional and strategic nuclear capabilities available to it. Therefore, in line with President Obama's call to address the world's growing nuclear dangers, the possible removal of NSNW from European soil is seen by these countries as an opportunity for the Alliance to show leadership on nuclear disarmament at low risk to its own security, while at the same time eliminating a potentially difficult financial and political problem associated with aircraft renewal for several Alliance members further down the line.

However, other countries within the Alliance have expressed not only concern, but in some cases strong resistance, to the idea of any unilateral NATO moves to remove NSNW from Europe. This group is made up of some of the newer member states of NATO in the east, those primarily concerned

with NATO's posture towards Russia such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Baltic states. But it also includes France, as well as important elements within the policy establishment in Turkey.

The debate among allies of differing persuasions on this issue became sufficiently acrimonious by April 2010 to prompt US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to intervene in a speech to NATO Foreign Ministers in Tallinn. Although she used the speech to set out five principles on the NATO approach to the issue, and although these were said to command unanimous support within the Alliance, debate persisted and the Lisbon Summit outcomes, which followed in November 2010, did not fully resolve the issue.³

The debate is therefore still live and unlikely to abate any time soon. Pressure from states that no longer want these weapons on their soil is likely to increase in urgency as dual-capable aircraft renewal decisions get closer, especially in Germany. On the other side of the argument, there is little sign that the opponents of change are altering their own positions in fundamental ways.⁴ The existence of the DDPR itself is in many ways proof of the intractability of the issue. Indeed, some have suggested that it exists only because the Strategic Concept Review failed to produce a clear and lasting agreement on this and related issues.

This paper, the first in a series examining the position of a key group of NATO member states in the debate, focuses on Poland. We start the series with Poland because it has a potentially pivotal role to play and has a position that is complex and too often caricatured. Poland has good reasons both to be apprehensive about changes in NATO nuclear posture and to seek to bring about that change. As the search continues for a NATO compromise, therefore, it could come to play a bargaining role among differing groups within the Alliance and could either help to build a consensus for incremental change or be increasingly influential in ensuring that no change occurs.⁵

In explaining why this is the case, the rest of this paper is organised into four parts. Part I offers a brief account of Poland's main security concerns today and notes the sensitive role of Russia's NSNW within them. Part II sets this account of Polish security concerns within the wider context of a foreign policy re-alignment that has now been underway for a number of years, an understanding of which allows a broader consideration of the interests and aspirations that Poland is seeking to balance as it charts a course through the challenges ahead. Part III then provides a brief overview of recent Polish policy positions on nuclear weapons issues, including on the NATO NSNW issue, and concludes with a summary of the complex factors that have shaped Poland's position in the NATO debate thus far. Part IV of the paper presents some conclusions.

Polish Security Concerns

The major security concern for Poland today, and one which it shares with many of the other states that joined NATO after the end of the Cold War, is Russia.⁶ Although threat perceptions are not high by historical standards, they have nonetheless failed to disappear altogether, and in the continued shadow of possible Russian intimidation Poland's security strategies still put a heavy emphasis on the need to protect national sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity.

From the viewpoint of Warsaw, there are several reasons why Russia is still a concern:

First, as well as being the European state with the westernmost border with Russia, at the latter's Kaliningrad exclave, Poland also borders Belarus, a close Russian ally. These borders are heavily militarised, and have seen many large-scale military exercises. The *Zapad-2009* and *Ladoga-2009* military exercises in August and September 2009, for example, saw over 30,000 Russian and Belarusian military personnel take part in a series of exercises ostensibly to defend against aggression from Poland, although this also included simulating suppression of a Polish minority uprising in Belarus, and the rehearsing of coastal landings and even a nuclear first strike on Polish territory.⁷

These exercises seemed overtly to threaten Poland and the Baltic states and, for some, held similarities with the declared aims of the 'Caucasus Frontier 2008' Russian military exercise, ostensibly held to practice the defence of Russian borders which came one month before the 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia.⁸

Second, Polish-Russian relations are also affected by the state of the wider NATO-Russia relationship, and this relationship itself has been through difficult periods in the very recent past. Relations suffered badly in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Georgia, and also in the context of Bush administration-era plans to deploy ballistic missile defence capabilities in Eastern Europe. Poland itself arguably contributed to this latter deterioration in relations with Russia by its agreement in 2007–08 to host ten Ground-Based Interceptors (GBI) on its territory as part of the US administration's National Missile Defence strategy. Despite Poland attempting to use this decision as an opportunity to improve relations with Russia, and making the plans and rationales transparent to the Kremlin, Russian officials at all levels condemned the proposal and used it as a justification to threaten, in return, to deploy short-range Iskander missiles to the Kaliningrad Oblast. Whether these missiles are nuclear or not has been much debated in academic circles, but officials at the highest level of the Polish government told the authors of this paper that Russia had already exercised the deployment

of non-strategic nuclear weapons to Kaliningrad and had upgraded the infrastructure necessary for their storage there. Others have gone further and argued that such weapons have already been deployed.⁹ This nervousness over Kaliningrad, in Poland and other NATO members, was recently stoked again by President Medvedev as he reiterated the Iskander threat in his 23 November 2011 speech on Russia's military response to NATO's proposed missile defence systems.

The deterioration in relations in 2007–08 and concerns over possible Russian deployments of non-strategic nuclear weapons had an impact in Poland, where the issue of non-strategic nuclear weapons is a sensitive one in any case. Polish military planners are all too aware that Russia has increased its reliance on these weapons in recent years. This has been done with the aim of compensating for the weakness of Russian conventional forces relative to those of NATO, and the Russian posture now mirrors closely that of NATO's flexible response approach used throughout much of the Cold War. Given Poland's location as a country on the front line of any future NATO-Russia conflict, and given the imbalance in conventional forces between NATO and Russia, there is concern that a future NATO-Russia conflict may not only quickly go nuclear, but that Poland would likely be a target for NSNW attacks were such a scenario to occur. At the same time, and conversely, Poland is also concerned that from a regional perspective, overall NATO conventional superiority may not be sufficient for stopping a small-scale military attack, especially if NATO does not have a proven capability of reinforcement on its eastern borders. Indeed, the need for 'visible reassurance' in Central and Eastern Europe – the demonstrated ability of NATO members to provide reinforcement and the ability of central and eastern European countries to receive it through relevant training, exercises and infrastructure – reflects Polish anxiety about NATO's ability to defend it against a conventional attack and concern that NATO itself might need either to accept a short-term defeat or threaten the use of unconventional weapons in such a scenario.

Beneath the surface, these tensions and concerns also betray a more fundamental difference in Polish-Russian perceptions. Whereas Poland perceives the presence of any US/NATO military infrastructure on its territory as a desirable form of strategic reassurance, Russia opposes any such deployment and argues that it goes against the commitment not to deploy further NATO forces in Central and Eastern Europe made in the NATO-Russia Founding Act. Poland is further concerned, in this context, about Russia's attempts to differentiate between 'new' and 'old' NATO members and about Russian efforts to agree a strict definition of a maximum level of conventional forces that could be deployed in Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁰

Third, although a prime objective of Polish policy is to avoid any future NATO-Russia conflict, this is not as easy as it could be, given what is perceived by

some in Warsaw as Russia's wider strategy of reasserting itself over a 'sphere of influence' in its European near abroad. After witnessing numerous crises in gas supply between Russia and Ukraine since 2005, with severe regional implications, the Polish National Security Strategy of 2007 was not subtle in its statement that the 'Russian Federation, taking advantage of the rising energy prices, has been attempting intensively to reinforce its position on a supra-regional level'.¹¹ The leader of Poland's main opposition Law and Justice party used firmer language, assessing Russia's recent foreign policy as part of a concerted effort to 'return to the group of superpowers that decide upon the world's fate'. He cited as evidence the recent conflicts over energy supply to Ukraine and Belarus, and Russian aggression towards Georgia.¹² An official at the very highest level of Poland's government stated this concern to the authors, but also qualified it by arguing that overall, Poland now believes that Russia is so concerned about the rise of China that it will ultimately seek better relations with its Western neighbours. Uncertainty about future Russian intentions in this area nonetheless remains a powerful driver of Polish security thinking.

Lastly, there is a Polish concern that, in dealing with Russia, NATO as a whole has at times appeared distracted and less committed than it ought to be.¹³ The major Polish rationale for joining NATO in 1999 was relatively simple. Poland wanted the political-military benefits that NATO was formed to provide, and the traditional centrepieces of this were its military deterrence and response capabilities. Polish strategists feel that on the whole the country has benefited from this and that Polish membership has been largely successful in achieving this aim, putting the country in a position where it faces a relatively low risk today of being subjected to external military pressure, despite its security concerns.¹⁴

Nevertheless, Warsaw has not been completely satisfied with the development of the Alliance since its newest members began to accede in 1999. Despite its heavy involvement in the non-European military interventions conducted with its Alliance partners (whether or not these were carried out under the NATO banner), Poland feels that security issues in Europe have been to some degree neglected. Events such as the 2003 Alliance deadlock over Turkey's request for a contingency plan for NATO assistance in case of an Iraqi attack have not been forgotten by Polish officials. At the same time, the change from Bush-era missile defence plans to the Obama administration's Phased Adaptive Approach affected Poland very directly and suggested to some that Polish security concerns would inevitably be sacrificed as part of the bigger game being played in US-Russian relations.¹⁵ It was also unfortunate that the date chosen to announce the change in US plans, 17 September 2009, coincided with the anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939. This felt uncomfortable and has underpinned some of the revised thinking on Polish-US relations outlined in the next section of the paper.

Polish Foreign Policy: A New Strategy in the Making

Poland's security concerns are only one dimension of the factors shaping the country's approach to the NATO non-strategic nuclear weapons debate. The country is in the relatively early stages of a realignment of its wider foreign policy objectives. This realignment has been underway since 2007, when the Civic Platform political party became the leading force in government and sought a more central and influential role in European affairs while trying to distance Poland from what was then commonly seen as a 'reflexively Russophobic, anti-German and Atlanticist' post-Cold War position.¹⁶

The change has manifested itself in a number of areas, including in relations with Russia, the United States, the EU and Germany.

Relations with Russia

The reset of relations with Russia has seen moves by both countries to improve ties, and has had both successes and set-backs. In November 2007, soon after the formation of the Donald Tusk government, Poland dropped its veto of Russia embarking on OECD membership talks, a move immediately reciprocated by Russia dropping its ban on Polish meat imports. Following President Obama's 2009 decision to scrap the Bush administration's missile defence plans and to focus on the Phased Adaptive Approach within NATO, moreover, tensions over Polish participation in missile defence have eased somewhat, though Russia continues to be against the deployment of an SM-3 base in Poland.

In April 2010, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin invited Prime Minister Tusk to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the Katyn massacre of Polish officers in the Second World War, a move that was seen as significant and symbolic. Following controversy over the death of Polish President Lech Kaczynski in a plane crash en route to a similar commemoration in Russia days later, Russia also attempted, in November 2010, to mend relations with Poland by passing a resolution directly blaming Stalin for ordering the Katyn killings.

In the subsequent period, however, mutual recriminations over who was to blame for the plane crash, fuelled by the politicisation of the issue within Poland, and by Polish disappointment at a perceived lack of Russian co-operation in the crash investigation, have cast a shadow over the bilateral relationship. The July 2011 publication of the official Polish inquiry failed to put the controversy to rest. The inquiry found that the military crew of Kaczynski's plane was ill-trained and ill-prepared, a finding which led to the Polish Defence Minister resigning in July 2011, quickly followed by three Polish Air Force Generals and eight other senior officers. However, the report

also concluded that Russian air traffic controllers should share the blame for giving inaccurate instructions, a finding that Russia's own inquiry rejected.

Beneath the controversy, attempts to build economic ties have continued and form an increasingly important part of the Polish-Russian relationship, with a 'Declaration on Economic Cooperation' signed between the two countries in 2010, alongside the negotiation of an EU-blessed gas supply deal that will last until 2022.¹⁷ The relationship with Russia therefore remains a major challenge, but the outlook is now at least mixed where previously it contained few, if any, bright spots. If the Polish belief that Russia fears China sufficiently to improve its relations with the West proves well-founded, further improvements can be expected over the long-term.

Relations with the United States

Change has also been visible in Poland's relationship with the United States. For most of the period since the end of the Cold War, Poland positioned itself unequivocally as a staunch ally of the US, sending military forces to Afghanistan in 2002 and strongly supporting the 2003 Iraq War as one of the four states providing troops for the initial invasion (alongside the US, UK, and Australia). In its degree of support, Poland thus distanced itself somewhat from its more hesitant immediate neighbours and in the process came to exemplify Donald Rumsfeld's 'New Europe', those European allies on whom the US could rely in times of crisis and war.¹⁸

Since 2007 however, there has been a reassessment of Poland's security interests. This was evident in negotiations with the US over ballistic missile defence deployments in Poland, throughout which the Tusk government made use of the domestic unpopularity of the deployment,¹⁹ and concerns over Russia's response, to extract more tangible security benefits from the US.²⁰ In return for eventually signing the deal to deploy ten GBI on its territory, Poland secured a 'Declaration On Strategic Cooperation' between the two states. Incorporated in this agreement was the stationing in Poland of an additional US Patriot missile and air defence facility, a pledge to assist Poland in the modernisation of its forces, and an industrial agreement to boost Poland's defence industries through co-operative technology research and development.²¹

Although President Obama subsequently abandoned the Bush missile defence plan, and the Polish GBI site along with it, Poland received the Patriot air defence system in May 2010, will host an SM-3 missile defence base under the European Phased Adaptive Approach, and has preserved the other benefits of the Declaration on Strategic Cooperation. Indeed, at the Komorowski-Obama bilateral meeting in December 2010 it was announced that, in the spirit of the 2008 US-Polish Declaration, Poland would host regular joint exercises aimed at increasing interoperability. Importantly the

US would also establish an aviation detachment in Poland in order to support the F-16 and C-130 aircraft in Poland's fleet, and to allow for the periodic deployment of US aircraft in Poland on a rotational basis.²²

Beyond the European theatre, Poland has been equally capable of exerting itself in relations with the US. This is perhaps demonstrated most significantly by the fact that in 2010 Poland announced the withdrawal of its 2,600 troops from Afghanistan would commence in 2012 – against US wishes. Poland also joined the other new member states, together with Germany, in refusing to supply any forces as part of NATO's deployment to Libya in support of UNSCR 1973.

By being more assertive in relationships that may previously have been one-sided, Poland is determined not only to carve out more certain benefits for itself, but also secure a greater role in decisions affecting its security. This has been misunderstood by the US at times, but now appears to be recognised by President Obama as he attempts to further reinvigorate the bilateral relationship.²³

Relations with the European Union

Poland's foreign policy strategy has also seen change outside of bilateral relations with Russia and the US. The country now aims to be a more influential player in the EU and, as such, seeks to further grow its leadership role not only in Central and Eastern Europe but also in European affairs more widely. If its aim can be summed up in just a few words, it appears to be to match French and German levels of influence over the European project. Officials speak of a revival of a defunct 'Weimar Triangle', and boast that Poland is 'no longer a playground but a player'.²⁴ The aspiration to be so is a deep-rooted one, an attempt perhaps to further develop the EU but more fundamentally, in the process, to extract Poland from its longer-term history as a battlefield in the wars of a divided continent.²⁵

There is both a military/political and an economic dimension to this shift in its approach to the EU. At the military/political level, Poland has used its EU Council Presidency in the latter half of 2011, among other things, to promote the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) through greater pooling and sharing between member states, and through greater EU-NATO co-operation. Poland has also used its EU Presidency to begin discussions on the next EU budgeting cycle, on which achieving consensus is likely to prove difficult, given the pressures on member states' budgets and the full-blown crisis that has enveloped the euro. Poland is expected to press hard to retain the high level of structural funds and agricultural subsidies which it currently receives, and which help explain the continuing popularity of the EU within Poland.

Relations with Germany

Finally, Polish-German relations have seen real improvement in the last five years. Relations have been fraught throughout history, not least because of the German invasion of Poland in 1939 and the subsequent brutal period of occupation that followed. There was some warming of relations after the end of the Cold War, as Poland first joined NATO and then the EU, but many in Poland continued to harbour resentment at what they saw as patronising treatment at the hands of the wealthier German state.²⁶ Post-Cold-War tensions reached something of a high point during the administration of the Kaczynski twins' Law and Justice Party, during 2005–07, a period in which Polish foreign policy seemed actively driven by a desire to frustrate Germany's efforts within the EU. As with relations with the EU, the US and Russia, however, Prime Minister Tusk's government has moved things on in recent years, building a more fruitful partnership between the two countries in a number of areas.

These changes in foreign-policy orientation complicate the simplistic view of Poland as a state that is in favour of the status quo in NATO, favouring a hard-line in dealings with Russia, and that sticks slavishly to US policy positions. As Poland has become more confident in its own position, it has begun to articulate more forcefully its desire for good relations with Russia and Germany and to lay claim to a more influential leadership role in the EU. Its defence and security interests are now more clearly nested in, and balanced by, a series of economic and political interests that are equally important to the country's future.

Polish Policy on Nuclear Weapons and on the NSNW Debate in NATO

This provides the wider context within which Poland's attitude to nuclear weapons sits. Beyond a concern with Russian NSNW, the issue of nuclear weapons does not command much attention in Poland. Indeed, in Warsaw the view was commonly expressed to the authors that nuclear disarmament is still perceived as a project of left-leaning apologists for communism, rather than a goal around which the entire mainstream of the Polish political class has already coalesced. Nevertheless, political leaders in the country, including in the current administration, have been vocal in their support of international measures toward multilateral arms control and disarmament.

In 2009, three extremely prominent Polish statesmen who, between them, had governed Poland from 1990 to 2005, published an article supporting the vision of global nuclear disarmament. The article supported the US 'Gang of Four' (prominent figures in security affairs: George Schultz, Henry Kissinger, William Perry and Sam Nunn), noted that Poland was familiar with the nuclear threats of the Cold War, and called for the US and Russia to lead disarmament efforts.²⁷ Poland's statement to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in May 2010 also expressed support for global disarmament efforts and reaffirmed Poland's commitment to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. In December 2010, President Komorowski, in his first visit to Washington, made clear that Poland was willing to support specific measures when he voiced Poland's strong support for the US-Russia New START agreement and urged its swift ratification in a joint statement with President Obama.²⁸ Komorowski also made clear that it was the view of the Polish government that this agreement was a necessary step toward negotiations on NSNW and, in its own right, would bolster efforts to improve relations with Russia.²⁹

Within this overall approach to the nuclear question, and consistent with its specific security concerns, Poland has been a very active player in the debate on non-strategic nuclear weapons both within and beyond NATO. In its statement to the NPT Review Conference in May 2010, Poland chose to highlight these weapons, stating that 'large arsenals of sub-strategic nuclear weapons seem anachronistic in the post-Cold War world and increase the risk of proliferation by non-state actors. Instead of enhancing our security they make it more volatile.'³⁰ However, the statement went on to say that 'any approach to dealing with them should be incremental, flexible and realistic, and reductions or eliminations should be predicated by transparency and confidence-building measures'.³¹

This statement of position followed a development in February 2010 in which Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski and his Swedish counterpart, Carl Bildt, published a widely circulated newspaper article calling for the creation of an arms control regime to cover NSNW, aiming at the eventual elimination of these weapons altogether. The article opined that it was countries such as Poland and Sweden that felt the greatest threat from NSNW, and urged that these weapons be included in the next round of bilateral negotiations between the US and Russia.

While concentrating on the need for bilateral agreements, the Sikorski-Bildt article also stressed that there was room for what were described as 'substantial unilateral confidence building efforts'.³² Though this was followed by the stated desire for Moscow to remove stored and deployed NSNW from European borders, the article did not rule out the potential for NATO or US unilateral movement on NSNW as well. Notably, the article dismissed the role of these weapons in deterrence of 'rogue nations', arguing that US and Russian strategic arsenals were more than adequate for this purpose.³³ The article therefore served to reinforce the view that, in Polish strategic thinking, the only potential utility perceived for these weapons is in the context of large-scale warfare within Europe.

In April 2010 Foreign Minister Sikorski appeared to clarify and perhaps harden his stance. In a further joint proposal published before the meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Tallinn, Sikorski and his Norwegian counterpart, Jonas Gahr Støre, called for NATO to address NSNW arms control in a *multilateral*, rather than solely bilateral US-Russian context. The statement stressed the need for both a gradual reduction process – beginning with increased transparency from the owners of the weapons – a move aimed specifically at Russia, *and* reciprocity between the Alliance and Russia.³⁴ Also central to the Polish-Norwegian proposal was the necessity of internal NATO consensus and consultation between members before any Alliance action on NSNW could be taken. Ahead of the informal meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers that subsequently took place in Tallinn a few days later, and adopted the five principles put forward by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, it seems Poland was attempting to find a compromise between NATO members in favour of change on the NSNW issue, and those supporting the status quo but nonetheless anxious about the Russian arsenal. The Polish approach has therefore been described by one analyst as 'cautious but open to necessary evolutionary changes'.³⁵

Poland has also linked its position on NSNW to wider reassurance measures it would like to see with regard to NATO's ability and commitment to defend Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic States. In this context, Poland pushed in the New Strategic Concept process for visible development of NATO defence plans, infrastructure and co-operation in the new member

territories, and for the maintenance of the current overall strategic deterrence posture.³⁶ Other Polish priorities were: clearer decision-making procedures within the Alliance on 'out of area' deployments, development of relations with the EU and Russia, and maintenance of the Alliance's open-door policy.³⁷

Polish leaders have subsequently expressed satisfaction with the NATO Lisbon Summit outcomes in these areas. Shortly prior to the Lisbon Summit in November 2010, President Komorowski noted at a presidential summit of the Visegrad states – consisting of Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland – that the presidents were unified in support of the proposed concept, and was himself 'deeply satisfied' with the outcome.³⁸

It seems clear from all this that Poland is treading a fine line between supporting the NATO status quo on the one hand and on the other seeking to take some initiative in moving the NSNW issue forward, both within NATO and with regard to its relations with Russia. Given the strategic perspective that Poland holds, it appears to be in a central position within the debate on the future of NATO's NSNW. It certainly has historic security concerns over Russia's foreign policy, a desire for Article V reassurance and a conservative attitude towards NATO deterrence posture, a position that makes it sympathetic to the views of other newer Alliance members and those other states, like France that would prefer a continuation of the status quo. In this context Poland is aware that its security is supplied primarily by its membership of NATO – without which it would not be in nearly so strong a position, or able to pursue improved relations with Russia.³⁹ It is unlikely that Poland will support any endeavour that it considers might jeopardise these interests.

On the other hand, as outlined earlier, Poland wishes to 'invest' in its own relationship with Russia,⁴⁰ and is keen for improved NATO-Russia relations. It views its future as tightly bound to the stability of the Euro-Atlantic region as a whole, and therefore has a strong interest in ensuring that NATO and Russia can move forward in partnership, provided any measures taken in the NATO-Russia relationship are reciprocal. At the same time, the US has invested significant capital in its own 'reset' with Russia, which is perceived as having yielded significant dividends, for example in relation to co-operation over Afghanistan, Iran and Libya. Poland remains keen not to be seen as an obstacle to this continuing détente, provided that its own specific interests and concerns are respected and that any reset goes hand-in-hand with measures to reassure the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Poland's close relations with Germany mean it also has an interest in being adequately responsive to the German desire to see NSNW removed from German soil. Poland's ambition to become a leading player, within both the EU and NATO,

also places an onus on demonstrating it can be a good team player within these collectives.

Poland thus occupies a position that is almost a microcosm of the entire NATO NSNW debate: supportive of disarmament but wary of undermining NATO, its own security, and of creating instability by taking precipitate and irreversible steps without adequate reciprocation by Russia. It has the potential to play a leading role, not least because it has regional influence on these issues within Central and Eastern Europe as arguably the most powerful of NATO's new members: militarily, economically and, increasingly, diplomatically. As other analysts have noted in this regard, Poland could also play a key role as a 'bargainer' between the two sides in the NATO NSNW debate.⁴¹

To play that role effectively however, it has an interest in building consensus among Alliance members. The current proposal for a consensus solution that Poland appears to support (and which would be consistent with the Strategic Concept) is for some form of reciprocity of NSNW transparency and disarmament measures between the US and Russia, as part of which – at a minimum – Russia would agree not to deploy any nuclear weapons or related facilities in Kaliningrad, or other parts of its territory that are relatively close to the Baltic republics.⁴² Poland may not necessarily be wedded to pursuing such an objective through a formal treaty, if other verifiable means of achieving it can be found, but it remains a key objective nonetheless.

Conclusion

Whether a solution to the NATO NSNW problem can be found with consensus is as yet uncertain but from the Polish perspective there certainly is a solution, namely the warming of relations with Russia based on increased transparency and confidence-building measures until a reciprocal arms control treaty or some other mechanism allows the reduction and/or elimination of the NATO NSNW arsenal from Europe and the removal of Russian NSNW from European borders. However, as with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in the 1980s, such proposals are likely to face strong resistance from allies of the US in Asia, such as Japan, who would be concerned that Russia could redeploy its weapons in the eastern parts of its territory. Nor is it easy to imagine that, even if NATO-Russia relations were to dramatically improve, that Russia would be willing to give up all its NSNW, at least so long as it believed it still had to make contingency plans against conventional invasion by numerically superior opponents from any direction. Addressing Russian concerns with regard to its relative conventional military weakness would therefore appear to be a pre-requisite to progress in the direction desired by Poland.

Given the tangible security assurances that Poland is currently establishing, one other limiting factor in its decision-making is likely to be the opinions of other new Alliance member states. If convinced that a consensus over some form of unilateral action could be reached among the NATO members, possibly through confidence-building with Russia and similar tangible assurances, it is unlikely that Poland would argue against the removal of NATO NSNW from Europe. In the absence of such a consensus, or a shift in the Russian position, Poland is unlikely to expend political capital pushing harder for a change to the status quo.

Notes and References

1. While the utility and status of these weapons has been discussed by experts for some time, the more recent political tensions within NATO were generated by the newly appointed German Foreign Minister, Guido Westerwelle, and his call for discussions on the withdrawal of US NSNW from German soil in October 2009.
2. Other key events shaping an extremely active nuclear debate in the past few years have included a swelling of global, relatively mainstream, political commitment to combating nuclear dangers, such as in the articles supporting the goal of global nuclear disarmament authored by the US 'Gang of Four', namely Shultz, Perry, Nunn and Kissinger, and similar position statements put out by European leaders (see <http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/group-statement-on-nato-nuclear-policy_47.html>).
3. For further analysis of the outcomes of the Lisbon Summit, see Simon Lunn and Ian Kearns, NATO Nuclear Policy After Lisbon, ELN Background Brief, available at <<http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/medialibrary/2011/02/14/57c5eac1/ELN%20Briefing%20Paper%20NATO%20Nuclear%20Policy%20After%20Lisbon.pdf>>. For Hillary Clinton's five principles, see <http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010_05/NATO>.
4. Malcolm Chalmers and Simon Lunn, 'NATO's Tactical Nuclear Dilemma', RUSI occasional paper, March 2010.
5. See Arms Control Association, 'NATO Clings to Its Cold War Nuclear Relics', *Issue Brief* (Vol. 1, No. 1), April 2010.
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15. Ireneusz Bil, 'NATO's New Strategic Concept – a Polish Perspective', 31 August 2010.
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40. White House, *op. cit.* in note 22.

41. Valasek, *op. cit.* in note 16.

42. This was the commonly expressed view of many of the ministers, politicians and analysts met by the authors in Warsaw during the course of their research.

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