In an effort to increase trilateral nuclear dialogue among the United States, France, and Great Britain, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) established a group of high-level nuclear experts to discuss nuclear issues and to identify areas of consensus among the three countries. From 2009-2013, the dialogue has hosted three meetings a year (one in each nation’s capital) and produced consensus policy statements signed by nongovernmental participants in order to promote trilateral understanding of the nuclear challenges facing the P-3. In 2013, the group’s discussion has focused on the following issues.

**NATO and the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons**

- Twice in the last three years – in its November 2010 Strategic Concept and in the May 2012 Defence and Deterrence Posture Review – NATO heads of government have unanimously endorsed the position that NATO requires a nuclear deterrent provided by the U.S., UK and France. NATO’s leaders have made clear that nuclear deterrence remains one of the Alliance’s bedrock functions, support for which is critical to its existing (and potentially prospective) members. Several of the Alliance’s member governments have changed since these documents were agreed upon; none has repudiated either the Strategic Concept or the DDPR.

- We are all citizens of democracies that foster a wide variety of views in the public debate. We encourage a robust national debate on all matters of nuclear strategy. Public support cannot be taken for granted. We are agreed that, as long as nuclear weapons exist, our governments must engage in the public debate, support the policies and forces on which their security relies, and make the contemporary case for deterrence.

- We are concerned, however, that some elements within Alliance governments are supporting and encouraging opposition to NATO’s policy of nuclear deterrence. We call upon the officials of our three countries to continue to work within the Alliance and other relevant fora, to remind their colleagues of the risks of undermining a key pillar of both our nations’ security and the transatlantic relationship, and of the importance of the principle of collective responsibility to NATO.

- We are specifically concerned about the long-term implications of the conference on Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons, the second meeting of which is to be hosted by Mexico on 14 February 2014 with further sessions being planned for South Africa and New Zealand. The P5 declined invitations to the first meeting. In addition to tilting the balance between disarmament and nonproliferation in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime (see next section), the underlying agenda of some of the participants is to delegitimize nuclear weapons as contrary to international humanitarian law, thereby
undercutting the deterrence provided by P3 nuclear capabilities for NATO and non-NATO allies and partners. We recommend that the P3 (or, ideally, the P5) consider whether declining again presents the best response. P3 deterrence policy has long recognized that major war between nuclear powers involves the possibility of nuclear escalation, which would have devastating humanitarian consequences. The deterrence and assurance provided by P3 nuclear capabilities has contributed to the prevention of major power war and has arguably been the most successful nonproliferation mechanism of all time. Attending the Mexico conference would enable the P5 to offer an alternative strategic narrative, countering the nuclear delegitimization campaign by asserting positively the contributions of nuclear deterrence to international security and stability. Therefore, we recommend that the P3 consult urgently, first among themselves and then with Russia and China, on whether to decline invitations to the Mexico conference or to attend in order to moderate the outcome by offering an alternative strategic narrative, policy approach, and agenda.

The NPT Regime

- For several years, members of the European Trilateral Nuclear Dialogue, much like their respective governments, have been preoccupied with the challenges of preventing further nuclear proliferation by North Korea and Iran. The nuclear nonproliferation regime is anchored in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Weaknesses in the compliance and enforcement mechanisms in the NPT regime have been readily exposed by repeated breaches of their commitments by several countries which undertook prohibited nuclear activities even though they were Parties to the NPT. The UN Security Council has often failed to take action against violators of nonproliferation obligations, given differences among its Permanent Members and the apparent desire of some of them to avoid penalizing the violators. The Council, especially Permanent Members, should play a more active and responsible role in enforcing nonproliferation agreements. From a broader perspective, as dialogue participants noted at the Paris meeting, disproportionate attention is paid to disarmament within the NPT, at the cost of a focus on the pressing issues of nonproliferation, including non-compliance by non-nuclear weapons states.

- We believe that the P3 should work within the NPT to reinvigorate its focus on nonproliferation by making a stronger case that nuclear nonproliferation provides security benefits for all states and is necessary for further progress on disarmament. The non-aligned movement is not a monolith, and the P3 can engage individual countries to take a more active role on nuclear nonproliferation issues. We continue to support the NPT regime and additional initiatives that strengthen it, such as the Proliferation Security Initiative and Nuclear Security Summits. We also believe that we should continue to seek additional pragmatic and useful ways to address important challenges to the effectiveness of the regime, and thus to prevent nuclear proliferation. Reviewing this topic from a strategic and technical point of view should include, among others, consideration of both existing instruments, such as International Atomic Energy Agency and Nuclear Suppliers
Group, and potential new instruments to be created if necessary. At its Washington meeting in November 2013, the group decided to explore these issues further in 2014.

Red Lines, Ultimatums and Other Forms of Coercive Diplomacy

- While the P3, particularly the United States, have used red lines in an attempt to prevent further nuclear proliferation, the track record of success has been uneven, at best. At its Paris meeting, dialogue participants noted that red lines can be useful policy instruments for states trying to influence the behavior of other states, but that their use raises the stakes for both of the players by making it clear when a red line is being crossed. The failure to enforce a red line can lead to further failure (e.g., the prior use of chemical weapons by Syria that culminated in the 21 August 2013 attack) and to the loss of credibility in the eyes of all those watching, whether directly or indirectly affected, both in the region and globally. Several U.S. administrations repeatedly permitted North Korea to cross red lines with no penalty. In addition to raising the costs of non-enforcement for those who set clear red lines, the red lines themselves risk "green-lighting" all behavior (e.g., the killing of over 100,000 Syrian civilians with conventional arms) that falls short of the red line. Clear red lines also transfer initiative to the potential transgressor by allowing him to decide when and how to probe the "firmness" of the red line and to test the issuer’s resolve.

- Dialogue participants concluded that, before issuing a red line, their governments need to determine (a) how clearly to define the red line, (b) how much to describe the specificity of threatened consequences, (c) whether, indeed, they have the means and will to carry out the threatened consequences, (d) how timely and compelling evidence of a breach of the red line will be gathered, and (e) how to effectively consult with allies. The enforcement of red lines does not necessarily need to be military in nature; the key is the threat of serious consequences. At the same time, a country or countries issuing a red line must be resolved to enforce it, and prepare tangible options in the event that the red line is crossed. The experts, both those in and outside of government, who engage in these pre-decisional deliberations, must also engage the political figures, who occupy the highest leadership positions in the government. Otherwise, facing the pressure to “do something” during a crisis, P3 leaders can make statements without fully analyzing their back-end consequences. Using red lines effectively requires both an understanding of one's opponent (what he values and how he makes decisions) and one's own readiness to take the serious actions needed to enforce a crossed red line. Carefully-defined and effectively enforced red lines may continue to be necessary for twenty-first century deterrence, but the lessons of history, including both the pre-World War II period and the Cold War, point to the fact that this has never been easy.
Multidimensional Deterrence

- We found it very difficult to reach a common view on “multidimensional deterrence,” a term which is meant to describe using one type of weapons system to deter a serious attack by another type of weapon. Our discussions focused on the use of nuclear weapons to deter space or cyber-attack. In one sense there is nothing new in this: NATO has for decades relied upon nuclear weapons to help deter massive conventional attack, and, at times, to deter chemical and biological weapon attack as well. In the twenty-first century, however, British, French, and U.S. strategists are struggling with how best to deter attacks against our space assets and our cyber-based infrastructure (both civilian and military) that could cause massive casualties or disruption of our way of life. The situation is complicated by an essential asymmetry: those nations most capable of attacking our space or cyber systems rely less heavily on their own space and cyber capabilities than we do. This fact suggests that a traditional threat “to retaliate in kind” may not always be effective and has caused some among us to question whether an explicit declaratory policy stating that an enemy attack which destroyed a significant portion of our space-based ISR or communications capability or which, by cyber means, caused devastating loss of life (by destroying critical civilian infrastructure) or disabled means of nuclear command and control could prompt consideration of nuclear retaliation.

- Other participants, by contrast, argued that the reflexive suggestion that a threat of nuclear response would be the only means to warn a potential attacker away from a massive cyber or space attack is fraught with difficulty, not least because those potential adversaries capable of doing serious harm to our societies by attacks on our space or cyber assets are also states possessing nuclear weapons.

- Our thinking on this issue eventually centered upon the following propositions: The P3 governments should investigate and pursue various mechanisms which would increase resiliency in the space and cyber worlds in order to mitigate and reduce the consequences of enemy attacks in these domains should deterrence fail. Additionally, the U.S., UK, and French governments – which of course, reserve individually the right to choose their response to cyber-attacks – would be well advised to keep under careful review which of their space systems and basic critical cyber and information systems could be regarded as “vital national assets” and to communicate clearly that an attack on such assets would provoke a significant military response of a type and scale which would deny the attackers any possible advantage they might have sought by their aggressive acts. The means by which such a response would be carried out would be left ambiguous. National military planning staffs should be directed to produce contingency plans to support such a policy. The P3 governments would be well served if they consulted on their preferred response options.
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