

## Future Roles Series Paper #8

# The Future Role of U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Europe: A German Perspective

by Holger Mey  
President, Institute for Strategic Analyses, Germany

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Robert L. Rinne  
Project Director and Senior Advisor on National Security Issues  
and  
Karinne W. Gordon  
Project Administrator

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## INTRODUCTION: THE NUCLEAR REALITY

The starting point for all reasoning about the future role of nuclear weapons is the inescapable need to accept what might be called the “nuclear reality.” The knowledge of physics and engineering, as well as the fundamental technological base to build nuclear weapons cannot be disinvented. Even the hypothetical assumption of a complete and verifiable ban of nuclear weapons cannot exclude the possibility that, during a prolonged conventional war, for instance, both sides would make all efforts necessary to regain nuclear options. This is true, if only for the simple reason of mistrust. The rationale to use nuclear weapons first—i.e., before the other side can use them—would be compelling. Such a “reconstitution race” with its resulting preemptive pressures would make for an extremely unstable situation.

In a two-sided or multi-sided nuclear situation, political decision-makers could respond to crises in a much more circumspect way, being aware of the other side’s nuclear capabilities rather than speculating about them. To accept peacetime deployments and to manage the various nuclear relationships may therefore be a much more appropriate way of dealing with the nuclear reality than to create myths about a safer nuclear-free world.

This applies to a world which consists of more than one nuclear power. Yet nuclear status is not equally distributed among nations. *Beati sunt possidentes*, as the Romans said—“Happy are those of property” (those who have). Nuclear powers tend not to share their privilege. However, just as the knowledge of physics cannot be disinvented, neither can the spread of knowledge be prevented. While everything can and, indeed, should be done to prevent proliferation, most nonproliferation measures will only contribute to retarding the proliferation process, not to halting it all together. If nuclear capabilities will remain a reality of the “second nuclear age”—the first age being the historically exceptional period of the Cold War and bipolarity—there is no reason to believe that global stability will improve if the West, and in particular the U.S., does not remain a strong—preferably the strongest—nuclear power in the world.

Today’s nuclear world order and, in particular, the specific number of countries that have and that do not have nuclear weapons, is by no means immutable. It is a rather fragile human construct, which consists of a complex system based on incentives and disincentives. Its continuing validity depends to a large extent on the political prudence of the nuclear powers. In order to be politically acceptable to the nuclear “have-nots,” nuclear powers need to take on special responsibilities. Otherwise, their position and status might be delegitimized and increasingly challenged over time—regardless of the unconditional and unlimited extension of the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Nuclear powers have a special obligation to put allies under their protection—an obligation that is entirely compatible with their own self-interest. Unlike many who argue that credible nonproliferation policies require nuclear powers to work toward total nuclear disarmament, this paper argues that only by maintaining a modern nuclear posture can nuclear powers prevent others from seeking to acquire their own nuclear capabilities.

At the same time, the impossibility of absolutely ensuring that nuclear capabilities do not fall into the hands of nations, or non-state actors, that are not interested in maintaining stability and the status-quo implies that the future world will probably be less safe than the past five decades of the first nuclear age.

## 1. THE EFFECTS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN PEACETIME

It has been argued that the historical record of conventional deterrence in Europe is poor, and that nuclear weapons add to the general uncertainty of attack planning in a way that makes the distinction between the pre-nuclear and the nuclear age a significant one. The politico-strategic effects of nuclear weapons in peacetime can be summarized as follows:

- Nuclear risks require political leaders to act with extreme caution in regard to the interests of political adversaries. Under the condition of a stable balance, nuclear weapons increase the consciousness of political decision-makers concerning the limits of their power with respect to the use of force to promote political aims. This has relaxing effects on decision-making processes, especially in crises.
- Nuclear power offers nations a special weight in international relations. Its main effect, however, is psychological rather than an expression of military strength *per se*. It helps in establishing and stabilizing alliances and suppressing regional instabilities.
- The strategic impact of nuclear weapons depends very much on the flexibility with which they can be employed. Current trends in U.S. thinking about nuclear weapons that confine their role to counterthreats against hostile weapons of mass destruction (WMD) will clearly reduce the strategic efficiency and scope of nuclear deterrence and, hence, the "political glue" of nuclear forces, i.e., their ability to bind nuclear and nonnuclear allies together. A no-first use declaratory policy would contribute to the further erosion of the credibility of extended deterrence and, hence, force more states to rethink their nonnuclear status. Additionally, no-first use policies are only declaratory; it is intellectually unsound to suggest seriously that a nation whose vital or existential interests are at stake is prepared to accept conventional defeat rather than use *all* means available to defend itself.
- Nuclear power must be counterbalanced by adequate nuclear power. Otherwise, the possibilities of instrumentalizing conventional offensive capabilities politically and strategically increase. The *real* reason behind Western concerns regarding the proliferation of WMD is, aside from general fears, the anticipated loss of leverage *vis-à-vis* other powers, specifically regional aggressors in the Third World. The latter know that they cannot possibly win a war militarily against the West—if the West is politically committed to win the war. However, if a Third World aggressor threatens to increase the price of Western intervention by using WMD, the West might well refuse to intervene at all. For a regional "wanna-be" hegemony, the question is less why he should acquire nuclear capabilities than what reason he could possibly find *not* to acquire them.
- Nuclear risks discipline war aims. Among nuclear powers and *vis-à-vis* a nuclear power, unconditional surrender in an era of sufficient strike capability is no longer a realistic option. For this reason, the political war objective of an attacker must necessarily be a fairly limited one.
- The direct military effect of nuclear weapons, if used in accordance with political objectives, is rather limited. Their main effect is of a more indirect nature. The benefit of nuclear power is very much linked to the conventional capabilities of a nation and to the acceptance of zones of influence by others.
- Without a specific politico-strategic framework and certain conditions, such as those that existed in the East-West context of the Cold War, the stabilizing effect of nuclear weapons is at least questionable.

Hence, the existence of nuclear weapons must be put into a broader political context and must be transferred into a comprehensive deterrence (or dissuasion) regime in order to develop their full potential for significantly contributing to international stability.

## 2. SCOPE AND REACH OF DETERRENCE

Deterrence cannot be assessed without reference to the specific political context in which it is supposed to work. It is always important to look concretely into the questions, "Who is deterring whom from doing what?" and "How does one do it?" A distinction should be made between three types of deterrence: general deterrence, direct deterrence, and extended deterrence.

### General Deterrence

General deterrence seems to work irrespective of the specifics of deployment or employment policies. The nonspecific danger of general nuclear war motivates careful crisis behavior and increases the general threshold for the use of military force as a continuation of politics by other means. General deterrence reflects more of a general uneasiness than a specific political factor. Although deterrence no doubt contributes much to the general reduction of the role of war in international relations, some qualifications have to be made.

The factor of nuclear risks applies to both sides. In the case of limited, nonexistential challenges, nuclear deterrence is not necessarily to the advantage of the defender. Nuclear deterrence might lead to self-deterrence. Therefore, general deterrence might not suffice to prevent local crises or limited wars on the periphery.

### Direct Deterrence

Because the use of nuclear weapons against an adversary who also possesses nuclear weapons (or is protected by a nuclear power) is associated with significant risks of self-destruction, maximum credibility of nuclear deterrence is associated with values of existential importance. In other words, the credibility of deterrence depends on a reasonable relationship between one's own risks and the values that are to be defended. It is safe to assume that the political objective of defending self-determination and the very existence of the state as an independent governmental entity has such a high value that, even under conditions of very high risks, the threat to use nuclear weapons is credible. In this case, the objective to defend will rank higher than the objective to conquer (or whatever the objective of the attacker may be).

For those very reasons, nuclear deterrence has an inherent tendency to lead to the *de facto* creation of sanctuaries that are, according to traditional perceptions, identical with the nation state. Hence, direct deterrence supports the direct protection of vital interests and national sanctuaries. This might work even in cases of nuclear disparities, if values of highest priority are at stake. But, because of the extreme risks involved, the use of nuclear weapons in defense of nonexistential interests or in the protection of allies is much less credible.

### Extended Deterrence

Extended deterrence with the objective of covering nonexistential interests and of protecting nonnuclear allies under a "nuclear umbrella" is not an easy commitment. The plausibility of this concept is connected with various conditions. First, extended deterrence requires the visible political intention and the military capability of a nuclear power to use nuclear weapons against an attacker who threatens the existence of an ally, despite the fact that the attacker may be able to

retaliate against the protective power. The protector must, therefore, be at least equal in offensive and defensive military capabilities. In the case of Russia's weight and potential power projection capability *vis-à-vis* Western Europe, only the United States is capable of providing this guarantee.

Another precondition for effective extended deterrence is an adversary's perception of America's determination to defend its allies. This condition has both a politico-conceptual and a military-technical side. The latter includes the capability to employ nuclear weapons in a limited, selective, effective, and flexible way. The former must be weighed by the United States in light of the following aspects:

- (1) the assessment of its own vulnerabilities and post-war recovery capabilities;
- (2) its political interests and the importance of the ally to the United States (the United States has to calculate the value of ensuring its continued influence and the protection of its sphere of influence against the risks involved in the use of nuclear weapons);
- (3) the politico-psychological mood of its own public, which has a tremendous impact on the political options available to the political decision makers (the behavior of the protected has a major impact on U.S. public opinion).

For the protected and his strategic calculation, whether the protective arrangement covers all of his vital interests or only some of them is important. For example, protection against only the risk of WMD would require additional efforts and additional political arrangements regarding other major risks. In other words, if the security risks of the protected are only partially covered, this means that the vital interest of the protector and the protected are only partially in congruence. This will, in all likelihood, lead to different policies.

### 3. EFFECTS AND UTILITY OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Nuclear weapons are, above all, weapons. As all military instruments do, they serve political objectives. These objectives may differ depending on the political authority that controls the use of those weapons. To claim that the sole role and single purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter the use of nuclear weapons is tantamount to neglecting the political context in which nuclear weapons have to be seen. Reducing the role of nuclear weapons to deter the use of nuclear weapons is linked to the luxury of overwhelming conventional superiority and the prospect of winning a war conventionally—or at least assuring that one does not lose. Otherwise, irrespective of a peacetime no-first use declaratory policy, nuclear weapons *will* be used when total defeat becomes imminent (this obviously applies mainly to a defeat on one's own homeland or when vital or even existential interests are at stake).

Recall that it was the United States that for many decades emphasized the role of nuclear weapons as compensation for the overwhelming superiority of the Warsaw Pact's conventional power. It comes as no surprise that the United States now prefers to downplay the role of nuclear weapons, because this further strengthens the overall conventional superiority that the United States enjoys today. It is foreseeable, however, that the United States will rediscover the merits of nuclear weapons if new world powers emerge in a few decades, such as China, India, or once again,

Russia. In any case, downplaying the role of nuclear weapons does not help those allies who enjoy neither conventional superiority nor nuclear weapons.

It is important to understand that different people may think differently about the role and utility of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the effects and utility of nuclear weapons may be different in wartime, in crisis, and in peacetime. If this is so, peacetime basing modes and deployment policies or crisis reinforcements and reconstitution strategies do matter.

### Effects and Utility of Nuclear Weapons in Wartime

In wartime, the military effects of nuclear weapons present a persuasive reason for using them. However, as is the case with the use of all military instruments, their use has to be in accordance with, and, indeed, in support of political objectives. Political perceptions that nuclear weapons are not military but *political* weapons prevail—at least, and perhaps only—in the West. Far less clear is what “political” means. However, this is not the place to delve deeper into the nuclear-theological debates of former decades about *war-fighting* and *deterrence-only* and the credibility of those concepts. What is clear is that it is by no means obvious that *all* political decision makers who have WMD at their disposal are prepared to confine nuclear effects to the exclusively political. While one could agree that nuclear powers have developed a “culture of non-use,” the nuclear crises of the past do not necessarily provide a good textbook prescription of how we want new nuclear powers to learn their lessons.

Aside from their physical-military effects, or precisely because of them, nuclear weapons provide prospects for intra-war deterrence. If deterrence fails, it might not fail all at once and not completely. As “weapons of last resort,” they might provide strong incentives for an opponent to leave some things untouched.

Collateral damage caused by nuclear weapons is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, modern nuclear weapons and precise delivery means as well as Western employment philosophy make it likely that nuclear weapons effects can mainly be confined to the target itself without causing much collateral damage. On the other hand, “collateral damage” might be exactly the intended effect if the use of nuclear weapons is done with the objective, for instance, of “terrorizing” the civilian population and to deterring Western policy makers from intervening (although in this case, the damage would not be collateral).

Wartime effects of nuclear weapons are probably only loosely related to deployment areas and modes. Hence, since other overwhelming considerations are likely to draw the attention of the decision makers, it will be less important *where* the specific weapon is being based. (This does not mean that for deterrence and intra-war deterrence, deployment or other specifics play no role.)

### Effects and Utility of Nuclear Weapons in Crisis

The anticipated effect of nuclear weapons in wartime, i.e., the expected effect of an actual nuclear detonation, determines the effects and potential utility of nuclear weapons in a crisis. Again, acting *vis-à-vis* a nuclear power must be done cautiously, whereas acting as a nuclear power *vis-à-vis* a nonnuclear power provides considerable leverage.

Parties to a crisis may engage in threats and counterthreats and attempts to deter and prevent self-deterrence. Aside from the question of conventional and nuclear capabilities and, hence, available options to the political decision makers, a key problem is who moves first. During the Cold War, a question often raised in the context of the credibility of extended deterrence was, "Would the United States sacrifice Chicago for Hamburg?" The counterquestion was, "Why should the Soviets risk the destruction of Leningrad in order to conquer Hamburg?" However, what if the Soviets had been able to set a *fait accompli* by conquering Hamburg in a Blitzkrieg operation and *then* confronting the United States with the choice of either risking the destruction of Chicago as retaliation for the destruction of Leningrad or doing nothing? This was a rather fruitless debate.

On the other hand, this debate has a "modern application." What if the next Saddam Hussein conquers Kuwait and threatens to use WMD against Western military or civilian targets in case of Western intervention? Why, could be replied, should he trigger a devastating Western response for a limited objective? However, would the West respond given the limited objective? Rather than engaging in further reasoning about the rationality of actors and the credibility of threats, it should suffice to say that actors in international relations usually prefer to have "options of last resort" available in order to reinforce their claims.

The real issue is option vs. option-denial. In a crisis, it will be useful to have more options available than the opponent. Nuclear weapons, even if currently associated with limited operational value, provide a comfortable basis from which one can act with more freedom. If a nonnuclear actor wants to increase his own room for maneuver, teaming-up with a strong protector whose interests are visibly intermingled with those of the protected will be the right choice.

In a crisis, deploying nuclear weapons forward will probably be intended, and interpreted, as an escalatory step. The intention might be to signal resolve, but politicians could well shy away from the appropriate steps, believing they could be interpreted as an escalation and, hence, a provocation.

### **Effects and Utility of Nuclear Weapons in Peacetime**

In peacetime, nuclear weapons contribute to the preemptive devaluation of the recourse to force in the pursuit of political objectives. Certainly, this presumption was more valid during the Cold War and under the condition of a comparatively stable bipolar system and the many other factors that made both systems—Western democracies and Soviet-style communism—comparatively predictable. However, it would be implausible to assume that nuclear weapons and the risks associated with their employment do *not* influence risk calculations of decision makers. Hence, deterrence, or dissuasion for that matter, is likely to work even if less comprehensively and securely than under the conditions of the Cold War.

Compared to traditional balances of (conventional) power, nuclear deterrence has the potential to provide an additional contribution to stability. Whereas the former remain important even under nuclear conditions, nuclear capabilities secure against conventional imbalances and induce cautious and careful crisis behavior. At the same time, and in particular under the condition of a one-sided nuclear advantage, nuclear capabilities might potentially increase the conventional leverage as well as the room for maneuver and freedom of action.

To sum up, nuclear weapons can work in war, crisis, and peace. The political objective is to ensure that their main, and indeed only, effect will be in peacetime. The challenge is to maximize the peacetime effects of nuclear weapons, i.e., their contribution to stability and war prevention. In addition to peacetime declaratory policy and many other diplomatic instruments, deployment policy is *the* peacetime instrument at hand for demonstrating such things as commitment, resolve, security, risk sharing, participation, intentions, etc. Most importantly, deployment, even if done in a rather camouflaged, concealed, or dispersed fashion, means visibility—visibility of commitment, participation, and all the other factors mentioned above.

Visibility is a poorly understood phenomenon, and *how* it works can scarcely be defined in precise terms. Intuitively, however, one can easily reckon the difference between a deterrent based on the moon and, alternatively, a deterrent based on Earth—even if one could credibly demonstrate that one is able to bring back the weapons from the moon at some stage for retaliation on Earth. Power projection, to give another example, could be done by ordering a strategic submarine to the Antarctic waters together with a statement that the range of the missiles would be sufficient to strike a target, for instance, in the Middle East. However, the forward deployment of nuclear weapons and appropriate delivery vehicles is much more likely to have an impact upon decision makers of the respective country than a less visible and, hence, perceivably less credible threat.

Hence, change of deployments or of deployment patterns means, and is perceived to mean, a signal of intentions. If there were no nuclear weapons based in Europe and on German soil today, one would scarcely base them there today, because this change would indicate a change of intention or perception by Germany and/or the United States, which would, in all likelihood, be followed by reactive measures by others. However, this line of reasoning also goes the other way around. To announce the withdrawal of weapons from existing storage sites today would indicate a policy change, which could be interpreted by others as a lessening of U.S. commitment.

Furthermore, proposals to withdraw nuclear weapons from Europe and rely entirely on sea- or centrally-based systems tend to overlook other political consequences. Some politicians and experts suggest that nuclear weapons should have their function in a crisis, while it has been suggested here that they should mainly work in peacetime. Hence, the question is not whether they *can* be brought back at a time of tensions and in a crisis (reinforcements, reconstitution), but rather whether they *will* be brought back despite concerns of escalation. The main issue is whether nuclear weapons should serve as only a reinsurance that a crisis does not lead to a shooting war or whether they might also contribute to preventing a crisis in the first place. Deterrence works in the minds of policy makers. Any attempt to move their risk calculation in the direction of moderation and careful behavior should be undertaken. This can be done most credibly by signaling in peacetime that the protected is an inseparable part of an overall deterrence regime.

Existing deployment arrangements of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe do not necessarily represent ideal, or even optimal, solutions. Most likely, they are holdovers from other times and circumstances. However, this does not mean that they no longer serve important political objectives. Militarily, technically, and operationally, one can think of alternative, and presumably even better, basing modes and deployment patterns than the existing ones. Politically, it is extremely unlikely that politicians now would be able to agree on new and improved deployment

regimes that would credibly and perceivably strengthen nuclear guarantees and participation arrangements. All other solutions, particularly those related to a withdrawal and “backward basing,” would be perceived politically as a retreat, rather than a strengthening of commitment.

Hence, while deployment policies do not entirely determine the credibility of deterrence or dissuasion regimes, they do represent important political signals. Considering Germany’s options and nuclear interests, one must keep in mind that deployment modes do matter in this respect.

#### 4. THREE BASIC OPTIONS FOR GERMANY

Germany cannot escape the nuclear reality and thus, must proactively shape the security policy environment in accordance with its vital interests. The interests of a country, including nuclear interests, must not be confused with ambitions. Ambitions to possess nuclear weapons are unlikely to arise if legitimate nuclear interests are being met.

This line of reasoning applies, in particular, to nonproliferation efforts. Any effective nonproliferation policy must be incentive-based and take the demand side into consideration. To focus exclusively on the supply side of the proliferation problem is a prescription for failure. Although export controls are extremely important and useful, they cannot solve the problem, but only delay it. As long as there is a demand, there will be a supply. Hence, it will be key to a successful nonproliferation policy to look into the problem of incentives and disincentives as well as into the question of how the legitimate interests of nonnuclear states can be met.

Germany, as a nonnuclear power, has nuclear interests. They can be summarized briefly as follows:

1. *Security and the protection of its people, its territory, and its interests against both limited risks as well as more existential threats, including threats posed by WMD and the respective delivery vehicles.* As has been argued above, it is clear that nuclear powers are comparatively well protected when it comes to existential threats. When the defender has its own nuclear capabilities, any aggressors’ objectives are likely to be rather limited. When a nation has no nuclear capabilities, it must seek second-best solutions.
2. *Maintaining stability in Europe.* This objective does not presume the existence of a confrontational political order in Europe. The interest in counterbalancing Russia does not reflect an actual concern about a Red Army attack or even invasion. However, even if Russia becomes a real partner of the West, the West would be well advised to be a strong partner rather than a weak one. Stability in Europe also means nuclear stability, particularly from the perspective of nonnuclear countries. This is a key tenet of European security, despite the low visibility of this item on the present political agenda.
3. *Ensuring room for maneuver with respect to its foreign policy.* Admittedly, nuclear weapons are rather difficult to operationalize politically for furthering one’s own foreign policy interests. However, it would not be easier without them. On the contrary; when facing a threat posed by a state with WMD, one would prefer to have countervailing options available. A nonnuclear country in a region where nuclear powers influence the strategic environment has to take precautions against any kind of nuclear-based pressure.

4. *Influencing the nuclear thinking and planning of the nuclear powers, but in particular that of Germany's allies.* Without its own control over nuclear weapons, Germany has to seek ways to ensure influence over the thinking and planning of the nuclear protector in order to optimize compatibility of German and U.S. nuclear interests. Related to this is the next point
5. *Ensuring cooperation and participation with the nuclear protector.* While point (4) can be arranged on a formal as well as informal basis, cooperation and participation should be organized and institutionalized in order to facilitate regular meetings, the development of procedures, joint training and exercises for the familiarization with the rules of the custodial power, etc. The objective is to participate in the overall nuclear deterrence or dissuasion regime as much as possible. Only by being deeply involved in nuclear matters can the protected (Germany) hope to close somewhat the gap between the degree of security provided by a national nuclear capability and the difficult situation of dependence on the decisions of another nation.
6. *Reducing the disadvantages of not being a nuclear power.* The disadvantages of not having national control over weapons of last resort and, hence, to a considerable degree over one's own fate can, and indeed must, be compensated for by the protector. Otherwise, incentives to proliferate might be difficult to reduce in the long run. This goes far beyond direct military arrangements. Currently, Germany and Japan are paying large sums of money to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for safeguard inspections, only to be among the most frequently inspected nations. Certainly, many inspectors prefer traveling to more comfortable places than to exposing themselves to "hardship assignments." However, the strengthening of the IAEA inspection regime is, in practice, unlikely to hit the right targets. For the civil nuclear industry and research facilities of nonnuclear Western countries, the tighter controls place an extra burden financially and organizationally, while competitors from nuclear states enjoy an "inspection-free status." In the long run, this situation can be counterproductive.

Basically, Germany has three options for pursuing its nuclear interests. First, it could follow a cooperative model by ensuring that a nuclear superpower extends its nuclear umbrella over Germany; second, it could try to achieve the so-called European option, i.e., an integrative model, where European nuclear forces are protecting a single integrated entity under the full control of a European command authority; and, third, it could become a nuclear power itself. These options will be discussed in the context of the deterrence models introduced earlier in this essay.

### Option 1: Extended Deterrence (Cooperative Model)

The first option for Germany in pursuing its nuclear interest is to "borrow" nuclear protection from a nuclear power that is capable of and willing to provide a guarantee. For extended deterrence to be credible, certain requirements have to be fulfilled.

It takes a superpower, not a medium power, to be a protector. Aside from world wide interests, the claiming of which is comparatively easy, being a protector requires considerable conventional military capabilities to make such guarantees credible. Without a global power projection capability, any security guarantee would be weak. Furthermore, the protector has to operate from a comparatively secure home base; it must be able to absorb counterstrikes if it is to have leverage. The degree to which these factors come into play and thus, the degree to which the guarantees are perceived as credible, depend on capabilities and "size," as well as on the amount of overlap between the interests of the protector and the protected. Furthermore, this determination is

perceived as being more credible if it applies to countries in the protector's generally recognized sphere of influence. The concept of extended deterrence is a very demanding one, in terms of both the protector and the protected. The protector needs to be prepared to accept considerable risks on the behalf of the protected, while the protected to a large degree puts its own fate in the hands of someone else. In order to somewhat lessen this concept's inherent tensions and conflicts of interest, arrangements with respect to influence upon planning and employment policies have to be made.

### Option 2: European Nuclear Force (Integrative Model)

The second option relates to the creation of a truly European nuclear force, which represents an integrative model and is fundamentally different from the extended deterrence model. It is much closer to the "direct deterrence" model discussed earlier. Whatever the character of a future European entity, it needs to be comparable to a single nation-state of today when it comes to political coherence. Requirements for this model to be credible include the following.

Security interests must be identical; that is, there can be no areas of different security. This requirements calls for a single political entity, what could be labeled the "United States of Europe." Which countries would be part of this entity is entirely open, but it is highly unlikely that it would include the entire current membership of the European Union. Joint nuclear capabilities have to be controlled by a single political actor, i.e., a "European President." Although it is extremely unlikely that this degree of harmonization of national interests and the subsequent creation of a single political entity and actor can be achieved anytime soon, it should not be totally excluded as a long-range vision. What is important is that any process leading in this direction not be confused with its actual realization and that any step short of this European deterrence not undermine the validity of extended deterrence as it currently exists.

### Option 3: National Nuclear Option

It must be emphasized that this option is a total anathema for Germany today and tomorrow. However, in order to remain a "no-option," certain conditions have to be fulfilled. First of all, extended deterrence must remain intact. Both Germany and the United States have to play an active role in keeping deterrence credible; otherwise, nothing will stop the erosion of credibility. Related to this condition, risks posed by WMD need to be countered by security arrangements, which might include defenses against them (e.g., a defense against ballistic missiles). Most importantly, a future situation where Germany "feels alone" must be prevented. Such a situation would likely lead Germany to think about alternatives to existing security arrangements. Last, it is important that the general disadvantages of being a "have-not" be comparatively small.

Again, it is clear that the national option is not an option today. To put the national option on the political agenda today would clearly decrease Germany's room for maneuver in foreign policy due to the likely reactions of Germany's neighbors and partners. However, this cost-benefit assessment might alter over time. As with all arrangements and treaties, the *clausula rebus sic stantibus* applies (i.e., agreements might only last as long as the conditions apply that led to the agreement in the first place). Certainly, inertia, traditions, customs and other factors work to prevent change. Nevertheless, it cannot be excluded that a future Germany, in the face of severe

threats and at a time when the U.S. extended deterrence has eroded further and lost most of its credibility, and when the creation of a European nuclear force has not yet been accomplished, might rethink its pledges to never become a nuclear power. This is precisely the situation that must be prevented. Hence, the definition and pursuit of its nuclear interests is a prerequisite for Germany to remain nonnuclear.

What might happen if Germany's nuclear interests were no longer being met? Given the current security environment, this situation would occur if the existing extended deterrence arrangement between Germany and the United States within the NATO framework continued to erode. First of all, this development would lead to a fundamentally new orientation of the strategic landscape in Europe. All existing NATO arrangements would be put into question. Germany would have to search for alternatives, one of which could be a national nuclear option. Others include a conventional arms build-up, further disarmament and appeasement policy, and/or an arrangement, for instance, with Russia.

All these alternatives look much less preferable than a stable continuation of the current situation. This is particularly true because the future of Europe is anything but clear.

## 5. EUROPEAN FUTURES

The current security policy environment in post-Cold War Europe does not suggest that nuclear deterrence matters all that much. However, Europe's future is very unpredictable.

Aside from general uncertainties about the future economic performance under increasingly competitive conditions, huge uncertainties exist with regard to the following:

- the European unification process;
- transatlantic relations;
- Russia's role in Europe;
- risks within Europe; and
- risks outside Europe with potential repercussions for European security.

Will there be a renationalization of the EU members or an ever closer Union or a status-quo plus? Can the strategic alliance between the United States and Europe be maintained or even strengthened? These and many more questions will remain unanswered for a long time to come. To forgo well-developed and proven cooperative arrangements or even to allow them to erode despite these uncertainties would be ill-advised. Both the German and the U.S. governments should take these factors into consideration.

## CONCLUSIONS: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT AND THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION

Under the condition of dramatic change and new challenges, no existing arrangement can remain intact without a considerable effort to maintain it. Both the German and the U.S. governments need to actively shape the political environment in order to ensure continuing support for a concept that has no alternative in the foreseeable future.

Germany has to define its nuclear interests precisely because it has no nuclear ambitions and does not want its neighbors and partners to speculate about a hidden agenda. In order to prevent a continuing erosion of extended deterrence and a future situation in which Germany might feel compelled to rethink strategic choices, the German government has to proactively shape the security policy environment. This includes leading the public debate in its own country but also influencing the United States (the Administration, Congress, foreign and security policy elite, opinion leaders, as well as the public), because the key question is whether the United States remains interested in Europe and Germany and whether it stays engaged in European and German security affairs.

In order to maximize the *peacetime* effects of nuclear weapons, visible *peacetime* deployments on German soil are important for Germany. Germany needs to continue to provide nuclear weapons platforms and to maintain its nuclear expertise by collaborating closely with the United States. It is important for Germany to stay engaged in the nuclear planning process and to ensure that this is more than just a debating club. Otherwise, Germany will lose influence upon nuclear matters and, consequently, lose interest in this specific form of arrangement. Germany must rethink its position with regard to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, because an eroding nuclear expertise in the United States may be sufficient for central and direct deterrence, but not for extended deterrence and forward-basing requirements. Last but not least, Germany needs to talk to its nuclear allies about the disturbing differences that exist in the IAEA inspection practice between nuclear and nonnuclear states as well as between the necessity of inspecting many critical states and the reality that too many inspections take place in countries like Germany and Japan.

The United States needs to keep extended deterrence credible and to stop the erosion process. It must seek to meet the interests of nonnuclear allies—this policy alone represents one of the best nonproliferation efforts. Furthermore, the United States must maintain its nuclear infrastructure, i.e., the capability and expertise to design, modernize, test, and produce modern, efficient, safe, secure, and reliable nuclear weapons. Even if the German government is currently entertaining the idea that old nuclear weapons are preferable to modern ones, this is hardly a position that can be maintained forever. The United States should encourage the German government to rethink its position, in order to make nuclear weapons deployments on German territory in *peacetime* acceptable in the long-run. Visibility is the key here. The Americans need to provide Germany with many opportunities for close cooperation in nuclear planning in order to reassure Germany about U.S. commitments and seriousness in regard to nuclear partnership. In pursuing a comprehensive non- and counterproliferation strategy, the United States must understand that one of the most important nonproliferation strategies is to prevent Germany and Japan from pursuing national nuclear options. This can only be done when their legitimate nuclear interests are being met.