



**Summaries of Working Group presentations
WG 1 – Nuclear Weapons and IR
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Presentation 1: US Nuclear Posture Review: Diverging transatlantic approaches to strategic stability, Maxwell Downman, BASIC

This talk assessed the impacts of President Trump's Nuclear Posture in a European context. It argued that key elements of the NPR represent a bold departure in US nuclear weapons thinking and presents risks for European allies and NATO's strategic priorities.

First, the United States has expanded the role of nuclear weapons to deter ambiguously defined 'non-nuclear strategic attacks' and deter Russia's supposed 'escalate to de-escalate doctrine' through the threat of 'limited nuclear retaliation.' However, this misunderstands Russian military doctrine, believes escalation can be controlled and risks lowering the nuclear threshold, by envisaging using lower-yield in non-strategic scenarios.

Second, the NPR puts an emphasis on low-yield nuclear weapons to carry out these missions - both the modernisation of ground-based systems and creation of new sea-launched systems. The presentation argued that such developments may prove controversial amongst European allies, and will do little to reassure European's who are wary of the Trump Presidency.

Third, the report outlined the NPR's approach to arms control, which sees little prospect of rekindling arms control with Russia in the near future. It argued that this approach could prove disastrous endangering European nuclear arms control given the need to negotiate a successor to New START and given the INF Treaty crisis.

The presentation concluded by noting that these changes force Europeans to think about how they can ameliorate US nuclear weapons policy in a declining strategic environment with Russia, and present a new vision for European arms control. It offered that Europeans should communicate ways in which the Alliance could achieve the stated aims of the NPR but through nuclear restraint and arms control. Such strategies would be better suited to managing great power competition, assuring allies and minimising nuclear risks.

Presentation 2: Two minutes to midnight: avoiding nuclear war between Russia and the US, Tim Street, Oxford Research Group

The presentation considered the current tensions between Russia and the US, primarily focusing on the possibility of nuclear war and what might be done to reduce those dangers and move towards 'common security'. As any conflict between Moscow and Washington would likely draw in the UK, it also touched on the role the UK can play in conflict prevention and peace-building.

The presentation noted the recent decision by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists to move the minute hand on their symbolic 'Doomsday Clock' to two minutes to midnight, implying an increased threat of nuclear catastrophe. Reasons for this change included indications that US policy is 'moving towards a wider role for nuclear weapons', which was 'compounded by the challenge presented to President Trump by North Korea's nuclear ambitions'.

The risks of nuclear weapons use have also been heightened by the breakdown of relations between Russia and 'the West'. One result of the freeze in relations is that nearly all negotiations on nuclear arms reduction and non-proliferation have come to a stop, while existing treaty structures are eroding and may even collapse. It was also noted that, in the UK, public opinion has turned against Russia, which may make war more likely.

Given the serious risks of nuclear war, our priorities should be avoiding war and building common security between the West and Russia.

The presentation considered ways forward in developing sound and cordial relations with Russia. One suggestion is to engage with Moscow's consistently articulated narrative of NATO encirclement, seeking mutually acceptable outcomes. This could include progress on the political status of Ukraine, NATO expansion, ballistic missile defence and restraining the development of advanced military technology.

It was also suggested that the UK needs to carefully consider how its commitment to overseas power projection, as part of NATO, interacts with Russia's threat perceptions and reliance on nuclear deterrence, given NATO's overall military superiority.

Presentation 3 - Is nuclearization rational choice for North Korea?

Danni Zou, SOAS

From North Korea's perspective, first, nuclearization is a national strategy which is based on national interest. It is assumed by the rational actor model that actors make choices that actors believe they will lead to the greatest expected benefit for them. North Korea continues to develop nuclear power, which is a long-term military strategy, because its government believes that nuclear weapons can ensure its national security, which can be seen as an important part of its national interest. Second, this choice is based on China's experience. North Korea has started nuclear tests from last century, during which China launched successful nuclear tests that helped China become great power in the next decades. Furthermore, the situation both countries faced with is similar. At that time, China also faced strong economic sanctions from US but it never gave up and finally achieved success on nuclear tests. Therefore, this previous sample gives North Korea confidence to insist its choice. Third, the North Korean government wants to apply nuclear issue to gain an equal status in international negotiation with US. To some degree, it is successful because US has paid more attention to North Korea to persuade it involving in nuclear disarmament talks.

However, nuclearization may not be a rational choice for North Korea at international level. The continuing nuclear tests of North Korea have brought out strong oppositions made by US and many neighboring countries such as China, Japan and Korea. The North Korea nuclear issue has become an urgent issue for international society to solve because it is a potential threat that may not only harm other states' national security but also challenge current international order.

First, other states are more likely to develop military forces to guard themselves. The improper and escalated nuclear tests offer Japan, an opportunity to reaffirm constitutional amendment. To be specific, the Japanese Government intends to use North Korea nuclear crisis as a good excuse for developing its military forces, which may challenge Asian status quo and current international political system based on the consequence of the Second World War. Second, the North Korea nuclear crisis provides a good reason for US to build a more stable alliance with South Korea and Japan in terms of military and diplomacy, which can be seen as the development of hub-and-spoke system. Moreover, it is argued that this nuclear issue provides US a good excuse for restarting the 'Pivot Asia' policy to enlarge its influence in Asia and contain Chinese power.

Overall, nuclearization is a rational choice but, taking current situation into account, it isn't a beneficial choice if the North Korea continues to developing nuclear tests. However, since South Korea envoy announced that Kim Jong-un was willing to give up nuclear tests if he can have a talk with US and Trump agreed this idea but emphasized that economic sanctions won't be stopped, how this nuclear issue goes in the future is unexpected.

Presentation 4 - May 12th: The End of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Ezra Friedman, INSS / ISYP

The presentation on the 'Iran Nuclear Deal' known officially Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) examined the likelihood of President Donald Trump either keeping the United States in, or the more likely scenario, of withdrawing from the JCPOA. The participants explored in the presentation how this will likely manifest itself in the form of the sanctions waiver, required by American domestic law, which Trump will likely not sign on May 12th, leading to the return of sanctions that had been lifted since the implementation of the nuclear deal.

We see the signs of this plan of action through Trump's hard line when it comes to Iran and specifically his opposition the JCPOA which begun with his candidacy for president and has carried into his administration. The Europeans, in the form of the United Kingdom, France and Germany, all guarantors of the deal, have attempted and will continue to try to address President's Trump's main concerns which include: the sunset clauses on enrichment, lack of the full and immediate access to all military sites, and lastly Iran's ballistic missile program, all of which must be addressed in a new deal or revised JCPOA according to Trump. The dismissal of those within his cabinet who championed the deal such as former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and former National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster, as well as their subsequent replacements in the form of CIA Director Mike Pompeo and now John Bolton respectively, who are considered war hawks and hardliners on Iran and are in step with the President on the need to either drastically reform the JCPOA or to withdraw from the deal altogether.

The lack of a plan for the 'day after' the end of the JCPOA is a huge concern, and one that could lead to conflict in the region between various actors following an American withdrawal. Following Trump's actions, we will likely see a collapse of the JCPOA and Iran returning to enrichment of uranium in its nuclear program to pre-JCPOA levels. The actions by the Trump administration will likely lead to more instability and increase the potential for conflict around the issue of Iran's nuclear program.

Presentation 5 – Risks and opportunities after the Nuclear Security Summit **Leah Matchett, University of Oxford**

The presentation looked at the history of the Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) initiative, launched by President Obama in his 2009 Prague speech, which brought together heads of roughly 50 countries to address issues of nuclear security. Leaders met four times from 2010 to 2016 and the initiative concluded with the creation of the Nuclear Security Contact Group.

There are a number of risks to the progress made by these Summits. One is a loss of momentum due to 'summit fatigue' and the prevalence of other issues in the nuclear arena. It was noted that nuclear security is a fairly technical issue and is usually below the pay-grade of national leaders – which is why having summits was so effective. The infusion of executive attention could and did expedite initiatives in participating countries. This attention has dissipated.

Another risk is 'issue linkage' – efforts to connect this issue to other (intrinsically unrelated) issues. One example is efforts by a number of states to link nuclear security to progress on disarmament, causing contention during the Summits.

The NSS initiative did however present opportunities for positive future action. The Summits encouraged states to bring so-called 'Gift Baskets' – public commitments to an idea or agenda above and beyond what could be reached by consensus, which other states are free to embrace or not. One example is Norway sponsoring a Gift Basket on HEU minimization, which was signed by a total of 22 out of 53 countries. This has led to further work being done by Norway and a Summit to be held on the topic in 2018.

It was also noted that Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), a non-governmental organisation, created its 'Nuclear Security Index' as part of the NSS process. This ranks countries based on their nuclear security performance. There is some evidence that states are actively using / referring to the index.

The presentation concluded by arguing that there is a massive opportunity and need for individual states and organisations to take the lead in increasing accountability for previous commitments on nuclear security.