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CSIS European Trilateral Track 2 Nuclear Dialogues

2017 Consensus Statement

The European Trilateral Track 2 Nuclear Dialogues, organized by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in partnership with the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) and the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS), has convened senior nuclear policy experts from the United Kingdom, France, and the United States (P3) for the past nine years to discuss nuclear deterrence and nonproliferation policy issues and to identify areas of consensus among the three countries. The majority of the experts are former U.S., UK, and French senior officials; the others are well-known academics in the field. Since the Dialogues' inception, high-level officials from all three governments have also routinely joined the forum and participated in the discussions.

The Dialogues have been unique in bringing U.S., UK, and French representatives into a trilateral forum for discussing nuclear policy. The United States, United Kingdom, and France hold common values and principles directed toward a shared purpose of global peace and security, as well as an understanding of their respective roles as responsible stewards of the nuclear order. Their sustained engagement will thus, irrespective of political shifts in any of the three countries, remain unique in the context of international alliances and partnerships and essential into the foreseeable future.

In 2017, the group's discussion addressed a range of issues in the Euro-Atlantic security environment and beyond, prompting agreement among the group's nongovernmental participants to issue the following statements reflecting the consensus views of the undersigned. All signatories agree to this statement in their personal capacity, which may not represent the views of their respective organizations.

Russia and NATO

We remain deeply concerned by Russian behavior, which is increasingly inconsistent with actions necessary to preserve peace and stability in Europe and beyond. Russia's continued nuclear sabre rattling promotes an antagonistic nuclear relationship between NATO and Russia rather than one characterized by cooperation. In addition, Russia's nuclear modernization decisions further undermine stability in Europe. In particular, Russia's ground-based short-range missile systems that could be employed for war-fighting purposes, along with an apparent Russian belief that nuclear weapons could be used in a "limited" way to manipulate escalation, pose a threat to NATO forces in Europe and are a major cause of concern.

We are also concerned about the implications of Russia's violation of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The complete collapse of this treaty could place the broader arms control regime between the United States and Russia at considerable risk, a regime that is already under great stress due to Russian noncompliance with many other arms control accords. We believe that it is important to continue to try to address any potential violations of the treaty through formalized treaty processes, provide avenues for Russia to return to compliance with the INF Treaty, and not accept the treaty's demise as inevitable. Presently, the United States should continue to demonstrate compliance with the INF Treaty. Improved coordination and information sharing among the United States, France, and United Kingdom is necessary on matters of INF noncompliance to sustain a united approach and ensure that any actions taken to respond to Russia's potential violation do not risk fracturing the alliance. Russia's continued challenges to the INF Treaty will render any movement on future arms control treaties significantly more difficult to achieve, with negative consequences that will extend beyond the U.S.-Russia bilateral relationship. We look to Russia to approach the INF Treaty with the same sort of honesty and transparency that it brings to the New START treaty, under which both sides have met the central limits, giving some promise for future cooperation on arms reduction and limitations. However, resolving INF Treaty compliance issues is paramount for the continuation of the broader arms control agenda between the East and the West.

To help reduce tensions between NATO and Russia, we believe that strategic stability talks between the United States and Russia hold the potential to develop mutual understanding of each sides' national security priorities, goals, red lines, concerns, and thoughts on escalation. Preliminary discussions were held in Helsinki in late 2017. These discussions should continue and expand in terms of content and participation. The inclusion of other NATO members, perhaps through a revitalized and repurposed NATO-Russia Council would also be useful.

While dialogue is important, we believe it is similarly important that NATO members remain unified in their Article 5 commitments to safeguard the alliance through not only unified political statements but also by ensuring that NATO has the right tools and capabilities to deter Russian aggression. We believe that NATO should bolster its conventional forces and maintain appropriate nuclear forces to respond to a range of circumstances. A strong, unified NATO is necessary to deter Russian aggression and maintain peace in Europe.

Iran

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the P5+1 and Iran is not a silver bullet for resolving all of Iran's problematic behavior, nor was it intended to be, but it remains the best available tool for keeping Iran's nuclear program in check for the foreseeable future as long as Iran continues to comply with the deal's conditions. We condemn Iran's support of terrorist groups and continued missile tests, and we encourage our respective governments to remain strongly engaged on these matters, but also to treat them as distinct from the JCPOA. While the JCPOA is not a perfect deal, we continue to judge that the costs of stepping away from the agreement will far exceed any potential benefits. To that end, the P3 must work together to ensure its provisions are followed to the letter. Strict enforcement is necessary to ensure the deal's effectiveness at delaying and hopefully

preventing a nuclear armed Iran. Though we do not believe the JCPOA should be abandoned, we do believe that policies that supplement the agreement to ensure Iran does not return to its status as a proliferation risk country may be useful. Such proposals should not critically undermine the JCPOA in any way, or else the deal may collapse in on itself in a manner that can only harm our collective security. We believe the P3 should begin planning strategies for preventing Iranian nuclear breakout at the end of the JCPOA period.

National Nuclear Policies

Given the aging status of the U.S., UK, and French deterrents and the reliance of Russia and China on highly capable nuclear forces in their security strategies, we stress the importance of modernizing the U.S., UK, and French nuclear capabilities to ensure the sustained credibility, reliability, and effectiveness of our respective nuclear deterrent forces to deal with twenty-first century threats. The United States, United Kingdom, and France are all facing or will soon face important nuclear investment decisions and must maintain deterrent capabilities. Each of the ally's programs will come under both monetary and political scrutiny and pressure, but it is important that all three countries make careful decisions to maintain the essential capabilities necessary to deter or resolve a crisis and not cut programs for the sake of fiscal expediency or to avoid political controversy. In addition, the P3 must continue to reinforce mutual consultations on national declaratory policies to ensure that each ally's nuclear capabilities and policies and statements provide complementary support to their collective deterrence objectives.

North Korea

North Korea's increased intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capabilities and continued nuclear weapons development is increasingly a global threat, and the need for P3 cooperation and coordination in response to this threat has grown dramatically. As three responsible, like-minded, and legitimate nuclear weapons states, the United States, United Kingdom, and France must stand together against this growing menace, making it clear that North Korea will not gain from its use or threatened use of nuclear weapons. Neither war nor negotiation on its own offers an expedient solution to the crisis, so the P3 should take pragmatic steps to reduce nuclear risks on the Korean peninsula through pressure, containment, and deterrence.

The options available to the P3 in North Korea suggest no easy solution to the problem. We would like to emphasize that preventative war against North Korea would pose profound risks and could not fully eliminate the span of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and conventional threats on the peninsula in the short term, much less permanently. Similarly, while we support and encourage dialogue, there is no assurance that negotiations would yield meaningful benefit in reducing or eliminating North Korea's nuclear or missile capabilities except at costs likely to be unacceptable to the United States and its allies. Therefore, the immediate priority with North Korea is containment and deterrence of nuclear use, conventional aggression or proliferation, and prevention of unintentional escalation. That said, enhanced conventional and defensive capabilities in East Asia are necessary to counter North Korean threats and prepare for any contingency on the peninsula. In addition, we

believe that the P3 must make it clear to North Korea that, as long as it has nuclear weapons, it will not be able to use them as a shield to enable conventional aggression or as a tool of coercion against U.S. allies. We must clearly communicate that any attempt at nuclear blackmail will fail. Finally, the P3 must stand together in sending the strongest possible message to both North Korea and potential recipients that onward proliferation of North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities will not be tolerated.

We believe the P3 must work seriously with Russia and China to bring North Korea to the negotiating table with a focus on measures to enhance stability, prevent proliferation, and limit further provocations rather than an exclusive focus on denuclearization. The P3 must communicate to Russia and China that instability on the Korean peninsula is dangerous for both countries and that efforts to reduce the risk posed by nuclear North Korea will help improve their own security. In addition, the P3 should highlight to both countries the risk of fissile material production in North Korea, not only for North Korea's growing arsenal but also as an onwards proliferation risk that will grow along with expanding stocks of weapons and nuclear materials. Efforts to freeze enrichment may be a useful step in reducing the broader proliferation risks from North Korea and lead to more meaningful negotiations.

Ban Treaty

The P3 should continue to exercise restraint in their own programs and acknowledge the importance of avoiding a revived nuclear arms race while not abandoning the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. However, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) does more to undermine these goals and policies than support them. We must work to create a vision of the world that acknowledges the serious security challenges the international community faces—individually and collectively—and allows us not simply to aspire to a world where nuclear weapons do not exist, but to work toward a world in which they are not needed. Until that time, deterrence ultimately backed by nuclear weapons remains an unavoidable and necessary aspect of international security. The promising road toward managing the challenges presented by nuclear weapons is within the proven framework of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to achieve continued progress toward multilateral disarmament, while diminishing the divide between nuclear and nonnuclear weapon states.

The TPNW has both practical and legal flaws that make it incompatible with the longstanding and highly successful NPT-based nonproliferation regime. Regrettably but unmistakably, the security environment today is not conducive for total and immediate nuclear disarmament. Western liberal democracies continue to face disproportionate focus and criticism from Ban Treaty supporters. If this approach were to result in unilateral disarmament by the P3, it is more likely to lead to possession of nuclear weapons solely by states unbound by civil society, democratic constraints, and commitment to a rules-based international order, not meaningful disarmament. Furthermore, real progress on these issues turns not only on agreements being reached but on strong verification that they are being complied with. The TPNW, however, contains no meaningful and detailed verification procedures and risks undermining the NPT verification framework centered on the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), through duplication, overburdening, and competing funding requirements. We also believe the TPNW serves to further polarize the nuclear and nonnuclear weapons states by creating a treaty designed solely for scoring political points rather than for compliance, verification, or enforcement.

The P3 and their allies will need to proactively counter the TPNW while simultaneously promoting more vigorous support for and compliance with existing arms control and nonproliferation treaties and agreements, including meaningful progress toward implementation of Article VI of the NPT. To that end, the P3 must highlight the durable and sustainable nonproliferation accomplishments under the NPT framework, from strategic level reductions to international cooperation on material security. The P3 should make clear in the TPNW debate that if the treaty were to secure the number of ratifications necessary to enter into force, it would as a matter of clear international law bind only states that are parties to it and would not in any way establish a new rule of customary international law. Additionally, the P3 should acknowledge the divide between nuclear and nonnuclear countries, attempting to bridge the divide between the two sides rather than further polarize the two. Seeking strong statements on the primacy of the NPT and continued support for disarmament verification work in the context of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification may be a potential area for common ground. Further, the P3 should promote alliance unity both within NATO and other allied recipients of security guarantees, to counter the potential of the TPNW to produce division within the alliance without meaningful restraint by adversaries. The P3 should make efforts to reiterate that NATO is a nuclear alliance and warn that any country wishing to sign the TPNW would severely undercut NATO's effectiveness, while acknowledging the pressure that several of these countries face from their civil societies if disarmament progress remains stalled.

Nuclear Security

A strong commitment to nuclear security is foundational to responsible nuclear stewardship and vital to P3 credibility and leadership in nuclear matters. It is a broadly shared interest not only of nuclear weapons states, but of all countries with significant nonmilitary nuclear programs and indeed of all nations. The threat of nuclear terrorism is real, urgent, and continually evolving. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the P3 as nuclear stewards to take nuclear security seriously to strengthen nonproliferation and complement deterrence, as opposed to viewing it as a distraction from their own nuclear enterprises. The P3 should maintain their longstanding support for nuclear security efforts. Beyond their own countries, we believe the P3 should demonstrate best practices to help build capacity on the nuclear security issue while working in partnership with others to develop more broadly shared views on the threat posed by nuclear terrorism to reduce nuclear risks worldwide.

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