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NATO'S NUCLEAR STRATEGY: CHANGING CONCEPT OR CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES?

The article focuses on different internal and external variables that influence the strategy-making process at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Research is based on the declassified documents from 1949 to 1968 and non-classified strategies from 1991 onwards. Cold War and post-Cold War are usual ways of referring to years after the end of the Second World War. In the meantime, these two periods are not homogeneous and include very different sub-periods with unique dynamic and conditions. Both nuclear deterrence and non-proliferation issues are mainstreamed through these times but it's a question of balance inside this pair that becomes decisive. The current situation is not an exception. Euro-Atlantic security system is facing numerous new and old security challenges. It's the ability to find an adequate response, adapt to the changing environment and agree on a new common strategy on the agenda.

Keywords: nuclear strategy, nuclear deterrence, NATO, European security, Euro-Atlantic security.

For decades, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) plays the role of a major security provider for the Euro-Atlantic space. A proper understanding of different challenges allows NATO to address insecurity through the development of an effective nuclear strategy at every particular stage. Is it just an illusion of success? All opportunities, threats and weaknesses should be taken into account to see the full spectrum, overcome these challenges and make this organization, its members and European position stronger. Not an easy job to do, especially dealing with a large institution based on the unanimous vote. One way or another there is a number of factors that drive changes to the strategy and influences the international tension's level. The Cold War ended and the collapse of NATO was predicted quickly after that, but the ability to transform and react properly combined with hard and soft power tools enabled this organization to stay at play among the main actors.

The objective below is to analyze the role of internal and external factors as explanants and their influence upon the transformation of the NATO's nuclear strategy as explicandum. Certain periods are characterized by different circumstances, a balance of power, relations between actors. Such external and internal dynamics for the independent variable lead to the nuclear strategy change for the dependent variable and accordingly vary the role played by nuclear component.

Internal factors include: economic situation at different NATO countries; political situation, leaders and parties leading NATO member states; public opinion; military innovations as well as internal NATO dynamics. Among external ones, structural changes at the system of international relations with the balance of power and clash of interests between blocks; economic and political crises; arms race; international agreements on disarmament, arms control and nonproliferation attract the most attention.

Closely looking for common and different features in comparing, analyzing transformation both horizontally through different aspects and vertically through separate stages, may give the possibility to formulate similarities and tendencies further applied to analyze the current situation. Following challenge/response law NATO tries to survive and become stronger after each challenge. As confronted with aggressive Soviet policy or massive arms buildup at the Warsaw pact it is expected to adopt a new strategy or even act proactively. In case of economic crises or in case of large pacifist movements decrease of defence spending should be taken with a choice either on conventional forces or nuclear weapons as depending on time, nuclear armament can be a quicker and cheaper way of increasing military capacity. Public opinion is to affect not only directly through protests but also through an elected candidate. This dynamics for harsher and more militarized strategy or vice versa is well seen on the example of US elections with two parties presenting different approaches, two houses of Parliament and President

that might not be all dominated by the same party at a time. And NATO level is even more complicated with all mentioned above brought into one room to make a unanimous decision. How do they manage to vote those strategic papers?

Logical-historical approach suits better to meet the objectives mentioned above than pure historical one, as it enables to differentiate and pay special attention to relevant historical documents and events, depending on the circumstances and the role played in the development process. This becomes obvious when we come to the empirical part and start particular NATO strategies' analysis. The logical is frequently understood as the theoretical analysis of an object in its most developed form while abstracting from the process of its development. If the historical method frees the logical from abstract speculation, then the logical method liberates the historical from empiricism¹.

Modern researchers are lucky to have access both to the NATO original texts of the Cold War period, opened for the public in the late 1990s, as well as to the post-Cold war strategies as they are nonclassified.

Nevertheless, there are a couple of nuances that should be mentioned.

First of all, taking a look at Figure 1 it becomes clear that the adoption of strategic documents is not a linear process and includes different types of such documents, which complement each other and reflect ongoing changes. In order to show milestones of the policy process the documents entitled as "Strategic Concept" were taken as a basis complemented with MC48 "The most effective pattern of NATO military strength for the next few years" of 22.11.1954. Talking about post-Cold War strategies it should be immediately mentioned that nonclassified strategies are combined with the classified ones, MC 400s. As far as the last concept was agreed in 2010, Deterrence and Defence Posture Review of 2012 and final communique of the last Warsaw Summit must be taken into account in order to understand modern tendencies.

DC 6/1 – The Strategic Concept for Defense of the North Atlantic Area (1.12.1949)

Let's take a look at the first period of the NATO existence. The main factor that influenced NATO nuclear strategy can be characterized as a structural change of the system of International Relations: division into two blocks associated with different systems and visions through appearance of the North Atlantic Treaty (04.04.1949) and Marshall Plan (08.04.1948) on one side and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (08.01.1949) on the other. The majority of the European countries have been already assigned to either one side or another after a difficult time of talks and intimidation, as in the case of Finland or Czechoslovakia. But there have been still unresolved questions as Germany, and disputable zones of influence as Turkey and Greece on the agenda.

What about the political structure? Alliance was composed of twelve founding members with different state positions but common threat perception and goal to create a stable and secure environment. Even at the first stage at DC 6/1 we see some difference revealed, as wording at the main point 7 was changed at the final version from "ensure the ability to carry out strategic bombing including the prompt delivery of the atomic bomb" (MC 3/2) to "ensure the ability to carry out strategic bombing including promptly by all means possible with all types of weapons without exception"² (DC 6/1) on request of the Danish Defence Minister³ to soften the statement. The roles are also assigned with the US taking major responsibility⁴.

Coming to the political leadership in particular countries, the US is headed by Democratic representative Harry Truman but the Congress majority is taken by the Republican party. The USSR with Joseph Stalin as the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union fully controlled internal and external policies of the USSR as well as its satellites. And while Stalin was alive, one of the main worries in the West was that he would attempt to increase the stay of his rule with the same "salami tactics" employed by Hitler in the 1930s, and the Western alliances, strengthened with the US nuclear arsenal, were keeping Stalin in check⁵.

¹ Spirkin, A.G. (2010). Logical and the Historical. *The free dictionary*. <<https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Logical+and+the+Historical>>. (2017, August, 05).

² Pedlow, G. NATO Strategy Documents. *NATO website*. <<http://www.nato.int/archives/strategy.html>> (2017, August, 05).

³ Pedlow, G. NATO Strategy Documents. *NATO website*. <<http://www.nato.int/archives/strategy.html>> (2017, August, 05).

⁴ Pedlow, G. NATO Strategy Documents. *NATO website*. <<http://www.nato.int/archives/strategy.html>> (2017, August, 05).

⁵ Heuser, B. (1995). The development of NATO's nuclear strategy. *Contemporary European History, Vol. 4, No. 1*, 39.

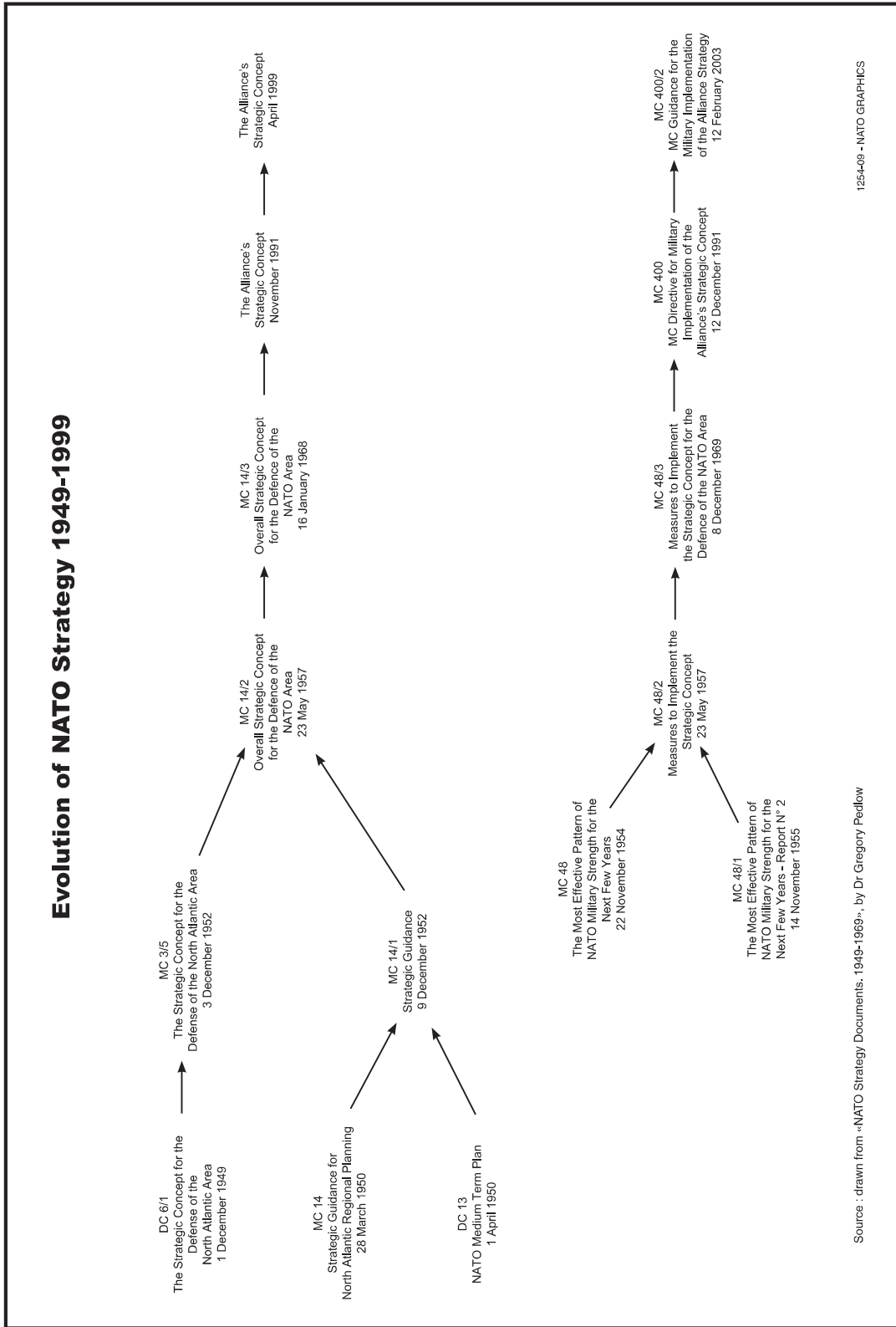


Figure 1 Evolution of NATO Strategy 1949-1999 ¹

³⁵ ¹ Evolution of NATO Strategy 1949-1999. NATO website. <http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2009_07/20090728_sstrategic_concept.pdf> (2017, August, 05).

Difficult economic situation was also a common feature for both sides but the military situation was totally different in quantity (largely in favor of Soviet bloc) and quality (nuclear weapons exclusively owned by the US). In this context, we see the situation of deterrence, where large conventional forces are deterred by the West with a threat of nuclear weapons' use. Such an inequality enables and pushes the concept of "Immediate strategic nuclear response against a conventional attack" with high readiness to use all nuclear potential at once.

Public opinion should be also mentioned here as an illustration. Regardless horrifying effect of Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing, it was taken by the American citizens as a necessary mean that saved lives of American soldiers¹.

Reflecting the mentioned above, the Strategy is entirely based on the US nuclear forces with other nations just assisting in defense. Doomsday Clock that shows whether we are more or less safe, counts 3 minutes to midnight².

MC 3/5 – The Strategic Concept for Defense of the North Atlantic Area (3.12.1952)

At the structural level, we see the ongoing block-forming process with the European Coal and Steel Community established in 1951. In 1952 Turkey and Greece became NATO members but the Korean war dominated the agenda as a disputable zone with the US entering the war in 1950. The political picture was more or less stable with slight changes as the Democrats took lead at the Senate and such an influential leader from the Conservative party as Churchill became the Prime Minister of Great Britain.

Ongoing Korean war 1950-53 has shown different attitudes within American political establishment to nuclear weapons. Finally, D. MacArthur's insistent claim to use up to 30 nuclear bombs to win the war was denied and provocation failed. The role of European allies was important here as no IBMs to reach US territory were at the Soviet disposal but USSR was able to reach Western Europe in return. Great Britain and France followed by other European allies argued against the use of nuclear weapons and after C. Atlee successfully communicated these concerns to H. Truman.

Both blocks have progressed in the development of the nuclear weapons with the USSR (unexpectedly for the USA) testing it in 1949 and the USA testing thermonuclear weapons on 1.11.1952.

This encouraged NATO to change strategy to "Massive conventional force build-up", proposed by Dean Acheson (51st United States Secretary of State) with an idea of a symmetrical response and possibility to gain some time and stop Soviet-cum-Satellite aggression in Central Europe while the American strategic offensive air forces were under way³. Doomsday Clock counts 2 minutes to midnight⁴.

MC 48 – The most effective pattern of NATO military strength for the next few years (22.11.1954)

This period shows well how internal changes in particular **countries can** gradually grow up to the multinational level. Previous strategy and its ideas turned up to be enormously expensive on a practical level for Western economies. This provoked a shift primarily formulated by the British Government at the second Global Strategy Paper as a need to make the Soviets aware that any aggression in Europe will be met with "an instantaneous and overwhelming atomic air attack"⁵ with higher role dedicated to the nuclear weapons to counter growing Soviet conventional strength in Europe. It should be taken into account that the British government was headed by Mr. Churchill, who sincerely believed that attention, previously paid to the value of nuclear weapons, was insufficient⁶.

In the United States of America, Dwight D. Eisenhower became a president in 1953 with the Congress majority taken by the Republican Party. Thus, the US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles first introduced massive retaliation as a doctrine on January 12, 1954, when addressing the Council on Foreign Relations, included the threat of asymmetrical responses with nuclear weapons even in wars outside

¹ Pedlow, G. NATO Strategy Documents. *NATO website*. <<http://www.nato.int/archives/strategy.html>> (2017, August, 05).

² Mecklin, J. (2016). It is still 3 minutes to midnight. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. <<http://thebulletin.org/sites/default/files/2016%20doomsday%20clock%20statement%20-%20final%5B5%5D.pdf>> (2017, August, 05).

³ Heuser, B. (1995). The development of NATO's nuclear strategy. *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 44.

⁴ Mecklin, J. (2016). It is still 3 minutes to midnight. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. <<http://thebulletin.org/sites/default/files/2016%20doomsday%20clock%20statement%20-%20final%5B5%5D.pdf>> (2017, August, 05).

⁵ Bowie, C.J. (1984). Platt A. British nuclear policy making. *RAND Corporation*. <<http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2007/R3085.pdf>> (2017, August, 05).

⁶ Baylis, J., Macmillan, A. (1993). The British global strategy paper of 1952. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 16, Issue 2, 200.

Europe, followed by adoption of the “New Look” policy into the United States National Security Council document NSC 162/2 of 30 October 1953.

At NATO level, we see adoption of such concept as “Massive retaliation” with all mentioned above ideas incorporated. This was a logical combination of political situation with particular leaders on top and technological progress in the military sphere of that time when atomic weapons had a relatively low explosive capacity and were successfully tested in Nevada for tactical air forces together with a range of ballistic missiles developed and deployed for strategic uses¹. The USSR has also progressed with the development of the thermonuclear weapons and both blocks were comparatively equal by the types of available weapons but not by its quantity.

At the same time, MC 48 was not replacing MC 14/1 and it was agreed that MC 14/2 would be further developed. No information on Doomsday Clock available those years.

MC 14/2 – Overall Strategic Concept for Defense of the NATO Area (23.05.1957)

There was a new wave of NATO enlargement in 1955 with the Federal Republic of Germany becoming a new member and the ECSC upgrading to the level of the European Economic Community. On the other side, there was a further structural change as the Warsaw Pact was created in 1955. Suez crisis, Indochina War and the crush of the Hungarian uprising, done by the Soviet Union in 1956, have shown serious difficulties within the international security system and once again brought the topic of deterrence to the different countries’ agenda. The fact that the US were not ready to follow France and use nuclear weapons in order to deter Western interests outside the NATO area, served as an additional booster in this regard. On the US political arena, we can see a gradual change with the Democratic Party taking the majority in the Congress. D. Eisenhower is still US president but rollback policy was seriously damaged in Poland and Hungary by no promised military help from the USA. This was by the way mentioned and condemned by Western European. On the military side, first the US nuclear weapons arrived in Europe in 1954 and the USSR had the ability to reach the US territory starting from 1957.

While accepting “massive retaliation” as a key element MC 14/2 turned out to be a much softer and compromised version with the core idea of “differentiated responses”, separating nuclear and conventional responses. As stated in the Strategy “We must have flexibility in the NATO forces”². This suited neither Eisenhower and Macmillan governments nor military establishments. As a result, NATO faced obstacles on a practical level, as an example, the SACEUR General Gruenther refused to initiate alternative planning for limited. i.e. non-nuclear, war with the Soviets, although other NATO members insisted that he should³. Doomsday Clock counts 7 minutes to midnight⁴.

MC 14/3 – Overall Strategic Concept for Defense of the NATO Area (14.01.1968)

Vietnam war, Berlin and Caribbean crises have shown difficulties of nuclear deterrence to win influence over disputable zones and have driven the new American Democratic leadership to the development of a new approach. Robert McNamara advised president Kennedy and later president Johnson to separate applicability of different forms of nuclear response and integrate the concept of escalation with different forces, used under certain conditions and on a particular phase of a conflict.

While general NATO changes were not available at the moment, they have started on the state level with an American operational plan. In Britain, the government was headed by the Labour party representative Harold Wilson, who faced with a budget deficit, stopped nuclear weapons testing and followed the American line in defense. At the same time, after 1958 and the establishment of the Fifth Republic France was headed by an ambitious leader Charles de Gaulle, whose approach was to allow “the first use of both tactical and strategic nuclear forces against even a conventional threat”⁵.

¹ Heuser, B. (1995). The development of NATO’s nuclear strategy. *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 44.

² Pedlow, G. NATO Strategy Documents. *NATO website*. <<http://www.nato.int/archives/strategy.html>> (2017, August, 05).

³ Heuser, B. (1995). The development of NATO’s nuclear strategy. *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 46-47.

⁴ Mecklin, J. (2016). It is still 3 minutes to midnight. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. <<http://thebulletin.org/sites/default/files/2016%20doomsday%20clock%20statement%20-%20final%5B5%5D.pdf>> (2017, August, 05).

⁵ Narang, V. (2014). *Nuclear strategy in the modern era: Regional powers and International Conflict*. Princeton university press, 160.

On the military side, there was an overestimation by the West of the Soviet capacities called “Missile gap”. The approach was based on a large spectrum of the Soviet activities including the test of an intercontinental ballistic missile (1957), launching of the first man-made sputnik (1957) and the first human journey into outer space (1961) combined with ambiguous rhetoric of the Soviet leadership. Nevertheless, by 1961 it appeared to be that the United States did, in fact, retain its substantial lead in the nuclear arms race¹. In 1962 the United Kingdom enabled its nuclear weapons to Nuclear Planning Group and with that strengthened an operation planning. On the top of this in 1963 the Limited Test Ban treaty was agreed on the international arena.

General pre-conditions for the development of a new sort of strategy were created already for a while but there were some serious obstacles on its way. One of them disappeared with the French withdrawal from the military part of the Alliance in 1966 and the majority of the McNamara’s ideas were quickly implemented into the Strategy. Doomsday Clock counts 7 minutes to midnight².

No strategy changes (1970s – 1985)

No strategy changes don’t mean any real policy changes. This period includes two totally different stages of international relations: détente of the 1970s and turning back to the Cold war in the 1980s.

Aside from French withdrawal, there was another trend proposed by this country – to enhance cooperation with USSR. In 1966 Charles de Gaulle visited Moscow the same year with joint declaration, cooperation agreement in the study and exploration of outer space for peaceful purposes, as well as scientific-technical and economic cooperation signed between USSR and France. Similar steps were done by Western Germany, W. Brandt government targeted for normalization of relations with USSR and Eastern European countries. Countries agreed to accept status quo and do not claim for territorial changes in Europe.

After Nixon’s (Republican party) visit to Europe US switched from “flexible response” to “realistic deterrence” with main attention focused on strategic deterrence and shared responsibility with European NATO allies in case of war. This led to maintain the biggest amount of US TNW in Europe (up to 8000) on one hand and smoothing relations on US-USSR direct level. In 1972 Nixon visited the Soviet Union and presidents agreed on SALT 1, as well as ABM treaty. These peaceful steps were enabled by understanding of military parity and accepting “mutually assured destruction”. Feeling of balance and no wish to take a risk of nuclear global war was stipulated at the Agreement between the USA and the USSR on the prevention of nuclear war during Brezhnev’s visit to the US in 1973³. In military sense work was ongoing and initiatives of President Carter (Democratic Party) to fight and win a long, protracted nuclear war⁴ are on the table to be conducted on the lowest financial cost.

European age of détente was presented by Helsinki Declaration at the end of the Conference on security and co-operation in Europe in 1975. All abovementioned steps combined with crucial changes at the international arena with Nonproliferation treaty enforced since 1970 enabled the doomsday clock to be at 9 minutes to midnight⁵.

Moving into the 80s with Soviet forces deployed in Afghanistan and Ronald Reagan (Republican party) as US president we see a shift towards confrontation and arms race. On the counter to previous presidents’ austerity policy (especially during Carter’s term) and defense cuts president Reagan focuses on massive development of space-based weapons under Strategic defense initiative programme. Arms control and disarmament initiatives failed, including ratification of previously agreed START II and deal on mutual refusal to place new rockets in Europe. Failure of Reagan’s “zero-zero proposal” on intermediate range nuclear weapons (proposed under influence from Western Germany, Italy, Netherlands and especially mass protests across Europe) brought British (Margaret Thatcher) and Germany (Helmut Kohl) proposal to offer

¹ Arms race and disarmament Dictionary of American History 2003, The gale Group Inc. <<http://www.encyclopedia.com/history/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/arms-race-and-disarmament>>. (2017, August, 05).

² Mecklin, J. (2016). It is still 3 minutes to midnight. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. <<http://thebulletin.org/sites/default/files/2016%20doomsday%20clock%20statement%20-%20final%5B5%5D.pdf>> (2017, August, 05).

³ Agreement between the USA and USSR on the prevention of nuclear war. *US department of state*. <<https://www.state.gov/t/isn/5186.htm>>. (2017, August, 05).

⁴ Ritchie, N. (2009). *US Nuclear Weapons Policy at the Cold War: Russians, ‘rogues’ and domestic division*. Routledge, 15.

⁵ Mecklin, J. (2016). It is still 3 minutes to midnight. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. <<http://thebulletin.org/sites/default/files/2016%20doomsday%20clock%20statement%20-%20final%5B5%5D.pdf>> (2017, August, 05).

their bases for US missiles¹. NATO enlargement process was also ongoing with Spain becoming a member state in 1982. Doomsday clock counts 3 minutes to midnight².

The Alliance's strategic concept 1991 (08.11.1991)

Structural changes in 1991 are rightly in the first place with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and transformation of the European Economic Community into the European Union. Approaches during the second term of Reagan's presidency are totally different from the first one, influenced by a number of incidents that could have started a nuclear war, as Able Archer 1983, and hopes on the new Soviet leader. At that time, the White House is headed by George Bush from the Republican party while the Congress majority is taken by the Democratic party. This turned out in the military dimension into reduction of Defence spending and severe limitation of a number of nuclear weapons modernization programmes³. Anyway, the tendency of improvement of relations between blocks has been seen with Mikhail Gorbachev becoming the Soviet leader that enabled signing Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (1987) and Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (1991). It was acknowledged by Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev in a joint communique of 1987 that nuclear war "could never be won and must never be fought"⁴.

An economic situation was challenged by the crisis of 1987 and the crisis which followed the collapse of the USSR. And in the USA, we see anti-war and anti-nuclear protests as well.

As for the strategy of 1991, it was the first nonclassified one mainly aimed at fulfillment of a new function – to inform. It addresses a wide range of questions and is different from previous concepts both in language and ideas. On the nuclear-related issues, it reflects and largely describes the ongoing process. We see both the need for further cooperation on disarmament and stating that "the presence of North American conventional and US nuclear forces in Europe remains vital to the security of Europe, which is inseparably linked to that of North America"; "the Alliance will maintain for the foreseeable future an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional forces based in Europe"⁵. Russian Federation is not mentioned as an opponent or enemy but rather invited to the process of creation of a "New Europe". Strategic Concept was also accompanied with a classified document "MC Directive for Military Implementation of the Alliance's Strategic Concept (MC 400) of 12 December 1991. Doomsday Clock counts 17 minutes to midnight⁶.

The Alliance's strategic concept 1999 (24.04.1999)

In 1999, we see further NATO enlargement with Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. At that time, United States president Bill Clinton (Democratic Party) has canceled simulations programmes following the tendency. But despite initial indications of a major shift in nuclear weapons policy the administration remained committed to a Cold War conception of strategic stability based on nuclear parity with Russia⁷. US Congress in 1995-2001 was dominated by the Republican Party.

Talking about economic conditions defense budgets decreased on both sides but in RF it was a dramatic reduction of 55% in 1998⁸. Besides that, in 1993 and 1997 Russia, again and again, proclaims "no first use" policy. On the international arena, we see a comprehensive test ban treaty agreed in 1996 but not ratified by the Senate in 1999.

¹ Margaret Thatcher: The 'Iron Lady's' pivotal role in ending the Cold War. *The telegraph*.

<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/margaret-thatcher/9979977/Margaret-Thatcher-The-Iron-Ladys-pivotal-role-in-ending-the-Cold-War.html>>. (2017, August, 05).

² Mecklin, J. (2016). It is still 3 minutes to midnight. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. <<http://thebulletin.org/sites/default/files/2016%20doomsday%20clock%20statement%20-%20final%5B5%5D.pdf>> (2017, August, 05).

³ Ritchie, N. (2009). *US Nuclear Weapons Policy at the Cold War: Russians, 'rogues' and domestic division*. Routledge, 31-32.

⁴ Cimbala, S.J. (2013). *Arms for Uncertainty: nuclear weapons in US and Russian security policy*. ASHGATE, 38.

⁵ The Alliance's New Strategic Concept. *NATO website*. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_23847.htm> (2017, August, 05).

⁶ Mecklin, J. (2016). It is still 3 minutes to midnight. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. <<http://thebulletin.org/sites/default/files/2016%20doomsday%20clock%20statement%20-%20final%5B5%5D.pdf>> (2017, August, 05).

⁷ Ritchie, N. (2009). *US Nuclear Weapons Policy at the Cold War: Russians, 'rogues' and domestic division*. Routledge, 55.

⁸ *Governing the Bomb: civilian control and democratic accountability of nuclear weapons*, Edited by Born H., Gill B., Hangii H., Oxford University Press, 2010 – p.62

The concept again pays more attention to the question of deterrence and nuclear weapons and its “unique contribution in rendering the risks of aggression against the Alliance incalculable and unacceptable”. This time a separate part is dedicated to this topic addressing both security and disarmament issues¹. It was later complemented by a strategic guidance document that remains classified: “MC Guidance for the Military Implementation of the Alliance Strategy” (MC 400/2) of 12 February 2003. Doomsday Clock counts 7 minutes to midnight².

The Alliance’s strategic concept 2010 (19.11.2010)

Barak Obama’s Prague speech has brought hope for crucial changes and he became a trend-maker. But first of all, let’s take a look at the pretext and context. In 2004 NATO was enlarged with 7 new members and two others invited a few years later. At the same time in 2008 Alliance members, despite the US support, disagreed on the Membership action plan for Ukraine and Georgia. Just four months later the West was puzzled by the Georgian war and Russian role in it.

Majority at the US Congress was taken by Democrats from 2007 to 2011 and mixed till 2013. In 2010 candidate from the Democratic Party Barack Obama has replaced on this post George W. Bush (Republican Party). During his term, the Missile defense agency programme spending has decreased by 1,4 billion dollars³. In 2008 the Congress did not appropriate any of the \$88.8 million for the Reliability Replacement Warhead programme and it was finally eliminated in 2010 by Obama Administration⁴. While the Russian Federation, on the contrary, has started a modernization programme in 2008.

As to economy, the situation was difficult due to the Global economic crisis which has started in 2008 and was much more severe than any previous one. On an international scale, the New START was signed on 8 April 2010 in Prague and assumes a large reduction of strategic nuclear missiles and warheads.

At the American Nuclear Posture Review 2010, it is mentioned that nuclear weapons will be used “just in extreme circumstances”⁵ and the accent is made on “strengthening of conventional capabilities”⁶. This is followed in the NATO 2010 Concept with lots of attention dedicated to the questions of arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation and twice referring to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. General spirit of the strategy is as close to the EU one as it could be with new security challenges and lowered language. On the nuclear deterrence, there is one paragraph mentioning “appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities”, “extremely remote” chance to contemplate their use and need for NATO to remain a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons exist⁷. This concept was further complemented in 2012 with Deterrence and Defence Posture Review with a similar language but more details provided. Doomsday Clock counts 6 minutes to midnight⁸.

Cross-impact estimate between internal, external factors and strategies itself

For a better understanding of the interrelations, it is worth to mention structural elements of this organisation involved one way or another. At the top of the NATO pyramid is the North Atlantic Council (NAC) that can meet at the level of ambassadors, ministers of defence or heads of states and governments. This council consists of all the members and unanimity procedure that gives a chance for national politics. This is also important for example for France to keep a final say regardless non-participation at the Nuclear Planning group (NPG). Depending on the question on the agenda there are numerous different committees for advisory purposes on defence planning, political issues, military operations etc. To realize the ambitions and political decisions important role is played by the command structure that is currently under revision.

¹ The Alliance’s Strategic Concept. *NATO website*. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm>. (2017, August, 05).

² Mecklin, J. (2016). It is still 3 minutes to midnight. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. <<http://thebulletin.org/sites/default/files/2016%20doomsday%20clock%20statement%20-%20final%5B5%5D.pdf>> (2017, August, 05).

³ Born, H., Gill, B., Hangji, H. (ed.) (2010). *Governing the Bomb: civilian control and democratic accountability of nuclear weapons*. Oxford University Press, 39.

⁴ Born, H., Gill, B., Hangji, H. (ed.) (2010). *Governing the Bomb: civilian control and democratic accountability of nuclear weapons*. Oxford University Press, 41.

⁵ *Nuclear Posture Review* (2010). Department of Defence USA, 9.

⁶ *Nuclear Posture Review* (2010). Department of Defence USA, 10.

⁷ NATO Strategic Concept 2010. *NATO website*. <<http://www.nato.int/lisbon2010/strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf>>. (2017, August, 05).

⁸ Mecklin, J. (2016). It is still 3 minutes to midnight. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. <<http://thebulletin.org/sites/default/files/2016%20doomsday%20clock%20statement%20-%20final%5B5%5D.pdf>> (2017, August, 05).

Summing up above-mentioned facts from different periods of the NATO strategies development makes obvious a certain set of factors that had or tried to influence the strategy-forming process. Factors of influence can also be divided by the time criteria into those that had an immediate impact and slow ones.

Among internal factors, we should mention positions of different members of the Alliance and their leaders. This factor proved to be effective and fast in some cases, as the US forming the agenda and Denmark of the first case with wording changed, but failed to achieve goals at other ones, as French and British cases during the Suez Crises or American and British visions being just partially implemented into MC 14/2. On the other hand, countries cannot only push for a new strategy change but also block such changes as in the case of France and MC 14/3 agreed only after its withdrawal from NATO.

Moreover, it appears that not only states make difference but also the leaders and political parties, as we talk about Western democratic societies with rapid change. Economic situation has two dimensions here both international with international crises and internal with national budget deficits.

The research shows that both make their impact and are quite quickly reflected in the strategy, on the other hand, decisions on how to deal with difficult times are up to the political leadership of the country and even at similar circumstances Labour and Conservative governments in the UK have taken polar decisions. Military balance and new technological innovations play a crucial role in the arms race and deterrence during the Cold War and remain important up to now. This was seen in 1949 with the need to deter large conventional forces of the Soviet Union and changed the strategy with the US cities being under danger of a nuclear strike. But the question here is whether we see the real capacity of our enemy and whether our calculations are right.

The deterrence theory is based on 3 pillars: force, readiness and perception; and from time to time countries can miscalculate or misunderstand each other, as it was with a famous “missile gap”. Coming to public opinion it becomes an important issue to be expressed directly through protests or public support or indirectly through voting for a particular candidate and therefore influences the situation. In the case with the nuclear strategy, the first way is to slow and play a supportive role in shaping policies, and the second to work faster through political leadership.

Looking precisely at the international factors, let's begin with structural changes including creation or dissolution of the structural elements of the Blocks as large-scale events and enlargement or withdrawal from these organizations as smaller ones. Both have their particular influence but the first type creates rapid changes due to the International Security system challenge and a need to react. Another aspect to be mentioned in the context of developments on the international arena is adoption of bilateral or multilateral agreements on arms control, disarmament and nonproliferation that has brought more trust and stability into the global system (relevant until 2014). Last but not least factor is the clash of interests and visions on the resolution of different conflicts and disputable zones of influence. Such examples were quite common at different stages and usually resulted in a slow but firm change in the strategy as in case of a Suez crisis in 1962, but were not the case after the war in Georgia in 2008.

As a result, NATO nuclear strategy forming system can be represented in a form of a triangle (Figure 2) with internal factors in one corner, external in another and the level of international perception on the top one.

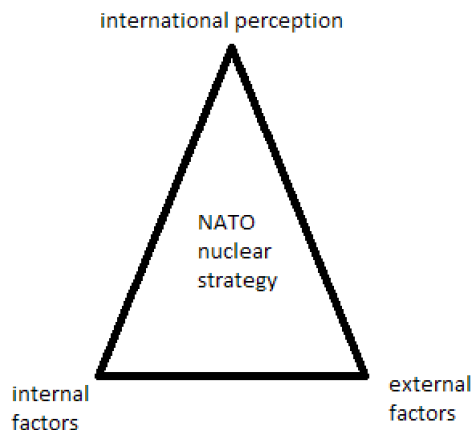


Figure 2. NATO nuclear strategy forming

After we described a structure of the NATO nuclear strategy forming we can investigate the case of interconnection of NATO strategy with the strategy of any other international actor. The nuclear strategy of the mentioned above international actor is formed by the same rules as they are true for everyone. Thus, their interconnection can be represented in a form of a Stability sandglass (Figure 3) filled both with nuclear deterrence instead of sand and disarmament measures instead of the air, and a joint triangle peak “mutual perception”.

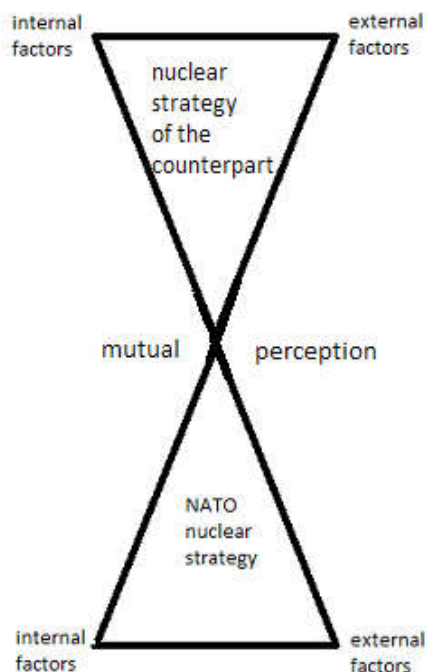


Figure 3. Stability Sandglass

The peculiarity within this interdependence is the need not only to create your own concept but also to provoke your counterpart to take symmetric measures for disarmament, simultaneously maintaining sufficient level of deterrence and power as “sand” for every particular situation to balance the system. Otherwise, one of the actors can perceive another one as not willing or not ready to fight and try to achieve the victory at a low cost.

Evaluation of the current situation

Starting with external factors it is impossible to omit mentioning the Russian aggression against Ukraine with the annexation of Crimea as well as the Syrian war. Both events deeply changed relations on the international arena. NATO was posed with the question of the sphere of influence and the sphere of responsibility that it is ready to protect. Marc-Michael Blum presents a convenient classification of different groups of countries within Europe with respect to nuclear weapons (excluding Russia and the Caucasus countries)¹:

1. nuclear weapons states (NWSs) which are members of NATO and the EU—France and the United Kingdom;
2. non-nuclear weapons states (NNWSs) which have nuclear sharing arrangements with the US and which are members of NATO and the EU—Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands;
3. non-nuclear weapons states with nuclear sharing arrangements with the US, which are members of NATO but not of the EU—Turkey;

¹ Blum, M.-M. (2013). *Rethinking the Bomb: Europe and Nuclear Weapons in the Twenty-First Century*, Drukkerij Jo Vandenbulcke. *Centre for European Studies*. <<http://www.martenscentre.eu/sites/default/files/publication-files/europe-and-nuclear-weapons.pdf>>. (2017, August, 05).

4. non-nuclear weapons states which are members of NATO and the EU—Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain;

5. non-nuclear weapons states which are members of NATO but not of the EU—Albania, Croatia, Iceland and Norway;

6. non-nuclear weapons states which are not NATO members but are EU members—Austria, Finland, Ireland, Malta, Sweden and Cyprus;

7. non-nuclear weapons states which are not NATO members or EU members—Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Kosovo, San Marino and the Vatican;

8. non-nuclear weapons states which are not EU members but are NATO Partnership for Peace countries—Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Switzerland and Ukraine.

The last group has already proved to be in danger with NATO support but being left outside the NATO Nuclear strategy. Nevertheless, recent developments proved that to get from group 8 to group 4 is possible with Montenegro being agreed as the 29th NATO member during Warsaw Summit in 2016.

On the internal factors, it is worth mentioning that recently some European countries have had elections and others are going to pass this process in the nearest future. The tendency shows that far-right and far-left forces are becoming more and more popular with possible unexpected statements and behavior in the international arena. The highest level of attention and interest is presented by the US presidential elections 2016. It was won by a candidate from the Republican Party Mr. Donald Trump who is well-known for many ambiguous statements, including such topics as nuclear weapons and security guarantees to the allies. “If we have them, why can’t we use them”¹. Donald Trump asked about the nuclear weapons, he also wondered “Now, wouldn’t you rather in a certain sense have Japan have nuclear weapons when North Korea has nuclear weapons? [Saudi Arabia, too, he was asked?] “Saudi Arabia, absolutely,”². When asked if the US would automatically protect the allies from Russian aggression, he said it would depend on their contributions: “If they fulfill their obligations to us, the answer is yes.”³. Mr. Trump’s is following his programme on migration, refugees and health care, Iranian deal etc but his presidential line is also full of surprises (ex. DPRK talks). US history knows examples of the candidate totally changes during the term of presidential office. “He expressed a great interest in maintaining our core strategic relationships,” Obama said during his first news conference since the election after meeting Trump. “And so, one of the messages I will be able to deliver, is his commitment to NATO and the Transatlantic Alliance.”⁴. Moreover, a lot will depend on people to take senior positions and the Republican party holding majority in the Congress. On the other hand, it is a way riskier and less effective to blackmail an unpredictable leader with nuclear weapons behind him.

International perception of his signals can also create a domino effect. Recently there was a declaration of Saudi Arabia is not excluding going nuclear in case of development of Iranian program, that was followed by “two significant projects ... of nuclear research reactor and a center for the development of aircraft structures”⁵

Talking about the military sphere, in public, Russian analysts express concern about the conventional balance in Europe and link this issue to tactical nuclear arms control. Furthermore, Russia lags behind the US in long-range high-precision conventional weapons⁶. The problem here is that NATO has very

¹ Trump, Donald (2016). Asked why US couldn’t use nuclear weapons if he becomes president. *The Telegraph*. <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/08/03/donald-trump-asked-why-us-cant-use-nuclear-weapons-if-he-becomes/>>. (2017, August, 05).

² Trump, Donald Nuclear Deterrence, and the Virtues of the Electoral College. *Lawfare*. <<https://www.lawfareblog.com/donald-trump-nuclear-deterrence-and-virtues-electoral-college>>. (2017, August, 05).

³ Transcript: Donald Trump on NATO, Turkey’s Coup Attempt and the World. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/us/politics/donald-trump-foreign-policy-interview.html?_r=0>. (2017, August, 05).

⁴ Trump Will Remain Committed To NATO, Obama Says. *The Daily Caller*. <<http://dailycaller.com/2016/11/14/trump-will-remain-committed-to-nato-obama-says/>>. (2017, August, 05).

⁵ Bin Salman launches Saudi Arabia’s first nuclear plant project 5.11.2018. *Aljazeera*. <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/bin-salman-launches-saudi-arabia-nuclear-plant-project-181105192827938.html>>. (2017, August, 05).

⁶ Acton, J., & International Institute for Strategic Studies (2011). *Deterrence during disarmament: Deep nuclear reductions and international security (Adelphi)*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, for the International Institute for Strategic Studies., Vol. 50, Issue 417, 36.

limited military deployments in Europe and with general high conventional capacity will meet difficulties to immediately counter aggression. According to RAND Corporation research, the longest it would take Russian forces to reach the outskirts of the Estonian and/or Latvian capitals of Tallinn and Riga, respectively, is 60 hours¹. This question was also addressed during the Warsaw Summit with four multinational battalions agreed to be placed in Eastern Europe with the accent not on the quantity but the fact of involvement of different member states with main forces. Another aspect is the specific pattern used by Russian Federation instead of a classic war. Under such conditions the line between the war and peacetime becomes blurred and the moment when Article 5 must be used becomes unclear. Especially due to frequent split massive exercises conducted by RF combined with numerous violations of airspace of NATO members. NATO conventional forces are strong and well-developed but primarily trained to complete different kinds of missions. Modernization is a general trend among the key players, but Russia has started the process back in 2008 and currently its military budget is decreasing regardless the rhetoric.

After 2010 Strategic Concept and 2012 DDPR Russian Federation didn't take the idea of mutual work on the European antiballistic missiles project and Putin in the interview called it as such that "do not contribute to trust-building", blamed US and NATO for taking over UN functions for interventions especially when it undermines "sanctified for centuries principle of state sovereignty", is concerned about the non-citizens status in Latvia and Estonia as a violation of human rights and states that Russia is treated with respect only when it is strong and keep its feet on the ground². This is a typical approach of Russian and previously Soviet perception and reaction, well explained even in the late 1940s at the George Kennan's "long telegram" to the US State Department. Western states try to treat and predict Russian policies according to their own understanding without enough attention to strategic culture. As in the late 1950s and 1960s, all efforts were dedicated to finding an alternative to the global nuclear war while USSR leaders considered every single nuclear shot as a beginning of exactly this global nuclear war.

Hopefully mentioned above is considered and drives NATO to change from the system of collective security to the system of collective defense. This includes the need to dedicate more attention to nuclear deterrence and disarmament based on relevant parity. At the Warsaw Summit, some steps were taken already. For example, the word "contemplation" was removed from the Final Communiqué and the phrase now sounds as "the circumstances in which NATO might have to use nuclear weapons are extremely low"³. On the question of disarmament, it was mentioned that NATO "regret that the conditions for achieving disarmament are not favorable today"⁴. One way or another, the Final Communiqué is not a full-scale strategy and this raises a very logical question 'why such a new strategy was not adopted yet'. There can be plenty of answers. Most probably the Alliance doesn't have answers to some crucial questions about the sphere of responsibility, level of aggression to start the war, etc.

It is anyway better not to agree on a new strategy than to disagree to agree and publicly show the absence of unity. Moreover, in nuclear strategies there is always a balance of certainty and uncertainty. Bruno Tertsais describes that we are used to see "Washington and London clear about the circumstances that would constitute a particular threshold (WMD use), but unclear about the response; Paris is vague about the exact threshold ('vital interests') but clear about the response"⁵. So, some changes can appear in this particular aspect with more attention paid to clarify the role of nuclear weapons in order to overcome current difficulties and finally develop a New Nuclear Strategic Concept for NATO. Some current trends can also be seen in the US Nuclear Posture Review Report 2018 with even more attention given to uncertainty by the US, greater differentiation of relations with other actors, modernization provisions (including low-yield missiles) and much more attention given to nuclear deterrence in general⁶.

¹ Shlapak, David A., Johnson, Michael W. Reinforcing deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank. <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1253/RAND_RR1253.pdf>. (2017, August, 05).

² Новикова, Е. (2012). На основе взаимоуважения. *Expert online*. <<http://expert.ru/2012/02/27/na-osnove-vzaimouvazheniya/>> (2017, August, 05).

³ Warsaw Summit Communiqué. *NATO website*. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm> (2017, August, 05).

⁴ Warsaw Summit Communiqué. *NATO website*. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm> (2017, August, 05).

⁵ Tertsais, B.A (2007). *Comparison between US, UK and French Nuclear Policies and Doctrines*. Sciences Po, 6.

⁶ See: *Nuclear Posture Review Report* (2018). Department of Defence USA.

The clock is ticking and it is 2,5 minutes to midnight in 2017 report (closest since the early 1980s) dominated with nuclear and climate change threats. With all the developments in 2018, the situation becomes even more complicated with 2 minutes to midnight¹.

Conclusions

North Atlantic Treaty Organization survived both the Cold War and post-Cold War period. During these years, the Alliance has gained large experience and for the better or the worse has undergone huge transformations developing an adequate response to the emerging security challenges. Not only circumstances were shaping NATO strategies, but the vice versa is true as well. But the strategy forming process is not as smooth and linear as it looks from the first look. It is complicated and permanently ongoing on different levels process. Every period is unique, has its own features. Furthermore, strategies before and after 1991 vary both in format (classified/ nonclassified) and essence (different understanding of security and priority tasks combined with the new function of “informing” after 1991).

Summarizing main factors that influenced NATO nuclear strategy making, we should identify the following: the position of different member states and their leaders, economic situation, public opinion among internal factors; structural changes, agreement on arms control, disarmament and nonproliferation as well as the clash of interests and visions among external ones. They are not necessarily all present every time, vary on the level and rapidness of influence.

All these factors should be seen as a part of a whole system of influence with special links and interdependencies. Strong leaders can realize potential only within the possibilities of a particular country leaded and, in contrast, even strong country can be left aside without a qualified leader. Meanwhile, nuclear or non-nuclear status is still balanced by consensus decision procedure at the Alliance and complex structure of the organization. Same economic crises and budget problems can be resolved by completely opposite decisions depending on political parties empowered etc.

NATO nuclear strategy itself cannot be viewed without international context and relations with the counterparts. And the level of tension is common for different international actors depending on the inter-perception. Depending on this situation actors tend to pay more attention either to the non-proliferation and disarmament or nuclear deterrence issues. Currently, the situation tends to be on the deterrence side as old hard power principles and conditions are taking back leading positions. Questions of capabilities, responsibility area and strategic communication are on top of the agenda.

As Alliance combine different groups of countries and is based on a unanimity ground, formulation of a new strategy becomes an extremely challenging task. In such circumstances, summit communiques fulfill the role of interim coordination and communication acts and, hopefully, new strategic concept will be agreed in the offing triggered by all the internal and external factors. Nowadays NATO faces a new complex of challenges that can make the Alliance even stronger and more united than ever as a guarantor of stability against the rude violation of international law.

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¹ Mecklin, J. (ed.) (2018). It is now two minutes to midnight 25 January, 2018. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. <<https://thebulletin.org/2018-doomsday-clock-statement/>>. (2017, August, 05).

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