

## Session 3: NATO and Extended Deterrence

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### Summary

The panel “NATO and Extended Deterrence,” moderated by Michael Lekson of the United States Institute of Peace, included NATO experts Jennifer Laurendeau of the U.S. State Department, Paul Schulte of the Carnegie Endowment and Elaine Bunn of National Defense University. The panel addressed how NATO’s security challenges have been managed since its inception as a case study of extended deterrence, focusing on implementation of the U.S. security guarantee to Europe as embodied in the nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Lekson and Dr. Laurendeau provided an overview of deterrence issues addressed by NATO throughout its history. Lekson explained how the U.S. nuclear deterrent represented a strategic guarantee to European NATO allies against a Soviet threat. Tensions ebbed and flowed with the threat level, reaching a high with the decision to deploy INF missiles in Europe in response to the Soviet Union placing similar missiles targeted at Europe. A turning point occurred when Reagan and Gorbachev agreed to eliminate U.S. and Soviet INF missiles in 1987 on a global basis. Dr. Laurendeau explained that the INF Treaty inaugurated a period in which NATO allies began to consider the relevance of nuclear weapons in a post-Cold War world. The U.S. subsequently unilaterally reduced a large number of its nuclear weapons following consultation with its European and Asian allies. Discussions are ongoing pertaining to the role of nuclear weapons with NATO’s Defense and Deterrence Posture Review. The review epitomizes NATO’s unique consultative process which has characterized NATO from its nuclear build-up to its draw-down.

This consultative process was then described by Ms. Bunn. She explained that consultation is both broad and deep, including all NATO allies and taking place on multiple levels. Consultations eventually expanded to include missile defense and other consultative

issues beyond nuclear, since effective deterrence also involves conventional forces and political solidarity.

Finally, Mr. Schulte suggested lessons that can be drawn from NATO's experience. He cautioned that although many activists see the role of deterrence as eliminated in the post-Cold War world, allies have different strategic cultures that influence their willingness to eliminate nuclear weapons. Schulte explained that NATO's experience proves that the size and unity of an alliance such as NATO adds to deterrence, but also makes decisions more difficult.

The panel struck a tone emphasizing the various considerations involved in future decision-making regarding the U.S. security guarantee to NATO allies. In response to a question regarding whether nuclear weapons were needed in Europe, Schulte and Laurendeau agreed that although there are multiple opinions, extended deterrence is as much about reassuring allies as stopping adversaries. Mr. Lekson noted that once nuclear weapons are withdrawn from a country, their redeployment would be extremely difficult. Ms. Bunn then concluded with an analogy: as one can have a healthy marriage without wearing a wedding band, it may be possible to have effective deterrence without forward-deployed nuclear weapons. Once already wearing a wedding band, however, taking it off signifies a breakdown of commitment.

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