

Germany in NATO in favour of co-operation with Russia and nuclear disarmament

A summit of defence and foreign ministers from NATO member states took place on 14 October in Brussels. A draft of NATO's new strategic concept was discussed during the meeting. The concept is to be adopted at NATO's Lisbon summit on 19–20 November. The disputed issues include plans to create a common NATO missile defence system and NATO's nuclear disarmament. Germany is sceptical about the creation of a common system and has announced it would grant consent to it only on condition that talks and co-operation in the area of missile defence are started with Russia and that nuclear disarmament within NATO is mentioned as one of the objectives set under the concept.

The building of a NATO missile defence system, nuclear disarmament and NATO's response to new threats (for example, cyber attacks) are the main points of dispute in negotiations regarding NATO's new strategic concept. Germany wants the interpretation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty not to be extended also to new threats, to envisage closest possible strategic partnership of NATO and Russia, and to mention nuclear disarmament of NATO as one of the objectives set in the concept, and especially the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from Europe. This latter demand is being especially promoted by the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guido Westerwelle. Germany also supports an 'open-door' policy. Germany has opposed the plans of creating a US missile defence system in co-operation with Central European countries due to resistance from Russia. The German Foreign Ministry (unlike the Defence Ministry, which presents a positive approach) is for the same reason sceptical about the plans to build a NATO missile defence system. Since the system is supported by a majority of member states, Germany in exchange for its consent wants to gain at least the partial fulfilment of its demands, arguing that NATO will not need nuclear weapons with a functioning missile defence system. Considering the controversies over Russia-NATO relations and the significance of nuclear weapons in NATO's defence policy, if German demands are mentioned in NATO's new strategic concept, this will be seen as great success in Germany. <jus>