

what forces were required to meet that threat, and in working out how and under what conditions these forces would be employed.”¹⁰ The advent of the NPG marked a turning point in the way in which the members of NATO could deal with nuclear arms. The idea of allowing member states to have some sort of physical control over nuclear weapons had been supplemented by the creation of a political institution which would hold consultations and work out decision-making procedures. This new organization would allow all members of NATO, not just the nuclear ones, to participate in these debates; this would not have been the case had either the multilateral force or the fourth nuclear power been established.

**Countries belonging to the NATO
Nuclear Planning Group**

Belgium	Luxembourg
Canada	Netherlands
Denmark	Norway
Federal Republic of Germany	Portugal
Greece	Spain
Iceland (Observer)	Turkey
Italy	United Kingdom
	United States

The Nuclear Planning Group, which at present consists of fourteen countries and one observer (Iceland), has the task of discussing the nuclear questions which affect the alliance. It undertakes studies which lay the groundwork for an overall nuclear strategy and it drafts the policies and procedures to be followed for the use of nuclear weapons. Among the various studies which the NPG has prepared is the one which gave rise to the 1979 “two-track decision” concerning the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Europe. This study was the work of the High Level Group which was specially set up for this purpose. The NPG was also given the task of implementing the decisions taken at Montebello in 1983 to withdraw and modernize some of the tactical nuclear weapons which were then deployed in Western Europe.

However, although the NPG has been in existence for twenty years, and despite the fact that in 1969 it adopted a working paper entitled “Provisional Political Guidelines,” there are still no clear-cut political procedures governing the use of nuclear weapons. According to Morton Halperin “the NATO Defence

Ministers . . . have agreed that the first use of such devices should be a demonstration shot designed to indicate to the Kremlin that the war is getting out of hand. There is no agreement beyond that.”¹¹

Analysts maintain that nothing has replaced or modified the NATO working paper and that the NPG now confines its attention to the size and structure of the nuclear arsenal. According to Daniel Charles, the NPG “never did resolve the baffling question of how an initial use of nuclear weapons could or should be accomplished.”¹²

The NPG operates at two different levels. The permanent representatives of the members of NATO meet regularly to discuss nuclear problems, and twice a year the defence ministers meet to be briefed on these discussions and to make the necessary decisions. The NPG has an administrative team which is “responsible for working out NATO’s defence policy in the nuclear field and for the preparation of background material.”¹³

The NPG is not the only section of NATO to have a say in shaping nuclear policy. It works in close collaboration with the Military Committee (the senior military group in NATO), the special Consultative Group, the Defence Planning Committee, the International General Staff, the various military commands and the Nuclear Planning Directorate of the Secretariat. In the last analysis every decision it takes must be referred back to the North Atlantic Council which consists of the permanent representatives of the sixteen NATO members, and which is the ultimate decision-making and consultative body within the alliance.

According to Paul Buteux, the NPG has four important political functions in addition to the purely administrative and technical tasks allotted to it: 1) it helps the United States to explain its nuclear policy and attract the support necessary for carrying it out; 2) it distinguishes nuclear problems from the other difficulties which confront the alliance; 3) it encourages member states to cooperate on other matters; and 4) it prepares joint studies which help to resolve differences over nuclear policy.¹⁴

Finally, it is important to note that even if the *raison d’être* of the NPG is to take collective decisions concerning nuclear arms, it clearly has nothing to do with operational planning for the use of such weapons; this remains the responsibility of the political and military authorities in the alliance, and of its members.¹⁵