
8. NATO: Nuclear Sharing or Proliferation?

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NATO Nuclear Policy*

Since its formation, NATO has argued that the collective security provided by its nuclear posture is shared among all members of the Alliance, providing reassurance to any member that might otherwise feel vulnerable. The most recent NATO Nuclear Planning Group Final Communiqué reaffirmed this, stating "We emphasised again that nuclear forces based in Europe and committed to NATO continue to provide an essential political and military link between the European and North American members of the Alliance."

NATO's Strategic Concept

"A credible Alliance nuclear posture and the demonstration of Alliance solidarity and common commitment to war prevention continue to require widespread participation by European Allies involved in collective defence planning in nuclear roles, in peacetime basing of nuclear forces on their territory and in command, control and consultation arrangements."

NATO's Strategic Concept requires widespread participation by European Allies in collective defense planning in nuclear roles, the basing of nuclear forces on their territory and consultation in command and control arrangements. NATO nuclear forces include strategic weapons provided by the United States, France, and the United Kingdom, along with US 'sub-strategic' or 'tactical' nuclear weapons deployed in Europe. Within NATO these substrategic weapons are seen as symbolic of the transatlantic link between the United States and its European allies. We regard them as highly contentious and counterproductive.

Five Non Nuclear-Weapon States (NNWS) parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – Belgium, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Turkey – participate in nuclear sharing arrangements with the United States. These countries host US B61 'gravity' bombs that, in the event of nuclear war, could be delivered by aircraft and pilots belonging to the host nations. The United Kingdom also hosts US nuclear weapons, USAF aircraft and pilots. Previously Greece also participated in nuclear sharing, but in 2003 US nuclear weapons were reportedly withdrawn from the country.

Recently, other European states have begun to question this nuclear sharing. We welcome recent moves by parliamentarians, particularly in Belgium, but also in Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands, calling for the removal of NATO nuclear weapons from Europe. As well, we note that the Non-Aligned Movement opening statement given by Malaysia as well as Egypt's opening remarks both questioned the NATO nuclear sharing arrangement.

Article I of the NPT states that:

Each nuclear weapons State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly or indirectly.

Article II imposes a complementary obligation on NNWS not to "receive the transfer" of nuclear weapons. NATO nuclear sharing appears to breach these obligations. NATO argues that nuclear sharing is compatible with the NPT, based on a US interpretation that it does "not involve any transfer of nuclear weapons or control over them unless and until a decision were made to go to war, at which time the treaty would no longer be in effect".

In the past ten years, this interpretation has become increasingly controversial. At the 1995 NPT Review Conference, Mexico asked for clarification on whether nuclear sharing breached Articles I and II. Mexico's concerns were taken up by the Non-Aligned Movement. Several proposals questioning the US interpretation were put forward for inclusion in the Committee's final report, including:

The Conference notes that among States parties there are various interpretations of the implementation of certain aspects of Articles I and II which need clarification, especially regarding the obligations of nuclear weapon States parties...when acting in cooperation with groups of nuclear-weapon States parties under regional arrangements...

In 1998, Egypt proposed that "the 2000 Review Conference state in clear and unambiguous terms that Articles I and II of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons allow for no exceptions and that the NPT is binding on States Parties at all times".

In 1999, the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) proposed that, "all the articles of the NPT are binding on all States Parties and at all times and in all circumstances".

The 2000 NPT Final Document contains a number of commitments relevant to NATO Member States:

- * the need for further unilateral reductions in nuclear arsenals;
- * increased transparency;
- * further reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons;
- * measures to further reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems; and
- * a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies.

NATO's Strategic Concept describes nuclear weapons as the "supreme guarantee" of Allied security. Recent figures published by the Natural Resources Defense Council indicate that the number of U.S. nuclear warheads based in Europe has remained static at about 480 since their 1994 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review. NATO does not publish any figures on the numbers of nuclear weapons based in Europe.

NATO's nuclear posture has also proved a major obstacle to progress in negative security assurances and any possibility of a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in Europe. NATO's refusal to rule out first use of nuclear weapons is a major obstacle to further steps to strengthen NSAs as proposed by the 1995 Review Conference. It also effectively gives a green light to NATO military planners to prepare for the option of using nuclear weapons first.

In conclusion, there has been no significant change in nuclear posture based on the 2000 agreements. Indeed, the United States and the United Kingdom renewed without any scrutiny their bilateral Mutual Defense Agreement in 2004 for a further ten years. This 'special nuclear relationship' permits the exchange of information, personnel, technology, and materials in pursuit of ever-greater sophistication. The United States also has a Mutual Defense Agreement with France, albeit a less collaborative one.

Mr. Chairman,

These nuclear weapons sharing or 'pooling' arrangements are a major impediment to the fulfillment of the objectives of the NPT. We believe it is time for them to be openly

and systematically challenged and for Nuclear Weapons States and Non-Nuclear Weapons States in Europe to abide by their respective obligations under the Treaty.

Removal of US nuclear weapons from Europe increases the credibility of non-nuclear weapons states calling for disarmament and non-proliferation and strengthens the NPT.

We urge that:

1. The remaining US nuclear weapons are withdrawn from Europe. These weapons are militarily obsolete and are no longer relevant to transatlantic relations.
2. NATO conducts a review of its Strategic Concept including a diminished role for nuclear weapons and a commitment to no first use of nuclear weapons as first steps to their complete removal from European soil.
3. The United States and Russia negotiate a verifiable treaty on the elimination of all sub-strategic, or tactical, nuclear weapons.
4. France, Russia, and the United Kingdom terminate all nuclear weapon modernization and replacement programmes.
5. This NPT Review Conference agrees a statement that the Treaty is binding at all times and in all circumstances.