



# US Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe

*Necessary or Obsolete?*



American Security Project



## Perspective

Ottavia Credi

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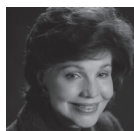
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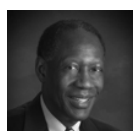
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## In this Report:

This paper addresses the presence of American non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNWs) in the European theater. It explores the role and purpose of these arms in order to determine their effectiveness as both a deterrent and as tools of non-proliferation.

The political and military role of US NSNWs in Europe, as well as their safety and security conditions, are matters of discussion. Because of the precarious political landscape among NATO members and the practical risk of nuclear proliferation, the US should not withdraw all of its non-strategic arsenal from Europe, but could consider a sensible reduction.

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## IN BRIEF

- Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Turkey are hosting a total of approximately two hundred American NSNWs, originally stationed there during the Cold War.
- The military value of US NSNWs in Europe has not been lost, and remains significant especially for Poland and the Baltic states.
- By demonstrating the US' commitment to NATO's burden sharing, American NSNWs in Europe still fulfill an important political component of the Atlantic Alliance.
- The American NSNWs continue to be an essential element of the US' extended deterrence strategy, which cannot and should not be replaced by a Eurodeterrent.
- While a complete withdrawal of US NSNWs is not advantageous, a reduction is favorable and feasible, and would successfully preserve these weapons' deterrence purpose.
- A complete removal of US NSNWs from Europe could promote a nuclear arms race as European nations race to fill their absence.
- Reducing the number of American NSNWs in the European theater might be a way to negotiate a cut in Russia's tactical arsenal.

## About the Author

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## Introduction

Five countries in the European theater are currently hosting American NSNWs. The United States placed them in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Turkey during the Cold War period, as a credible deterrent against a potential Soviet aggression. These NSNWs constituted the essence of NATO's Nuclear Sharing strategy,<sup>1</sup> and represented a concrete commitment on behalf of the US for the defense of its overseas allies.

Today, the continuing presence of US NSNWs in Europe is highly debated. While some claim they continue to serve a crucial purpose, others argue they should be withdrawn at once. The primary element which determines whether someone advocates removing American NSNWs from Europe or supports keeping these weapons in place is their view on nuclear disarmament. The former believe disarmament should be pursued and could be achieved starting with the retreat of the US NSNWs from Europe; the latter conceive nuclear disarmament as neither a realistic nor desirable prospect.



**Büchel Air Base in Germany: where some US NSNWs are stored. Google Maps image.**

Advocates of the continued presence of US NSNWs in the European theater emphasize their unvaried political significance, their military role, and their crucial deterrent purpose. They deny any physical risk to the facilities hosting these weapons and some of them even push for an increased number of units. Instead, supporters of the withdrawal of American NSNWs claim these weapons have lost any military or political function, do not serve as a deterrent against a potential Russian aggression anymore, and are vulnerable to the threat of terrorist attacks.

Both sides present valid arguments, but neither is entirely correct. While it's true the European air bases hosting US NSNWs could benefit from improved security standards and higher levels of nuclear security culture, these weapons have not lost their political or their military role. Moreover, even though the number of American NSNWs based in Europe certainly shouldn't be increased, those that are currently present in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Turkey do continue to serve a momentous deterrent function.

American NSNWs should not be removed from the European territory. A potential alternative could, however, involve a sensible reduction in their number.

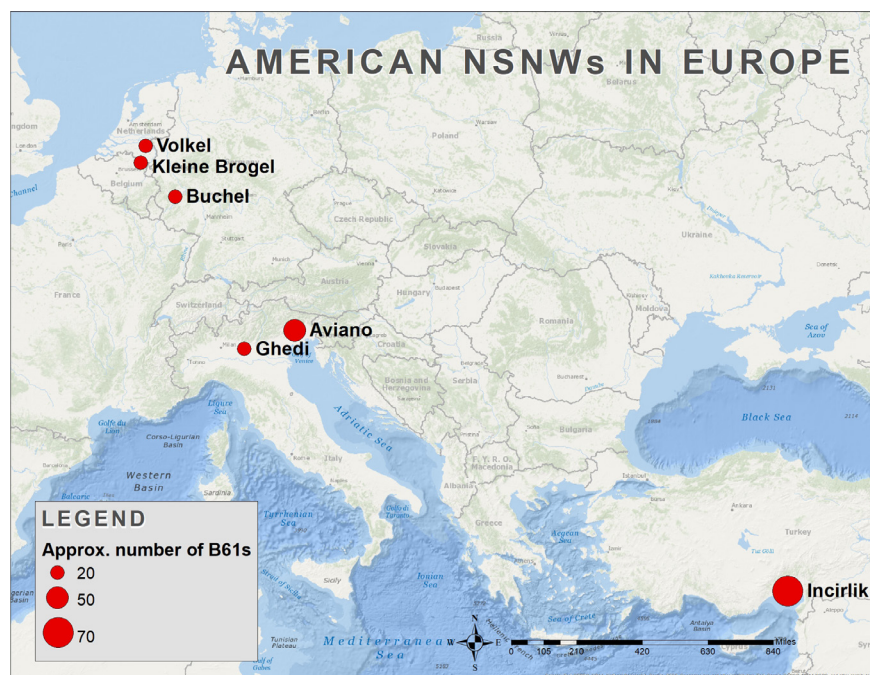
## Why are there American nuclear weapons in Europe?

During the Cold War, amid the tensions between the US and the Soviet Union and the delicate balance dictated by Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD),<sup>2</sup> the US deployed thousands of nuclear weapons in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and Turkey. Many of these arms were categorized as non-strategic (or tactical) nuclear weapons. While strategic nuclear weapons typically have a long range and large yields, non-strategic nuclear weapons have a shorter range, lower yields, and are intended primarily for battlefield operations. Non-strategic delivery systems tend to carry warheads with smaller yields, and are typically fitted for hitting a specific target. Additionally, all treaties that apply to nuclear strategic forces do not concern NSNWs.

In the Cold War period, the Warsaw Pact nations had a palpable numerical superiority of conventional forces. US NSNWs in Europe constituted a fundamental part of NATO's strategy of flexible response<sup>3</sup> against these superior numbers. Thus, these weapons represented a deterrent against the enemy's potential willingness to begin a conventionally-armed battle. More importantly, American NSNWs were the essence of the US' extended nuclear deterrence in Europe.<sup>4</sup> By having ready-to-use nuclear weapons on the European continent, the US would have been able to intervene in defense of its European allies if the Soviet Union attempted an attack. Having deployed NSNWs on European territory did not mean the US would have automatically used them to respond to a potential Soviet nuclear attack—it merely meant the US had the option to do so.

In the 1960s, the American non-strategic nuclear arsenal consisted of approximately seven thousand units, including nuclear mines, artillery, ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and gravity bombs.<sup>5</sup> In the fall of 1991, US President George H. Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev implemented a series of initiatives aimed at reducing the number of non-strategic nuclear weapons in their respective arsenals. After the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the Soviets pulled their tactical nuclear weapons eastward. Between 2001 and 2006, the US removed 85% of its nuclear weapons from the European territory.<sup>6</sup>

Today, Europe hosts about two hundred American tactical nuclear weapons. They are B61-3 and B61-4 gravity bombs with a destructive power that ranges between 0.3 and 170 kilotons.<sup>7</sup> If the modernization plans go as envisioned, both types of bombs will be replaced by the B61-12 model.<sup>8</sup> Russia has about two



Estimated number of American NSNWs hosted by country, location, and number.<sup>10</sup> Image credit: Laura Sigelmann

American nuclear weapons can be assigned to the host countries' delivery vehicles. While the hosting nations wouldn't be able to unilaterally decide to use a nuke, they could veto an American order to employ one. That being said, Turkey allegedly stopped training its pilots to deliver American NSNWs for economic reasons, and it would therefore be entirely incumbent on the US to intervene with its aircraft in case of a nuclear confrontation.<sup>11</sup>

thousand NSNWs. They are based on land, air, and sea delivery systems which include surface-to-air missiles, torpedoes, and gravity bombs.<sup>9</sup> While the US has released information concerning the approximate number and location of its NSNWs based in Europe, the quantity and quality of Russian NSNWs remain, to this day, uncertain.

The weapons are stored in underground bunkers, however their exact location is classified. A team consisting of both US Air Force officials and NATO personnel is appointed to safeguard each site hosting American NSNWs. The five countries hosting American NSNWs hold dual-key arrangements with the US. That means that in wartime,



## Have American NSNWs in Europe lost their military value?

Several experts claim US NSNWs in Europe do not play a military role anymore.<sup>12</sup> However, Russia's strategy continues to be built on its "perception of Western weakness and hesitation."<sup>13</sup> It would therefore be highly irresponsible to leave NATO's European allies without an appropriate American-linked nuclear deterrent. NATO is, above all, a military alliance. And despite what some may say,<sup>14</sup> it is as relevant today as when it was first conceived.

Due to their geographical proximity to some of Russia's NSNWs,<sup>15</sup> Poland and the Baltic states still feel very much threatened by the possibility of a Russian nuclear aggression. Russia has privately stated that in the event of a war with a NATO state, it would be willing to bring a potential conflict to a nuclear level.<sup>16</sup> Having US NSNWs in Europe makes these countries feel safe, reassuring them of the US' seriousness in its commitment to NATO's Article 5.<sup>17</sup>

Lately, there has been a lot of speculation of a possible Russian military strategy better known as the "escalate to de-escalate" doctrine.<sup>18</sup> According to such strategy, Russia might be planning on employing a nuclear weapon, possibly a small one, to heat up a conflict to a point where the parties involved decide to retreat rather than risk each other's annihilation. Considering such a threatening scenario, all members of the Atlantic Alliance need to present themselves as countries willing and capable of responding to a potential nuclear escalation. That being said, Europe doesn't need as many NSNWs as it is currently hosting to achieve such a goal.

## Do NSNWs still have a relevant political role?

In a press release from 1995, the NATO Defense Planning Committee and Nuclear Planning Group wrote that the presence of deployable non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe contributed to "Alliance solidarity, common commitment, and strategic unity."<sup>19</sup> The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) lists the cohesion within the Atlantic Alliance and the element of mutual reassurance among the primary reasons for keeping American NSNWs on the European territory.<sup>20</sup> In such a context, then-President Obama stated it is important the US "continue[s] to assure [its] allies and partners of [its] commitment to their security."<sup>21</sup>

Despite the general euphoria that followed NATO's 70th anniversary celebrations, today, confidence in the Atlantic Alliance is not as strong as one might think. Two years ago, German Chancellor Angela Merkel stated, "The times in which we can fully count on others are somewhat over."<sup>22</sup> Such a statement clearly shows a disenchanted attitude towards the Alliance, whose sense of cohesion urgently needs to be reaffirmed.



A B-61 training mockup in the Netherlands in 2008. USAF Photo.

During his presidential campaign, President Trump repeatedly questioned the US' relationship with NATO and the overall value of the Atlantic Alliance itself. He has done so several times during his presidency as well.<sup>23</sup> On one occasion, Trump went as far as to suggest it'd be best if some US allies built their own nuclear arsenal.<sup>24</sup> These statements shake European confidence in the US' commitment toward NATO and its attitude toward its overseas allies in the coming years. What's sure is that US NSNWs in Europe contribute to a common sense of shared rights and responsibility within the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>25</sup>

Nuclear weapons, and their sharing among NATO's allies, are "the foundation of [NATO's] solidarity."<sup>26</sup> At a time when the US' solidarity with Europe is in question, it seems dangerous to take this guarantee away in its entirety. The US' desire to show its commitment to its allies' security is anything but a "vague concept"<sup>27</sup> and, as long as such cohesion will be maintained, American NSNWs in Europe will continue to serve their purpose of keeping peace and preventing wars.<sup>28</sup>

## **Are US NSNWs in Europe legally controversial?**

Certain supporters of a US withdrawal of its NSNWs argue that the presence of these weapons in their European host countries violates the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).<sup>29,30</sup> They claim the deployment of US NSNWs in Europe goes against Articles I and II of the NPT which, respectively, forbid nuclear weapons states to transfer nuclear weapons to other countries, and prohibit the latter from receiving nuclear weapons from the former. That being said, the US placed the majority of nuclear weapons that are currently based in Europe well before the entry into force or even the signature of the NPT.<sup>31,32</sup>

Because the American NSNWs in Europe are, during peacetime, under the custody of US personnel, their presence does not constitute a violation of the NPT and its nuclear sharing policies. By placing its NSNWs in Europe, the US didn't surrender either its possession or its control over these weapons. All it did was station them in allies' territories, for the sole purpose of defense and deterrence.

Lastly, as a guarantee that no nuclear weapon will be used or threatened to be used against a non-nuclear weapon state signatory of the NPT, all five countries hosting US NSNWs have acknowledged NATO's Negative Security Assurances (NSAs).<sup>33</sup> These serve as a tool to ensure none of these countries will use or threaten to use a nuke against non-nuclear weapons states which are signatories of the NPT.

## **Are the US NSNWs in Europe safe?**

Not all of the facilities hosting US NSNWs in Europe are as safe as one might desire. A few dangerous episodes showed how some of the bases hosting US NSNWs might not be in compliance with the necessary security requirements indicated by the Department of Defense (DoD).<sup>34</sup> In 2010, the Kleine Brogel Air Base in Belgium was the location of protests in which activists were able to circumvent both the American and Belgian authorities appointed for the base's protection.<sup>35</sup> In March 2016, the Pentagon raised security-related concerns about the Incirlik Air Base, in southern Turkey.<sup>36</sup> The DoD was worried ISIS terrorists could try to attack the facility, which they didn't consider appropriately safe. After the 2016 attempted coup d'état, even more concerns were raised about the security of Incirlik.

Surely, there is space for improvement in the nuclear security culture of the personnel working at these facilities, as well as in the physical security of the bases themselves. However, it's important to know there are numerous safety and security precautions in place at these facilities. Such precautions include a series of “stronglinks” and “weaklinks,” which are intended to prevent an accidental or unauthorized detonation,<sup>37</sup> and Permissive Action Links (PALs), namely systems that require a specific code in order to authorize a blast.<sup>38</sup>

As far as the risk of terrorist attacks is concerned, European bases hosting US NSNWs are not subject to similar threats. The process a terrorist group would have to go through to successfully get hold of a nuclear weapon is beyond the capability of any existing organization. To conduct a nuclear attack, the terrorists would have to access a facility in which nuclear weapons are kept, steal a bomb, find a way to transport it, and manage to correctly detonate it. None of these hurdles are uncomplicated, and the difficulties they present make the risk of a terrorist attack on a facility hosting US NSNWs extremely unlikely.

## How would the removal of US NSNWs affect Europe's deterrence capabilities?

The primary reason behind the placement of US NSNWs in Europe during the Cold War was their critical role in deterrence. A key element of NATO's collective defense strategy is based on the assurance of the US' extended nuclear umbrella. The North Atlantic Treaty obligates all NATO allies, including the US, to come to the defense of others in the Alliance. Should they be threatened with the prospect of nuclear escalation, it is incumbent on the US to involve its nuclear arsenal. The American NSNWs placed in Europe represent “a visible reminder of that commitment.”<sup>39</sup> NATO praised the importance of US NSNWs in Europe in its 1999 Strategic Concept.<sup>40</sup> In its 2010 Strategic Concept, it reiterated the argument, stating that “deterrence, based on an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities, remains a core element of our overall strategy.”<sup>41</sup>



NATO's New Strategic Concept was released in 2010. NATO photo.

Some critics argue NSNWs don't play a role in the modern overall nuclear deterrence strategy of the US.<sup>42</sup> However, the very concept of extended deterrence rests on the presence of tactical, non-strategic nuclear weapons on European territory. Those weapons are not there with the intention of fighting a war – as the very concept of deterrence is based on the premise that success means they will never be employed. US NSNWs in Europe are there to warn any potential NATO adversary of the Alliance's capabilities and commitment. Should a conflict between NATO and a nuclear-armed adversary escalate, both the Alliance and the adversary can count on the threat of NSNWs for immediate tactical warfare, thanks to their geographical location and their short-range.



Some claim NATO would not, even in the event of a nuclear escalation, use a nuke against an adversary.<sup>43</sup> Accepting this notion would render NATO's European deterrent toothless, and the presence of US NSNWs in Europe pointless. Such allegations go against the very principle of deterrence. A state doesn't adopt a strategy of deterrence because it wants to use a nuke, but rather because it wants to demonstrate its preparedness to do so, should the need arise. Today like fifty years ago, nuclear weapons make "a unique contribution in rendering the risks of aggression against the Alliance incalculable and unacceptable."<sup>44</sup>

## What about a "Eurodeterrent"?

Should the US remove its NSNWs from Europe, several of the non-nuclear countries of the continent would find themselves without a tangible nuclear deterrent. In such circumstances, some claim Europe could create a so-called "Eurodeterrent."<sup>45</sup> One way to do this would see the United Kingdom and France



*HMS Vanguard, one of 4 ballistic missile submarines that comprise the UK's nuclear deterrent. UK Ministry of Defense photo.*

nuclear weapons, of which only 400 are deployed – that would not be a proportionate deterrent against Russia.<sup>49</sup> Lastly, the UK's arsenal is entirely submarine based, consisting of four Vanguard-class ballistic missile submarines (SSBN)<sup>50</sup> – because of the European allies' limited territorial waters, placing a submarine in these small areas as a direct replacement for US NSNWs would lend to the disclosure its location, defeating the purpose of a nuclear armed submarine.

Others have therefore advanced a different proposal: Great Britain and France could provide some of their existing nukes, and Germany could fund the production of new ones.<sup>51</sup> This plan has been endorsed by numerous European personalities, including German Bundestag member Roderich Kiesewetter, several German ministries, officers of the Polish and Hungarian governments, and NATO officials.<sup>52</sup> This strategy flagrantly violates the NPT. The creation of new nuclear weapons goes against the very principle of non-proliferation, and likely erases any remaining credibility the NPT holds. A similar expansion would, in every respect, represent a European nuclear weapons program.

replacing the current American NSNWs placed in Europe. Poland has been very vocal about its support for this plan. Polish Under-Secretary of State Tomasz Szatkowski confirmed the country has been considering the possibility to participate in a "nuclear sharing" program among NATO nations,<sup>46</sup> and Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz suggested France share its nuclear arsenal with the rest of NATO's European allies.<sup>47</sup>

Such strategy is flawed. Firstly, neither the UK nor France showed any willingness to extend their deterrent capabilities beyond state borders.<sup>48</sup> Secondly, even if that were the case, the UK's and France's nuclear arsenals combined consist of little over 500

The creation of a Eurodeterrent is not an adequate alternative to American NSNWs in Europe. That doesn't mean that a country's (or coalition of countries') deterrence should be a static strategy. Deterrence must "continue to evolve."<sup>53</sup> However, it is not by leaving Europe without an appropriate deterrent, or by promoting a strategy of proliferation, that NATO can continue to ensure an appropriate standard of defense to its members.

## **Are we ready to face a European nuclear arms race?**

The most threatening and, unfortunately, most realistic scenario following a complete removal of American NSNWs from the European theater would be a new wave of nuclear arms race. Security pressures are, indeed, "the primary driver of proliferation decisions[.]"<sup>54</sup> The threat of the US potentially withdrawing its NSNWs made several European countries consider the possibility of building their own nuclear arsenal. Polish leader of the Law and Justice party Jaroslaw Kaczynski is among the most outspoken representatives of such a proposition.

In Germany, some critics and academics have been arguing the country should leave the NPT, stating that "Germany needs nuclear weapons."<sup>55</sup> Failing to do so would, in their view, leave the country exposed to possible Russian aggression. In Turkey, 54% of the population questioned on the matter declared they'd be favorable to the creation of a Turkish nuclear arsenal, should Iran make one of its own.<sup>56</sup> Withdrawal from the NPT is technically not illegal.<sup>57</sup> However, if all or even just some European countries decide to pull out from the treaty, this would likely lead to a total collapse of the NPT, and the rise of many new nuclear countries – a truly "horrific scenario."<sup>58</sup> Hosting an ally's nuclear weapons makes a country less likely to feel the need to protect itself with by building its nukes.<sup>59</sup> As long as the US maintains its NSNWs in Europe, its overseas allies won't have reasons to seek the creation of their own arsenals.<sup>60</sup>

After the nuclear instability caused by the US' recent pullout from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF)<sup>61</sup> and its hesitance in extending New START,<sup>62</sup> the last thing the world needs is additional threats of nuclear proliferation. With the INF falling apart, being able to access existing nuclear weapons grants the US a degree of flexibility which, should NSNWs be removed from Europe, would fade. It's certainly better to rely on these weapons, rather than possibly building new ones.

The threat of nuclear proliferation is multiplied by those claiming extended deterrence is not a successful strategy for conflict prevention. These critics are unintentionally encouraging NATO's European allies to build their own nuclear stockpile.<sup>63</sup> Since the creation of nuclear weapons, though, deterrence has not failed. While one can't prove the US' strategy of extended deterrence is what ultimately prevented a European nuclear arms race during the Cold War, a successful strategy of deterrence is apparent in the absence of war between nuclear-armed or umbrella-protected powers.

## **Should there be more American NSNWs in Europe?**

Though this might not be the right time to entirely remove US NSNWs from Europe, it also certainly isn't the time to place more. Yet some argue the US' non-strategic arsenal in Europe should increase to eight-hundred units to appropriately deter a potential Russian nuclear escalation.<sup>64</sup>

It is crucial the US continues to comply with NATO's 1997 Founding Act on relations with Russia, which states that NATO member states have "no intention, no plan and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members, nor any need to change any aspect of NATO's nuclear posture or nuclear policy – and do not foresee any future need to do so."<sup>65</sup> The NPR's support for the maintenance of American NSNWs in Europe doesn't imply approval for nuclear proliferation.

While the US should not increase its non-strategic nuclear arsenal based in Europe, it could consider reducing the number of these weapons stationed overseas. The ultimate purpose of nuclear weapons in peacetime should be providing a minimum credible deterrent.<sup>66</sup> In a post-Cold War world, a minimal deterrence strategy doesn't require the same quality and quantity of nuclear weapons it did in the past to be successful. The number of NSNWs at each European base could potentially be reduced without serious repercussion on the nuclear umbrella's deterrence, or the effectiveness and credibility of responding with the strategic nuclear arsenal.

## What does public opinion say?

The European public is largely against nuclear weapons.<sup>67</sup> When questioned on their opinion on the presence of US NSNWs on their countries' territories, a poll by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons indicated that the large majority of the citizens of the four European countries surveyed wished the US would remove its nukes.<sup>68</sup> The strongest support for the US' removal was registered in Germany (70%) and Italy (65%).<sup>69</sup>

That being said, many citizens of these four nations most likely have no idea their countries have been and still are hosting American NSNWs. Even though all of the hosting countries are signatories of the 1999



An anti-nuclear protest in England in 1980. Photo credit: Wikimedia commons / Kim Traynor

Strategic Concept, which states that NATO maintains "sub-strategic [nuclear] forces based in Europe,"<sup>70</sup> the countries' governments have never publicly declared the presence of these weapons on their territories.<sup>71</sup>

While citizens of US NSNW-hosting countries might not be fully aware of these arms today, they certainly would be if the US ever decided to remove its weapons, and then was forced to deploy them again. Consider, for instance, the following scenario: to achieve its disarmament purposes, the US withdraws its NSNWs from Europe. Years later, tensions between a NATO member state and Russia heats up, and Russia moves its forces close to the European border.

The US therefore reintroduces NSNWs in Europe, as a deterrent against a Russian aggression. Such action, while necessary, would have multiple unfavorable consequences: it would be interpreted as an aggressive and escalatory step by NATO's adversaries,<sup>72</sup> and would raise a significant wave of discontent from the European public.



## How can US NSNWs help negotiating with Russia?

The removal or reduction of NSNWs ideally should not be unilateral. Even if the US was prepared to reduce the number of its NSNWs, it is preferable to do so with a guarantee of Russia's commitment to a similar same effort. In 2010, at the Informal Meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers held in Tallinn, Estonia, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton argued that such reductions should be contingent on similar Russian cutbacks.<sup>73</sup>

Some argue that the only way to convince Russia to remove the NSNWs it has placed close to the European border is by first removing the US NSNWs hosted by European countries.<sup>74</sup> That's not necessarily the only option. If the US withdraws its NSNWs from Europe before even discussing the possibility of a reduction of Russia's non-strategic nuclear forces, it would eliminate a significant incentive on which it could base potential negotiations.<sup>75</sup>

On the other hand, despite what some may claim, scaling down American nuclear non-strategic forces in order to open a dialogue on reduction with Russia wouldn't inevitably lead to a loss of military flexibility and political certainty.<sup>76</sup> Independent reductions may provide the US with future flexibility not bound by arms treaties. Additionally, US defensive posture and spending decisions need not be dictated by Russia's military.

There might be another way to persuade Russia to scale down its tactical arsenal. The US has long-range radar units in Kürecik, in Turkey, which constitute a part of the European Phased Adaptive Approach.<sup>77</sup> Even though the radars' purpose is detecting a potential ballistic missile attack from Iran,<sup>78</sup> Russia fears the real motive behind their presence is undermining its long-range nuclear missiles.<sup>79</sup> While it's not realistic for the US to remove its radars from Turkey, it could consider a reduction in the number of interceptors deployed on Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) systems,<sup>80</sup> or the number of launchers themselves. As interceptor accuracy improves and fewer are needed to ensure safety from a rogue nation's hypothetical nuclear attack, this may be a medium-long term strategy to trade quantifiable missile defense assets for Russian nuclear reductions. Such move could be a way to gain some trust from Russia, which might then consider more seriously removing a percentage of its NSNWs from the European border.

## Conclusion

Some claim the US is waiting for its European allies to make a possible decision on its NSNWs,<sup>81</sup> while others believe any decisive agreement will inevitably be reached in Washington.<sup>82</sup> What's certain is that due to the importance of the NATO alliance, such a pivotal decision shouldn't be made unilaterally. NATO is an alliance of twenty-nine members, which are expected to make decisions like these as a cohesive group.

A considerable reduction in the American non-strategic nuclear arsenal is welcome, but the prospect of complete disarmament would entail more risks than relief. NATO's nuclear doctrine has been successful since its inception. While that doesn't mean it should never be altered, there's no compelling reason to overturn it during such a delicate, precarious global political moment as the present one. The Atlantic Alliance continues to depend on the extended deterrence provided by the US – should it be taken away as a whole, the number of the world's nuclear weapons states might increase dramatically.

“[A]s long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance.”<sup>83</sup> And so it should.

## Endnotes

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