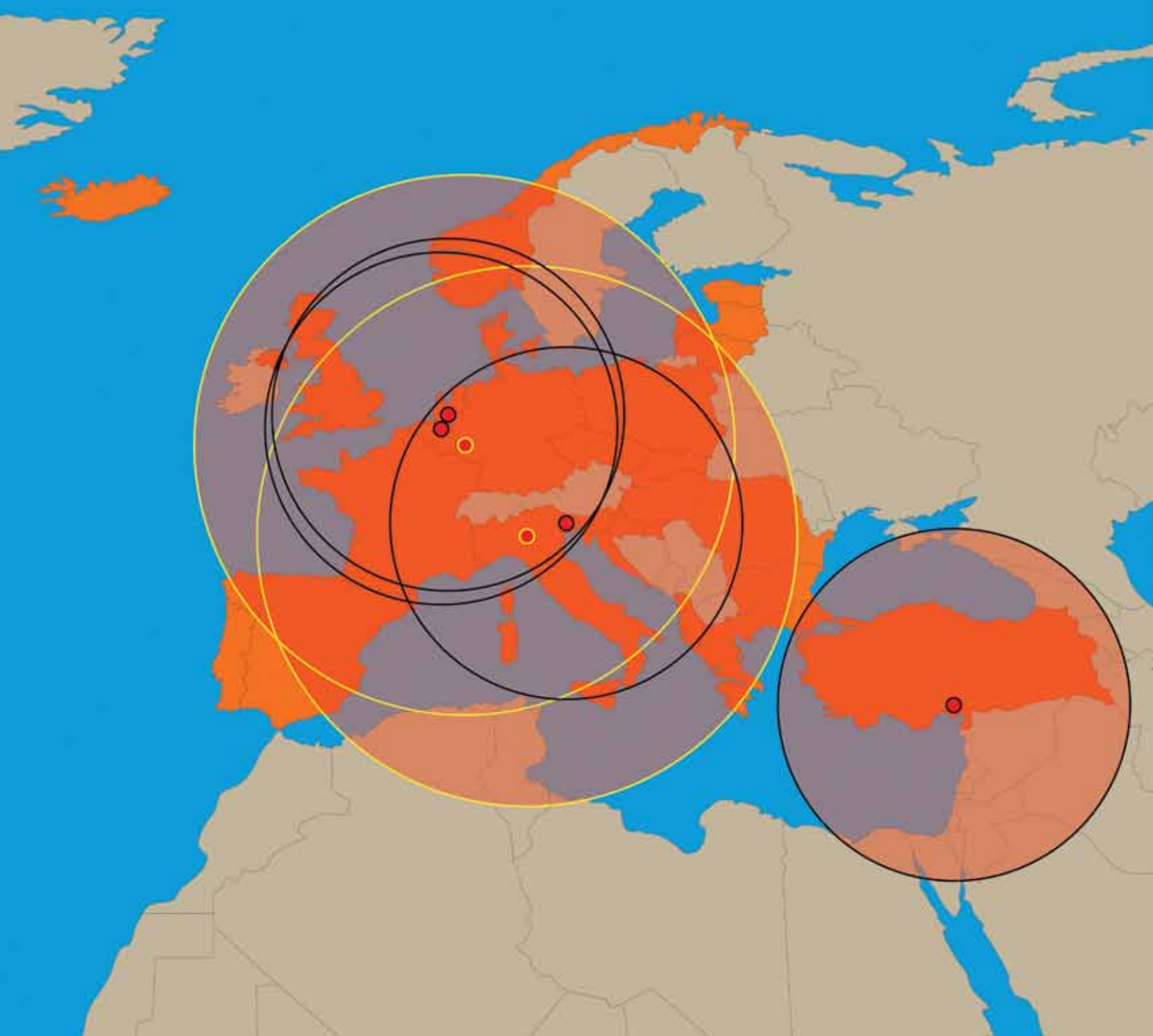


# Withdrawal Issues

*What NATO countries say about the future of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe*



### Acronyms used in this report

DCA-	dual capable aircraft
NAC-	North Atlantic Council
NATO-	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NPG-	Nuclear Planning Group
NPT-	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
WS3-	Weapons Storage and Security System
TNW-	tactical nuclear weapons

NoNukes is IKV Pax Christi's campaign for a world free of nuclear weapons. IKV Pax Christi is the joint peace organization of the Dutch Interchurch Peace Council (IKV) and Pax Christi Netherlands. We work for peace, reconciliation and justice in the world. We join with people in conflict areas to work on a peaceful and democratic society. We enlist the aid of people in the Netherlands who, like IKV Pax Christi, want to work for political solutions to crises and armed conflicts. IKV Pax Christi combines knowledge, energy and people to attain one single objective: there must be peace!

The NoNukes campaign informs, mobilizes and speaks out for nuclear disarmament. We do so through research, publications, political and public advocacy.

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### Authors

Susi Snyder is the Nuclear Disarmament Programme Leader for IKV Pax Christi. Previously, Susi served as the Secretary General of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, based at their International Secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland, where she monitored various issues under the aegis of the United Nations, including sustainable development, human rights, and disarmament. She has presented papers and testimony at countless international conferences and in 2009 was one of the first civil society representatives to ever deliver a statement to the Conference on Disarmament, the world's sole permanent multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. She has also spoken at more than 40 U.S. governmental hearings regarding nuclear weapons, power and waste, including presentations to the National Academy of Sciences, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the Department of Energy.

Wilbert van der Zeijden is a political scientist with a MA in International Relations from the *Vrije* University in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Since early 2010, he's worked as a Researcher for the No Nukes Programme of IKV Pax Christi. Previously, he worked for the Dutch think-tank Transnational Institute as Peace & Security program coordinator. He lives in Utrecht, with his two sons Jonathan (9) and Ruben (8).

The authors welcome feedback, additional information or corrections to this report. These can be sent to [info@ikvpaxchristi.nl](mailto:info@ikvpaxchristi.nl)

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**Cover:** Map depicting the maximum range of U.S. tactical nuclear weapon delivery platforms without refueling. F-16's (black circles) and Tornado's (yellow circles).

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# i Findings and Recommendations

This section summarises the findings and recommendations reached after interviews with every national delegation to NATO as well as NATO Headquarters Staff.

## Findings:

- 1 There is sufficient political will within NATO to end the deployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) in Europe.
  - a. Fourteen, or half of all NATO member states actively support the end of TNW deployment.
  - b. Ten more say they will not block a consensus decision to that end.
  - c. Only three members say they oppose ending the deployment.
- 2 There are no quick and easy formulae that accurately portray national positions.
  - a. There is no clear relation between the duration of NATO membership and position on the TNW issue.
  - b. Likewise, proximity to Russia is no explanatory variable.
  - c. The majority of countries most actively involved in nuclear sharing want to end TNW deployment.
- 3 Obsolescence, more practical burden sharing and a desire for visible demonstrations of alliance solidarity are reasons given for why the majority want to end TNW deployment.
  - a. Half of the 28 members believe TNW are militarily and politically redundant or obsolete.
  - b. Many countries recognise that TNW were historically “the glue that holds the Alliance together.” Most now say they prefer “more useful” forms of burden sharing, or “more visible” forms of Alliance solidarity.
  - c. Missile Defence could replace TNW as a practical and useful way of burden sharing according to roughly half of the Alliance. The other half disagree.
  - d. Safety concerns – sometimes mentioned in literature – are not shared by NATO members.
- 4 Alliance cohesion, Russian reciprocity and French resistance are the three main obstacles countries list that need to be cleared before TNW can be removed.
  - a. Ending nuclear burden sharing should not lead to a weakening of the transatlantic link. It must be replaced by other forms of burden sharing and visible alliance solidarity.
  - b. Only six countries mention Russian reciprocal steps as a necessary precondition. 11 more say they “would prefer” or “would welcome” Russian reciprocity. One country regrets the link made with Russian TNW.
  - c. Ten countries pinpoint French resistance as a main obstacle. No clear idea of how to overcome it was presented to us in the interviews.
- 5 The process of deciding the future of TNW deployment is currently at an impasse. The Strategic Concept dictates that NATO first needs to “aim to seek” Russian agreement on reciprocal steps towards a TNW free Europe. But Russia refuses to talk about its TNW until the U.S. first relocates all its TNW back to the U.S. To break the impasse needs careful planning by multiple actors in multiple arenas.

### Recommendations to NATO members:

- 1 To break the reciprocity impasse, NATO should mandate the U.S. to approach Russia with the offer to relocate all its TNW to the U.S. if Russia is willing to include concerns about the role of its TNW in comprehensive disarmament talks to be held in 2011 and 2012. We believe that it should specifically be the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) who mandates the U.S.
- 2 In the process of consulting NATO members prior to the writing of the Defence and Deterrence Posture Review, a special consultation round should be planned to allow all member states to share their concerns about – and proposals for – maintaining strong Alliance solidarity and the transatlantic link.
- 3 Special emphasis should be put on reassuring France that its independent nuclear capacity and role will remain unchanged after ending TNW deployment.

# ii Introduction

Between October 2009 and Summer 2010, discussions within NATO on the deployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) in Europe intensified in a way that took many off guard. The new German coalition government openly spoke out against ongoing deployment in Germany. Several countries followed, including two more 'host states' of U.S. TNW – Belgium and the Netherlands – albeit with various conditions. Opponents of TNW withdrawal responded as well, as did those worried that the debate might undermine the stability or solidarity within the NATO Alliance. The TNW issue became one of the most contentious debates in the consultation process leading to the November 2010 adoption of the NATO Strategic Concept.

As a research and advocacy NGO with a long track record on nuclear disarmament and peace issues, IKV Pax Christi was intensely involved in 2009 and 2010 in analyzing – and sometimes framing – the discussions in the Dutch political context, and beyond. In the first half of 2010, we noticed how reports published on the issue, both by inside NATO sources – such as the May 2010 report of the Group of Experts<sup>1</sup> – and by outside experts started to contradict each other in their analysis of the viability of proposals for withdrawal of TNW, but also in the assessments of country preferences on this issue. Generalising statements such as “The Eastern European countries think that...” or “The Baltic States want...” seemed overly crude assumptions that – as we expected – turned out to be largely untested. In addition, we realized that in those months, the emphasis was shifting away from looking at the opportunities to end TNW deployment, towards looking at all the reasons why it would be difficult, or impossible.

All that led to the idea for this report: To try and interview all 28 national delegations at NATO. To ask how they assessed the future of TNW deployment, and how TNW fit – from their

national perspectives – in the larger assessment of current and future threats faced by NATO and in the broader ideas on future cooperation on defence and security issues within the Alliance.

Not wanting to 'guide' our respondent, we asked each to identify their specific national security priorities in the context of NATO and in the context of the upcoming NATO Strategic Concept. From there, the talks would 'zoom in' on the issue of NATO's nuclear posture and nuclear policies and on a number of issues that we knew were perceived as 'contentious', such as plans for a civilian capability for NATO; NATO – Russia relations; the 'balance' between out of area and more traditional territorial defence missions; NATO – EU relations and the tactical nuclear weapons issue. This way, we gained a clear understanding of the general positioning of each country within NATO debates, but also of their positions on a number of topics, including disarmament issues and the TNW issue specifically.

Between July and December 2010, we met with all 28 NATO delegations – some several times. In addition, we interviewed several NATO staffers concerned with nuclear planning and nuclear deployment. It was clear to all respondents that the information gathered would be used in public reports, but that quotes given would not be attributable.

This report starts by giving a short overview of the discussions and statements concerning the new worldwide attention for nuclear disarmament, and the growing debate on TNW deployment prior to our research. In chapter 2, we look at the 'opportunities' for ending TNW as they were presented to us by the member states. In chapter 3 we turn to the 'obstacles' states see that need to be cleared before NATO can decide to end TNW deployment. In chapter 4 we present a viable scenario for overcoming these obstacles, doing justice to the opportunities that a large majority of delegations see.

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1. Group of Experts (17 May 2010) NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement

In Lisbon, the North Atlantic Council was tasked with the responsibility of conducting an alliance wide Defence and Deterrence Posture Review. This report aims to contribute to that process by presenting members' positions and a scenario that both overcomes the obstacles and embraces the opportunities.

We would like to thank all those who agreed to meet with us. We met with all in a cooperative, transparent and amicable atmosphere. Many representatives showed a keen interest in the outcomes – and we hope that they can find themselves in the representation of data, the analysis and of course in the recommendations in this report.

Susi Snyder & Wilbert van der Zeijden

Utrecht, March 2011



*NATO Headquarters.  
Source: European Parliament*

# iii Definitions and interpretations

Before representing our findings and analyses, we would like to specify some of our choices and interpretations of terminology.

## **Tactical, sub-strategic or non-strategic nuclear weapons**

For the purposes of this report we use the phrase ‘tactical nuclear weapons’ or TNW when speaking about the forward deployed U.S. B61 gravity bombs in five European states. In some literature, the phrase ‘sub-strategic’ or ‘non-strategic’ weapons is used. While realising these terms are not interchangeable, we’ve chosen to settle on one, for concerns of readability. In each case these are weapons of a type that do not fall under any current bilateral arms reduction treaty between the U.S. and Russia.

## **Policy or posture**

Our interpretation of the difference between policy and posture has an impact on the way data are presented and suggestions are put forward in this report. We see policy as decisions of the alliance as a whole- like the Strategic Concept. Nuclear sharing policy decisions are made at the highest levels by consensus agreement of all 28 NATO members. Posture decisions however, we interpret as decisions related to the implementation of those policies. Deployment, support roles, locations, numbers are all posture items, generally agreed amongst the 27 members of the Nuclear Planning Group.

## **What do we mean by ‘withdrawal’**

In our interviews and in the analyses of these interviews in this report we did not prejudge or specify the exact withdrawal scenarios already presented in various literature. There is a spectrum of understanding of what exactly withdrawal means to member states – from the complete end to nuclear sharing policy to the relocation of just the U.S. B61 gravity bombs to the U.S. Other withdrawal scenarios have included the relocation of TNW to one or two locations within Europe, while some have suggested that the maintenance of dual capable aircraft and related host state infrastructure is a necessary component.

Our research was aimed at getting to the larger political objections and opportunities envisaged by member states that come before agreement can be reached on any of these scenarios. For that reason we do not endorse or promote any particular scenario, and rather offer a suggestion to alleviate the political blockages that could prevent scenario discussions from occurring in good faith.

That said, the reality is that Russian reciprocity – as we will explain – can only be obtained if ‘withdrawal’ means at the minimum relocation of all U.S. TNW to the U.S. A conclusion of this report is that reductions and central storage of TNW is not a viable strategy.

## **Redundant or Obsolete**

The terms redundant and obsolete have often been used interchangeably. For the purposes of this report, we have chosen to use the following definitions:

Redundant: being in excess, no longer necessary.

Obsolete: being outdated, no longer of use.





*B61 tactical nuclear weapon maintenance*  
Source: NNSA News

# 1. Creating the conditions for withdrawal

The current discussions on the future of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe have to be placed in the larger context of the growing momentum towards nuclear disarmament seen in the past years. Sometimes referred to as U.S. President Obama's "Prague Agenda", the renewed push for reductions and eventual abolition of nuclear weapons resulted in several important steps forward in 2009 and 2010. These steps, though mostly focussing on strategic nuclear weapons, have helped to create the conditions for a renewed debate on the tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) in Europe. Ending the forward deployment of tactical nuclear weapons is consistent with the emphasis on practical, viable steps towards disarmament. The goal of finding these steps is widely supported within NATO. Political leaders of all NATO countries have committed themselves to, at the very least, create the conditions for a world free of nuclear weapons.

## 1.1 Setting the goal of a nuclear weapons free world

The stage was set in January 2007 with an Op-Ed published in the Wall Street Journal by Henry Kissinger, George Schultz, Sam Nunn and William Perry, often referred to as "the Gang of Four". The former U.S. political heavyweights endorsed "setting the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and working energetically on the actions required to achieve that goal".<sup>2</sup> The Op-Ed went on to suggest a series of steps to that end, including: "Eliminating short-range nuclear weapons designed to be forward-deployed".<sup>3</sup> Since then, similar 'Gangs of Four' have emerged around the globe. Many of those initiatives were developed by former political figures from European NATO member states, demonstrating the general shift in thinking within NATO countries and a renewed energy for the ideal of 'Global Zero' and practical approaches towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

### Ban Ki-Moon's five point plan

In October 2008, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon issued a five point plan for nuclear disarmament during a speech to The East – West Institute. The plan calls for action by all parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, including negotiations on nuclear disarmament; action by the nuclear weapons states to provide security assurances

to non-nuclear weapons states; strengthening and bringing into force existing agreements on nuclear weapons; greater transparency on the part of nuclear weapons states; and complimentary measures on other weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons issues.<sup>4</sup> While previous UN Secretary Generals had called for further action towards nuclear disarmament, Ban Ki-Moon was the first UN Secretary General to suggest negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or framework of mutually reinforcing agreements.

### Obama's Prague speech

The shift in language used in literature and statements about the future of nuclear weapons paved the way for the April 2009 speech by President Obama in Prague, in which he stated "clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons".<sup>5</sup> President Obama outlined several action points to help move towards a nuclear weapons free world, including a new bilateral strategic arms control agreement with the Russian Federation. President Obama's statement brought the concept of a nuclear weapons free world back onto the global agenda in the boldest way since Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev uttered their nuclear weapons free world vision at Reykjavik in 1986. The Prague Speech made the

2 "A World Free of Nuclear Weapons" George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger and Sam Nunn. The Wall Street Journal, January 4, 2007; Page A15.

3 *ibid.*

4 UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's Five Point Plan for Nuclear Disarmament as presented at the East- West Institute. Full text can be found here: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sgsm11881.doc.htm>

5 <http://prague.usembassy.gov/obama.html>

desire for a world free of nuclear weapons one that could no longer be politically ignored.

### UNSCR 1887

The push for disarmament and nuclear abolition was carried to the first ever UN Security Council Summit on Nuclear Weapons in September 2009. The outcome, UNSC Resolution 1887, commits “to seek a safer world for all and to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons”.<sup>6</sup> The unique importance of UNSCR 1887 is that with it the process began of codifying the global urge to abolish nuclear weapons. Instead of demonising the ‘problem states’ that have or may be seeking to attain nuclear weapons, the resolution “enshrines our shared commitment to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons”.<sup>7</sup>

Statements by country leaders recognised the global demand for a nuclear weapons free world, but also that the road towards abolition is a long one. As Croatian President Stjepan Mesić stated: “Even if we get only one single step closer to this objective we will indeed have succeeded, because the journey towards a world free of nuclear weapons is not, cannot be and will not be easy, simple or short”.<sup>8</sup> President Mesić, at the time the only head of state from a non-nuclear armed NATO country on the Security Council, further elaborated that the debate is not, and cannot be, about whether a nuclear weapons free world is desirable, but about how to get to that world when he stated “we have to work together to affirm or establish principles that will help us to head towards a world free of nuclear weapons without necessarily entering into debate over this or that concrete issue”.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.2 Tactical nuclear disarmament

As was to be expected, the renewed emphasis on nuclear disarmament soon led to a renewed interest in TNW. As opposed to strategic nuclear weapons, TNW have not yet been subject to any international disarmament regime. Maximum numbers of warheads agreed on in bilateral treaties do not concern TNW. In 2010, the new emphasis

on TNW became apparent during a number of important occasions, most notably during the May 2010 NPT Review Conference; during the negotiations for and ratification of the “new” START Treaty, and; during the consultation process within NATO in preparation for the 2010 Strategic Concept.

### The NPT Consensus Action Plan

The NPT calls on members to “pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament”.<sup>10</sup> In previous NPT Review conferences, NATO’s TNW were brought up, mostly by countries arguing that the TNW deployment in Europe constitutes a breach of articles I and II of the Treaty, prohibiting the transfer and receipt of nuclear weapons to and from non-nuclear weapon states.

At the 2010 Review Conference, forward deployed U.S. nuclear weapons were debated in a more thorough and nuanced way than before. Many states saw the opportunity to indirectly influence the coming NATO Strategic Concept. Several European NATO members spoke openly about the TNW and how their eradication could be a positive step towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Their focus on NATO’s own responsibility reflected the changed position of many NATO governments.

During the conference, the European Union joint statement encouraged both Russia and the United States “to work towards new agreements for further, comprehensive reductions of their nuclear arsenals, including non-strategic weapons”.<sup>11</sup> The Netherlands also referred to NATO nuclear weapons in its statement, advocating for “a phased approach, aimed at the reduction of the role and the numbers of nuclear weapons in Europe”.<sup>12</sup>

The statement of German Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Werner Hoyer made the strongest call for the inclusion of TNW in disarmament processes, noting that “NPT states already agreed to this in principle in 2000”. He went on to state that these weapons “no longer serve

6 UNSCR 1887 (2009)

7 S/PV.6191, viewed online at: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/political/SC/2009Summit/Summary.pdf>

8 *ibid.*

9 *ibid.*

10 Article VI, nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, 1970

11 Statement of the European Union to the General Debate of the NPT Review Conference, 3 May 2010. Viewed here: [http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/legal/npt/revcon2010/statements/3May\\_EU.pdf](http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/legal/npt/revcon2010/statements/3May_EU.pdf)

12 Statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Maxime Verhagen, to the General Debate of the NPT Review Conference, 3 May 2010. Viewed here: [http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/legal/npt/revcon2010/statements/3May\\_Netherlands.pdf](http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/legal/npt/revcon2010/statements/3May_Netherlands.pdf)

a military purpose and do not create security". Dr. Hoyer further elaborated the German Government's "intention to bring about, in agreement with our allies, the withdrawal of the tactical weapons still stationed in Germany".<sup>13</sup>

Main Committee 1 of the Review Conference - the committee dealing with disarmament - also heard statements on the issue of NATO nuclear weapons. A group of states - Austria, Belgium, Germany, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden - recommended that "States Parties concerned should commit themselves to include non-strategic nuclear weapons in their general arms control and disarmament processes, with a view to their transparent, verifiable and irreversible reduction and elimination".<sup>14</sup>

After much debate and discussion, the NPT Review Conference Chairman issued a draft final declaration, reflecting his assessment of conference proceedings that recommended nuclear weapons states "commit to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament" including by addressing "the question of all types of nuclear weapons and related infrastructure stationed on the territories of non-nuclear weapon States".<sup>15</sup> The Non-Aligned Movement went even further when it suggested that the language be changed to "withdraw nuclear weapons stationed on the territories of non-nuclear-weapon States in accordance with article I and II of the Treaty".<sup>16</sup> In order to achieve consensus, and to prevent this Review Conference from ending in failure as the 2005 Review did, this paragraph was significantly toned down in the final document. While the Final Document did include 64 action items, 22 of them on disarmament, none dealt directly with TNW. Instead, agreement was reached to "Address the question of all nuclear weapons regardless of their type or their location as an integral part of the general nuclear disarmament process".<sup>17</sup>

#### "New" START negotiations and ratification

Recognizing that the Russian Federation and the United States, as possessors of more than 90% of nuclear weapons

in the world, bear a special responsibility to take concrete measures to reduce their arsenals, the "new" Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) was negotiated and signed in Prague just over a year after President Obama's historic speech.

During the signing ceremony, President Obama made it clear that this is but one step down the long road towards disarmament, and that he hopes "to pursue discussions with Russia on reducing both our strategic and tactical weapons".<sup>18</sup> President Obama's statement offers the possibility that the exclusion from bilateral agreements of sub-strategic or tactical nuclear weapons may be changed. This would make it possible in the future to include TNW in bilateral disarmament agreements. As this report will illustrate, the issue of reducing TNW through bilateral U.S.-Russian negotiations is an option that many NATO members recommend.

The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in its September 2010 Resolution of Advice and Consent to Ratification for the new START agreement, made it clear that the Senate is also concerned with the number of tactical weapons that remain in both nation's arsenals. The resolution's declarations section specifically "calls upon the President to pursue, following consultation with allies, an agreement with the Russian Federation that would address the disparity between the tactical nuclear weapons stockpiles of the Russian Federation and of the United States and would secure and reduce tactical nuclear weapons in a verifiable manner".<sup>19</sup> President Obama agreed to do this, and in a time bound framework, with his February 2011 message to the Senate on the new START treaty that said "The United States will seek to initiate, following consultation with NATO Allies but not later than one year after the entry into force of the New START Treaty, negotiations with the Russian Federation on an agreement to address the disparity between the non-strategic (tactical) nuclear weapons stockpiles of the Russian Federation and

13 Statement of German Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Werner Hoyer on 4 May 2010 to the NPT General Debate.  
Viewed at: [http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/legal/npt/revcon2010/statements/4May\\_Germany.pdf](http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/legal/npt/revcon2010/statements/4May_Germany.pdf)

14 Statement by Ambassador Hellmut Hoffmann, Permanent Representative of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament in the Subsidiary Body of Main Committee I, 12 May 2010.

15 NPT/CONF.2010/CRP.2/Rev.1 Action 6b.

16 NAM Position as of 18 May 2010 on NPT/CONF.2010/MC.I/CRP.2

17 NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)

18 <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2010/04/08/new-start-treaty-and-protocol>

19 U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Report 111-6, 1 October 2010, viewed at: <http://foreign.senate.gov/download/?id=4C65B25B-F3E8-4CF6-8660-36E21D639ECC>

of the United States and to secure and reduce tactical nuclear weapons in a verifiable manner”.<sup>20</sup>

The next round of bilateral arms reductions between the U.S. and Russia will offer the opportunity for a new form of arms control and disarmament, one where treaty based verification is not limited to strategic weapons alone. This next round of negotiations could open the door to international or third-party inspections of TNW related sites. However, it has also been made clear that the Russian Federation is not eager to begin such negotiations until all U.S. nuclear weapons are returned to U.S. soil – a key issue for NATO members to consider. As this report shows, some NATO members are interested in building confidence between NATO and the Russian Federation through increased transparency.

### *The 2010 NATO Strategic Concept*

The 2010 NATO Strategic Concept embraced, in part, President Obama’s Prague Agenda by restating language agreed during the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Specifically, the new concept “commits NATO to the goal of creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons - but reconfirms that, as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance.”<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the Concept reflects the absence of consensus inside the Alliance on early withdrawal or reductions of U.S. nuclear warheads. The text fails to mention any policy changes with regard to NATO nuclear sharing but at the same time, it does not explicitly reconfirm the existing policy of forward basing U.S. nuclear warheads.

The Concept does reconfirm NATO’s reliance on “an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities”<sup>22</sup> and ensures that “NATO has the full range of capabilities necessary to deter against any threat to the safety and security of our populations”.<sup>23</sup> Explicating the ‘full range’, the document says the alliance will “ensure the broadest possible participation of Allies in collective defence planning on nuclear roles, in peacetime basing of nuclear forces, and in command, control and consultation arrangements”.<sup>24</sup> This statement of course leaves every opportunity open for

continued nuclear sharing, but at the same time it does not forego further reductions, relocation of warheads or even an end to the policy of nuclear sharing. The Strategic Concepts of 1991 and 1999 contained similar language, but also stated “the presence of United States conventional and nuclear forces in Europe remains vital to the security of Europe, which is inseparably linked to North America”.<sup>25</sup> The omission of this reference to forward basing in the 2010 Concept seems to be a deliberate choice allowing further discussions on NATO nuclear policy, including the possibility of phasing out the tactical nuclear weapons. More specific language on TNW appears in the section on Arms Control, Disarmament, and Non-Proliferation, where NATO reminds its audience it has “dramatically reduced the number of nuclear weapons stationed in Europe” since the end of the Cold War and that it “will seek to create the conditions for further reductions in the future”.<sup>26</sup>

### **1.3 Conclusion**

As Mr. Heinz Fischer, Federal President of the Republic of Austria said during the 2009 Security Council Summit “The international community has undertaken efforts to contain the threat, but many have adjusted to it, almost accepting the nuclear shadow as part of life. But any such complacency is ill-founded; we have arrived at a fork in the road. We can maintain our course and hope that nothing happens, or we can seek real change. Future historians will assess whether today is a turning point. That will not depend on words spoken but on the deeds that follow”.<sup>27</sup> The adoption of UNSCR 1887, the action plan of the NPT Review Conference and the ratification and entry into force of the new START Treaty are three examples of deeds that followed the new rhetoric of nuclear abolition. More important for this report, they are examples of deeds that set the stage for further discussions within NATO on the eventual withdrawal of the U.S. TNW from Europe. As the next two chapters will show, the political will exists within NATO, as does the rhetoric. But there are obstacles to overcome too, if NATO is to demonstrate the real change Mr. Fischer, and the world hope for.

20 Message from the President on the New START Treaty, 2 February 2011, viewed at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/02/02/message-president-new-start-treaty-0>

21 NATO (2010): Strategic Concept For the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Preface.

22 *ibid.*, § 17

23 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, § 19

24 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, § 19

25 NATO (1999): The Alliance’s Strategic Concept, paragraph 42, Obtained online: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-7BAF6429-63B24B59/natolive/official\\_texts\\_27433.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-7BAF6429-63B24B59/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm)

26 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, § 26

27 S/PV.6191, viewed online at: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/political/SC/2009Summit/Summary.pdf>

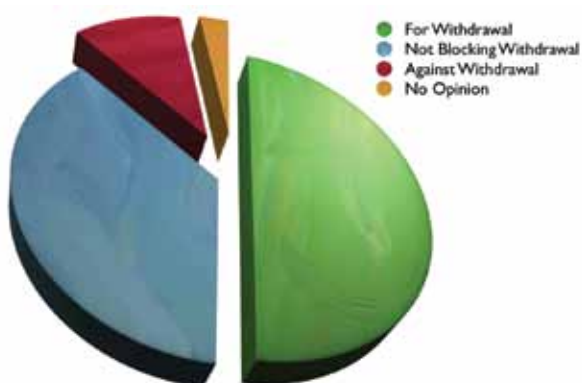
## 2. Withdrawal opportunities

The new NATO Strategic Concept reflects the lack of consensus on TNW within the Alliance. In the months leading up to the Strategic Concept, media reports as well as expert seminars on the issue, highlighted the contentious TNW debate. The tone evolved as the momentum carried from President Obama's Prague speech, through the UNSC Summit and into the German Coalition agreement, soon met more sceptical views focusing on the obstacles standing in the way of policy change. Those obstacles will be discussed in the next chapter, but in this chapter we first want to dig deeper into the opportunities that so many countries see to eventually end the deployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.

### 2.1 Crumbling consensus

In our interviews, 24 of 28 NATO member states said they would not oppose removal of the TNW from Europe. Fourteen, or half of the countries, indicated that they actively support changing the current nuclear sharing policy. Ten others indicated their country would not oppose removal or block consensus. Only three countries (France, Hungary and Lithuania) are particularly supportive of the current status quo, with France as the most vocal opponent of removal. Albania had no opinion on the matter.

Country positions on TNW deployment



The chart clearly shows the erosion of support for TNW deployment. After decades of being regarded as the cornerstone of alliance burden sharing and solidarity, TNW deployment is increasingly seen as a relic of the past. With 86% open to suggestions for removal and 50% actively supporting the end of TNW deployment in Europe, it seems only a matter of time before the axe falls for the TNW in Europe. This chapter investigates what reasons NATO members give for supporting the withdrawal of TNW.

### 2.2 Global zero

The Strategic Concept summarised NATO's view on disarmament in a sentence that seems to almost constitute an internal contradiction. NATO "commits [...] to the goal of creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons", but it also "reconfirms that, as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance".<sup>28</sup> This is a clear departure from the 1999 Concept language, which stated "Nuclear weapons make a unique contribution in rendering the risks of aggression against the Alliance incalculable and unacceptable. Thus, they remain essential to preserve peace".<sup>29</sup> For the time being, "the supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance".<sup>30</sup> This language is directly from the 1999 Concept and once again TNW are not mentioned as part of this 'supreme guarantee.'

Ending nuclear sharing is a condition to be met on the road to a world without nuclear weapons. The new drive for nuclear disarmament is reflected in NATO, as all 28 NATO members indicated they support the eventual aim of "Global Zero". One state however is particularly pessimistic that a world without nuclear weapons could ever happen, and therefore will only agree to "create the conditions" for such a world.

28 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, Preamble

29 NATO (1999): The Alliance's Strategic Concept, paragraph 46. Viewed online at: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-7BAF6429-63B24B59/natolive/official\\_texts\\_27433.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-7BAF6429-63B24B59/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm)

30 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, § 18

French President Sarkozy, when outlining French nuclear policy in Cherbourg in 2008 called nuclear weapons “*quite simply the nation’s life insurance policy*”.<sup>31</sup> Hungary aligns itself closest to the French position on nuclear weapons in NATO, but acknowledges that the effort to disarm is in itself important, also to bolster non-proliferation efforts. Hungary therefore supports a more active role for NATO in disarmament forums.

While half the NATO members indicate they believe that NATO could play a stronger role in international disarmament efforts, what that role could or should be remains unclear. For some, disarmament and non-proliferation seem to be synonymous. Thereby, a more active role in disarmament for NATO means more effort to keep non-NATO countries from building nuclear arsenals. Other respondents see a direct link between TNW and the larger goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. For them, TNW are the ‘low hanging fruit’ of global nuclear disarmament. They should be considered, as one official put it “*the first ones to go*”. Removal of TNW would, they reason, inspire confidence and trust in NATO’s willingness to negotiate more difficult issues on the ‘road to zero’.

### 2.3 Redundant or obsolete

In the post-Cold War era, scenarios in which TNW could play a role in warfare are extremely hypothetical. Originally, the TNW were meant to deter a Warsaw Pact invasion of Western Europe. Early European NATO allies worried that, if the Soviets would launch a ground invasion, the U.S. might not be willing to risk all-out extermination by launching a retaliatory nuclear strike on the Soviet Union. By introducing ‘battlefield nuclear weapons’ to the deterrence mix, it was believed that the Eastern Bloc would be deterred from launching a conventional or limited nuclear war in Europe. Scenarios for their use included the bombing of large areas in East Germany, but also in West Germany. If the Berlin Wall would fail, a wall of radiation would stop invading troops dead in their tracks. The Warsaw Pact reasoned along much the same lines.

Such a scorched Earth tactic seems unthinkable in the 21st century, and it is perhaps not surprising then that the hardest push for policy change comes from Germany. The German parliament, the Bundestag, passed cross-party resolutions calling for the return of TNW to the U.S. in two successive cabinet periods, and most notably, the current



B61 tactical nuclear bomb  
Source: Marshall Astor

German coalition agreement states that the German government will “*work within the Alliance and with our U.S. allies to ensure that the nuclear weapons remaining in Germany are withdrawn*”.<sup>32</sup>

The limited military use for TNW is the most used argument by states proposing to phase them out. Nine countries explicitly mentioned they believe the TNW are militarily redundant. Backed by many international nuclear weapons experts and some high-ranking U.S. military, they reason that there is currently no conceivable scenario in which TNW could perform a task that cannot be done better, or more efficiently with conventional arms or strategic nuclear weapons. TNW, in this line of reasoning, could be removed simply because they are no longer needed.

The U.S. is a crucial player in this debate as it provides the warheads as well as the technological support for their deployment. In addition, U.S. F-16’s are involved in nuclear missions flown from Aviano Base in Italy. Talks with U.S.

31 Speech by Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, Presentation of Le Terrible in Cherbourg, 21 March 2008.

32 German Coalition Agreement (October 26, 2009): Growth. Education. Unity., p. 171/189. Obtained on-line: <http://www.cdu.de/doc/pdfc/091215-koalitionsvertrag-2009-2013-englisch.pdf>

diplomats in Brussels, but also public documentation show that U.S. thinking on the matter is shifting towards removal of the TNW from Europe, largely because of the redundancy argument. When asked in April 2010 if there is “any military mission performed by these [B61] aircraft-delivered weapons that cannot be performed by either U.S. strategic forces or U.S. conventional forces?” General Cartwright, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff felt confident enough to simply answer “No”.<sup>33</sup>

One high-ranking diplomat in Brussels went even further, implying that the TNW in combination with their delivering aircraft are not only ‘not needed’, but can actually not be used at all. That they are for all intents and purposes obsolete. In his words: “They’re like pterodactyls throwing rocks. The pterodactyls are dying, so they need to be replaced. But the new Pterodactyls cannot carry the old rocks. So we have to upgrade the rocks as well. But whatever investment we make, we’re still stuck with pterodactyls throwing rocks” Just as pterodactyls went extinct with the rest of the dinosaurs, his metaphor indicated just how obsolete these weapons are in the perception of many within NATO.

Five NATO countries specifically mentioned obsolescence as the main reason why they favour ending TNW deployment. One source likened the TNW to “a Polish cavalry unit in 1939”. Without any propulsion means of their own, the B61 bombs need to be dropped over a target by aircraft specifically designed with capacity to carry them. Current configurations in Europe only allow for dropping by fighter jets that themselves are incapable of flying the B61 beyond current NATO borders without refuelling.

Their old function gone, B61 bombs do not have a new military role to play. They are regarded all but useless in stand-offs or open confrontations with sub-state enemies. They are no help to prevent, combat or retaliate against terrorism, or piracy. Nor do they have a role in bolstering border security or resource security. For cyber warfare, they are a liability rather than a functional tool. When reflecting on emerging threats, only four countries listed the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as a priority issue. Ten countries indicated that terrorism was a more grave threat, and three countries said that there were no more conventional threats to the alliance as a whole from any other country. Only one country mentioned a possible

role for TNW in a standoff or even an open confrontation with Iran. But the only NATO country bordering Iran, Turkey, openly wondered: “would we really use nukes in our own neighbourhood?” And even if scenarios could be made up in which U.S. TNW deployed in Turkey could be used, the redundancy argument still stands: The same functions could be performed better, more efficiently and perhaps less expensively by existing conventional or strategic nuclear forces. Whether countering emerging or existing threats, TNW no longer have a military role.

## 2.4 A political weapon?

Some NATO staffers argued in interviews that the lack of a military role for TNW is not necessarily a problem. The 1999 Strategic Concept elaborates: “The fundamental purpose of the nuclear forces of the Allies is political”.<sup>34</sup> It is an argument commonly repeated by those who attain high value to nuclear deterrence. TNW are deployed in Europe not to bomb Russian troops, but to prevent Russian troops from invading or from starting a limited nuclear war. Increasingly, proponents of withdrawal argue that if B61 bombs cannot be used militarily, they have no function in the deterrence mix, and as a result they lose their political function as well. NATO’s overwhelming conventional battlefield superiority makes any Russian offensive manoeuvre against NATO territory extremely unlikely, even if post-Cold War Russia would entertain such an idea in the first place.

Others have argued that the TNW’s last job is simply to be a bargaining chip at the negotiation table. The sole purpose of the TNW would be to make sure Russia also dismantles its tactical arsenal. But as we will discuss in the next chapter, Russia doesn’t keep its TNW because of NATO TNW. Instead, Russia keeps them to even out NATO’s conventional superiority. Keeping NATO TNW in Europe only provides Russia with a legitimate excuse not to talk about its own TNW arsenal. Politically, NATO TNW are hardly any more useful than militarily, and a growing number of NATO allies realise this.

## 2.5 The burdens

Redundancy of TNW is by far the most mentioned reason why more and more NATO countries are leaning towards or even openly calling for a change or an end to the nuclear sharing policy. Some diplomats also point to the coming

33 Council on Foreign Relations (April 8, 2010): Special Briefing on Nuclear Posture Review, p. 9/22.  
Obtained on-line: [http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/Council\\_on\\_Foreign\\_Relation.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/Council_on_Foreign_Relation.pdf)

34 NATO (1999): The Alliance’s Strategic Concept, paragraph 62.  
Viewed online at: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-7BAF6429-63B24B59/natolive/official\\_texts\\_27433.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-7BAF6429-63B24B59/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm)



increase in financial burdens for the countries involved in nuclear sharing. In the near future, four of five host countries face the replacement of the fighter aircraft assigned to nuclear tasks. The future of TNW influences, to a certain extent, the choice for replacement aircraft, and vice-versa. Only the U.S. produced F-35 (Joint Strike Fighter) plans include a modification that allows for carrying and dropping TNW. Modification costs for this so-called 'dual capability' come on top of the many recent cost overruns, delays and technological problems the F-35 development program is facing. If countries need to maintain their nuclear roles, they are pretty much tied to the uncertain future of the F-35.

Next to that, next generation aircraft will require upgrades for the warheads as well. To be operable with the F-35, the B61 warheads need to be 'digitalised'. All this leads one high ranking representative to conclude that *"TNW, although they are the 'cheap option' in many ways, are in the end still too expensive to maintain – all the more because they are obsolete"*.

Upcoming replacement of the delivery platforms, some argue, is what pushed some of the TNW host countries to make a political issue of the B61 now, rather than later. The new Strategic Concept seemed the perfect moment to find out if they would still need dual capable aircraft in the future. The Germans decided not to wait for a decision within NATO. Berlin has already chosen a non-dual capable successor for its current Tornado fighter jets. While it is possible that Germany will extend the life cycle of its Tornados now assigned a nuclear task just to fly TNW, the decision to invest in non-dual capable aircraft for the coming decades signals Germany's growing reluctance to keep sharing this particular burden.

'Burden sharing' has always been part of the justification of NATO nuclear sharing. Through the sharing of nuclear tasks, NATO countries share in the financial burden of maintaining a deterrent. They also share in the decision-making responsibilities in case of a nuclear conflict. In the next chapter we look at the issue of burden sharing again, as a potential obstacle in the way of removal of TNW. For this chapter though, it is noteworthy that many countries indicated they do not see the necessity of continued TNW deployment to maintain a form of burden sharing. Six countries indicated that Missile Defence could make TNW "even more obsolete" and could take over the burden sharing functions now attached to nuclear sharing. Sharing of technology, but also of responsibility for financial and operational cooperation could be done by hosting the U.S.-developed Missile Defence system with bases, in a variety of countries. Burden sharing could actually be improved according to one source *"if it leads to cooperation on more*

*useful missions"*. Slovenia added that in their vision burden sharing is not tied to nuclear weapons, but a principle to be applied much more broadly, with all members contributing to the best of their ability, on many different levels.

## 2.6 The transatlantic link

TNW have historically played an important role in ensuring strong transatlantic links. In the 1999 Strategic Concept, it is formulated explicitly: *"Nuclear forces based in Europe and committed to NATO provide an essential political and military link between the European and the North American members of the Alliance"*.<sup>35</sup> In the new Strategic Concept, this link is removed. As with burden sharing, this supports our findings that NATO countries attach less value to TNW deployment than before. The transatlantic link is still high on the agenda of many countries, but many no longer see how TNW – in the long run – contribute to maintaining that link. Central and Eastern European states in particular express a desire for linkages that are less symbolic, more visible and practical. Some of those whose role in TNW burden sharing is minimal would prefer a more practical form of U.S. involvement in maintaining European security. They prefer ways that would allow them to share more of the burden, as a signal to the U.S. that the future of the transatlantic link is guarded by the 'new' Europeans too.

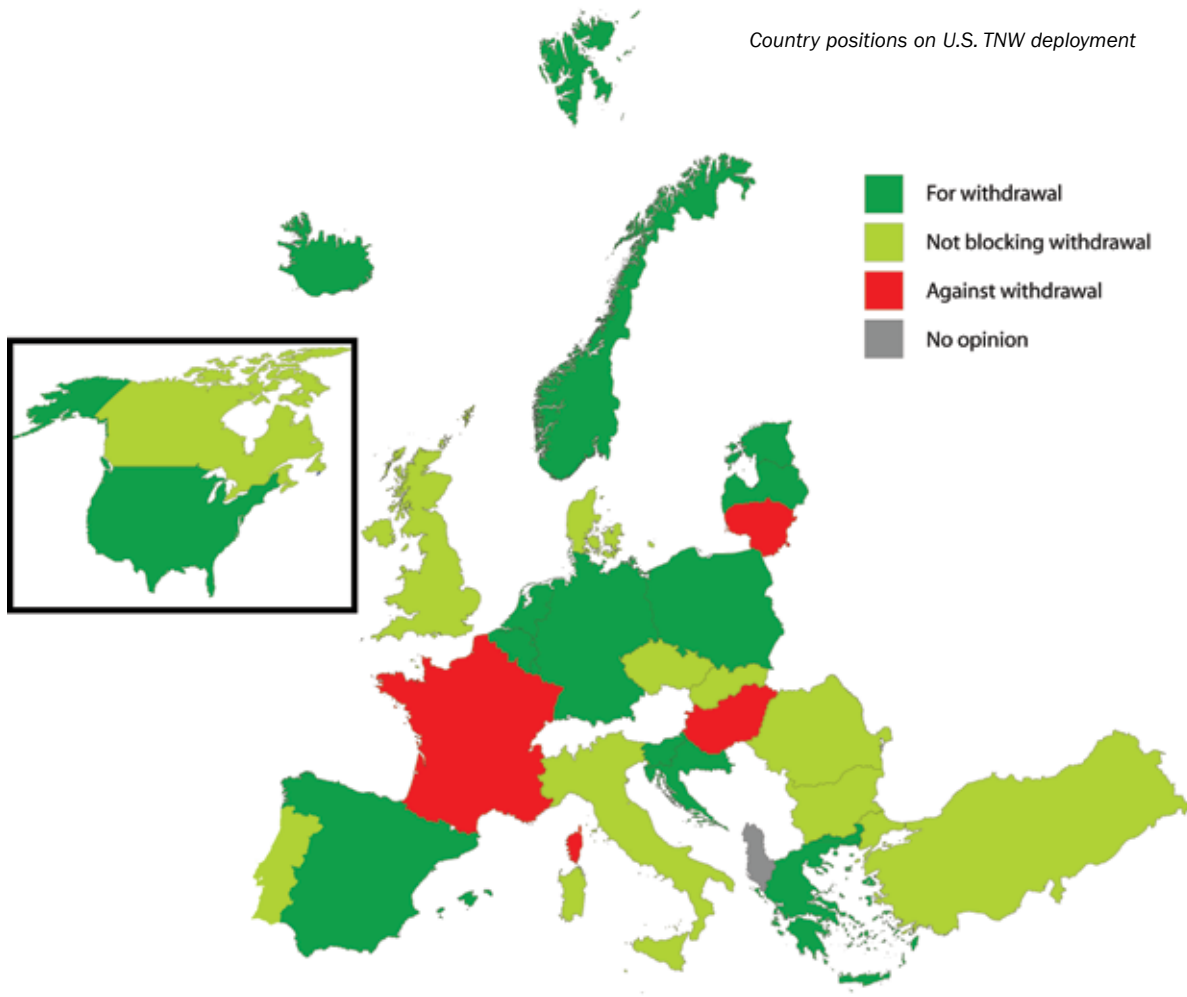
## 2.7 Safety

Safety issues, even after the 2008 U.S. Air Force's Blue Ribbon Review<sup>36</sup>, were barely mentioned by the NATO delegations in Brussels, despite the fact that safety concerns are often brought up by experts and political activists. No country mentioned doubts about security of the military bases hosting the nuclear weapons. This despite the April 2010 high profile breaking and entering into the Belgian Kleine Brogel Airbase, where 20 U.S. B61 warheads and their F-16 delivery jets are kept in bunkers. Belgian peace activists were able to walk undisturbed among the bunkers for hours. And videotape it.<sup>37</sup> In international media and among disarmament experts, this led to questions about how well protected the B61 are against theft or other unauthorised access. Still, in our interviews, NATO countries did not raise base security as a concern.

35 NATO (April 24, 1999): The Alliance's Strategic Concept. Paragraph 63.

36 Available from the Federation of American Scientists, here: <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/usa/doctrine/usaf/BRR-2008.pdf>

37 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1fnDhwWm-U>



## 2.8 Voting patterns

### Old and New Europe?

In literature on the subject, it is often assumed that those countries that became members of NATO after 1989 are more reluctant to end NATO nuclear sharing than those countries that were part of NATO during the Cold War. The outcomes of the interviews with all NATO delegations do not confirm this pattern. On the contrary, there seems to be no discernable distinction between 'old Europe' and 'new Europe'.

Of the 14 countries advocating an end to TNW deployment, 9 were members before the fall of the Berlin Wall, five are 'new'. Of the 10 countries 'not blocking' TNW removal, six are 'old' members and four are former Warsaw Pact members. Of the countries opposing TNW removal, two are 'new', one is 'old'. One 'new' member, Albania, did not put forward an opinion on the matter.

The faulty assumption is not only repeated in public documents. The interviews conducted at NATO HQ showed that many delegations also work from this assumption. A handful of 'old members' mentioned that in discussing TNW removal, the reluctance of 'new Europe' should be taken into account.

### Proximity to Russia?

Digging deeper, the assumption stems from the idea that countries closer to Russia will be more likely to remain in favour of maintaining nuclear sharing while countries further away would be more open to change. The Baltic states are often mentioned as against TNW removal because of their proximity to Russia, especially as part of the Russian TNW deployment is close to their borders. Both Estonia and Latvia attach much less importance to continued deployment than is often assumed, and both agree that the TNW are redundant if not completely obsolete. Both have expressed their desire to remove TNW if – and this is an important if – Russia is willing to reduce and/or relocate its own TNW stockpile. The importance of Russian 'reciprocity' will be discussed in the next chapter. Lithuania seems most reluctant to let go of the TNW, saying it does not support removal unless *all* Russian TNW are verifiably dismantled. What the three do agree on is that visible show of Alliance solidarity is most important. They do regard TNW as contributing to that. But Estonia and Latvia both proposed other, "more relevant" forms of visible Alliance solidarity, such as more military training in their region, NATO investment in building a marine port, or an extension of the already existing NATO air patrol missions.

Similarly, Poland has often been misunderstood. Many assume that Poland is in favour of continued TNW deployment, even though Polish minister of foreign affairs Radek Sikorski asked for reductions of tactical nuclear weapons in a public letter written together with his Swedish colleague, Carl Bildt in February 2010. In the open letter published in the New York Times, the two ministers call the TNW “*Dangerous remnants of a dangerous past*”. They propose further reductions of TNW, as measures that “*should only be seen as steps towards the total elimination of these types of weapons*”.<sup>38</sup> Polish diplomats in Brussels confirmed that the Polish view on TNW has not changed. At the same time, opinions voiced by the members further away from the Russian border are equally diverse. France is against, but its direct neighbours Germany and Belgium are among the most vocal proponents of ending TNW deployment. Canada is more reluctant than the U.S., it seems, while Spain more enthusiastic than Portugal.

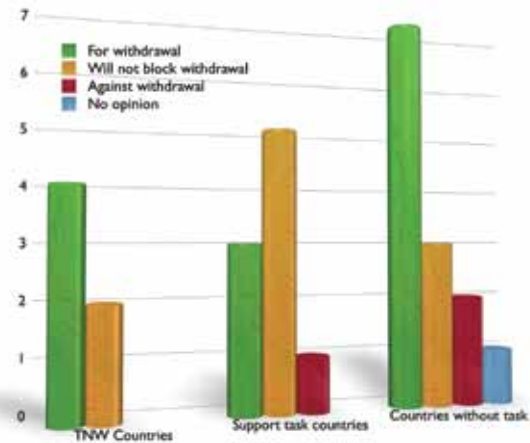
### Nuclear Involvement

According to NATO staff, 15 countries are physically involved in NATO nuclear sharing, while 27 are involved in consultations as part of the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG). Only France does not participate in the NPG. The U.S. provides and is responsible for maintenance and upgrades to the warheads themselves. In addition, U.S. aircraft are involved in nuclear missions flown from Aviano Base in Italy. Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands host nuclear warheads and their own Air Forces are trained to fly nuclear missions. Turkey hosts warheads on Incirlik Air Base, but currently no squadron (Turkish or U.S.) is tasked with nuclear missions involving the Incirlik warheads. Nine other countries have an active ‘nuclear task’: The Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Portugal,



Aviano Airbase in Italy

### Who Decides?



Romania and the UK. Their support tasks include air control missions, reconnaissance, radar and communications support and refuelling.

It is noteworthy that of the six countries involved in deploying TNW and flying nuclear missions, four are proponents of TNW removal. Three host countries Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as the U.S, have all indicated they wish to work towards an end to TNW deployment. The Dutch government formally notified the U.S. government that the Netherlands no longer relies on U.S. TNW for its security, and that the TNW can be removed. This position was backed by a widely supported parliamentary resolution calling on the government “*to notify the U.S. government that it is no longer attached to the protection of the European continent through the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe, and that it regards the withdrawal of these nuclear weapons desirable*”.<sup>39</sup>

Germany, as discussed in the previous chapter, has been the strongest proponent of ending TNW deployment in Europe, with a 2009 coalition government agreement openly calling – within NATO – for an end to TNW deployment in Germany.

The Belgian government supported the German / Dutch initiative to make the future of TNW a topic on the agenda of the April 2010 Tallinn NATO Foreign Ministerial. The Belgian parliament has called on its government since 2005 to strive for removal of the TNW. Italy and Turkey are less outspoken on the subject, at least in the interviews we had with their delegations in Brussels. Both indicated they would not block consensus on removal. According to a U.S. cable leaked by

38 New York Times, February 1, 2010: *Next, the Tactical Nukes*, Op-Ed by Bildt, Carl & Sikorski, Radek. Obtained online: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/02/opinion/02iht-edbildt.html>

39 Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal, 22 februari 2010: Motie 32 123 V, no. 86, Motie van de leden Van Velzen en Azough. Obtained online: [http://www.europa-nu.nl/id/viel8rgpzgyl/motie\\_motie\\_van\\_velzen\\_azough\\_over\\_de](http://www.europa-nu.nl/id/viel8rgpzgyl/motie_motie_van_velzen_azough_over_de)

Wikileaks, Italy did propose removal of its TNW in November 2009<sup>40</sup>, but this story is uncorroborated by Italian sources. In Italy, rumours about relocation of all currently deployed TNW to Aviano Air Base led to the Regional President preventatively issuing a statement opposing this scenario, with unanimous support from the Provincial Council.<sup>41</sup>

Throughout the entire process of preparing the NATO Strategic Concept, the U.S. has been surprisingly flexible on the subject of the future of TNW. The U.S. has maintained that it does not want to forego discussions among European partners. Off the record, most U.S. diplomats are quite outspoken on the subject: they see no future for TNW deployment in Europe. It is a public secret that the current U.S. Ambassador to NATO, Ivo Daalder, would support an end to NATO nuclear sharing if the European partners agree and if certain additional criteria are met. Those, as said, will be discussed in the next chapter.

The other nine countries with a supporting task are less outspoken than the host countries, but only one of these indicated opposition to the removal of the TNW. Five of the countries with supporting nuclear roles said they would not block consensus, and while some supported the idea of withdrawal, they attached more importance to alliance consensus. Others would favour the current status quo, but are unwilling to expend political capital to maintain it, also prioritising consensus. Among the 13 countries without a nuclear task, only two are against removal, while one had no opinion on the matter. The majority favours removal.

## 2.9 Conclusion

The data discussed in this chapter show that, while there is no consensus to immediately end NATO nuclear sharing or remove TNW from Europe, it is clear that the large majority of member states would either favour or not object to a future free of U.S. nuclear weapons deployed in Europe. The support for continued deployment is minimal, with France as the most outspoken in retaining the status quo. More than often realised, the support for an end to TNW deployment in Europe is spread across the map. Neither duration of NATO membership nor proximity to Russia are explanatory variables bearing a clear relation to country positions. Our research shows that in the group of nine countries with a support role in nuclear sharing, the majority would not block consensus on withdrawal, and some are outspoken proponents.

To prefer an end to the deployment of American nuclear weapons in Europe doesn't necessarily mean countries want them gone today, or tomorrow. Nor does it say anything yet about the preconditions countries want to see met before they feel comfortable with an end to forward deployment. There are several obstacles standing in the way of early removal of TNW from Europe, some of which get support from even the most active proponents of nuclear disarmament. Taking from this chapter the message that there is sufficient political will to change, or end current nuclear deployments, we look in the next chapter at the obstacles to be overcome before NATO consensus can be reached.



W35 Bunkers and runway at Volkel Air Base, The Netherlands

40 WikiLeaks (November 24, 2009): Cable 09BRU.S.SELS1580, section 8.

41 <http://www.ilfriuli.it/it/top-news/50367/>

# 3. Withdrawal symptoms

In the previous chapter, we saw how only three member states actively oppose TNW removal. The majority of countries do not oppose, or are openly promoting removal. Chapter 2 showed how little substantive support is left for the continuation of the current TNW deployment in Europe. This raises questions: How come the TNW are still around? Why was no agreement reached to change the policy through the process of formulating a new Strategic Concept? What is standing in the way? This chapter delves deeper into those questions. It looks at the conditions countries have set before they can agree to TNW removal. These 'obstacles' will be looked at one by one as we also address both the breadth of support and the validity of the underlying argumentation. In the next chapter, the outcomes will be used to formulate suggestions that could move the debate forward in the coming period.

## 3.1 Transatlantic burden sharing

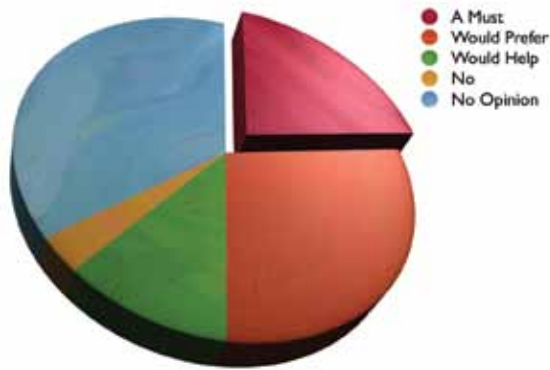
During our talks, many NATO countries expressed the importance of maintaining a strong transatlantic link. For some of them, the North American involvement in securing Europe is the unique selling point for NATO as a multinational alliance. A diplomat of one of the 'new' (post-Cold War) member states formulated it in no uncertain terms: *"Becoming a NATO member for us was an important part of a package deal: Democracy, freedom of speech, EU membership and NATO membership. All are part of the Western package. NATO membership is an important part of that, because it ties the U.S. to the defence of our territory"*.

Historically, nuclear sharing has been one of the manifestations of that transatlantic link. It solidifies the North American involvement in securing the European continent, while at the same time it gives European allies a shared responsibility in planning – and in case of a nuclear war – executing a joint nuclear strategy. Even countries more critical of current U.S. foreign policy bring up the importance of nuclear sharing in this respect. In their logic, nuclear sharing and other forms of burden sharing give European states leverage with the U.S. in case the U.S. – as one respondent put it – *"tries to sell another Iraq"*. In their view it guarantees them greater access to Washington's corridors of power. One diplomat suggested there should be an increase in the transatlantic link *"to remain important in Washington"*.

The burden sharing argument was brought up by NATO diplomats of eight countries during our interviews. However, not all eight concluded that the TNW should therefore stay. Five countries – mostly 'new' members – used the argument to explain that for them, visible proof of American involvement in their security is more important than the form the involvement takes. Some actually expressed they would prefer removal of TNW, if it were replaced with *"more functional"* or *"more convincing"* methods of strengthening the transatlantic link and of sharing the burden. Some suggested that missile defence could play that role in the future, with the sharing of technology, deployment of U.S. military instruments and rockets on European territory, and sharing in the decision making process and maintenance costs. It would, as one delegate put it, make the TNW *"even more obsolete"*. Another asserted that once a functional missile defence system is in place *"the U.S. will for sure remove the TNW"*. It is important to note here that while approximately 50% of states saw a clear link between missile defence and TNW, the other 50% wholeheartedly denied that any such link exists, or should exist. It is clear that NATO is internally divided on the subject. Reconciling these divergent views is likely another reason why the Alliance agreed to conduct a Defence and Deterrence Posture Review.

It is noteworthy that none of the five host states, or the U.S. raised the issue of burden sharing in our interviews. Though the outcomes of the interviews are not conclusive, it seems that those countries most directly involved in nuclear sharing seem the least concerned about this way

### Russian Reciprocity



of maintaining the transatlantic link. It is not the TNW themselves that they value, but the ‘visible proof’ of alliance solidarity it represents.

### 3.2 Reciprocity

The Strategic Concept formulates as a condition for TNW removal that “in any future reductions, our aim should be to seek Russian agreement to increase transparency on its nuclear weapons in Europe and relocate these weapons away from the territory of NATO members. Any further steps must take into account the disparity with the greater Russian stockpiles of short-range nuclear weapons”.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Russia maintains a large number of TNW that could hit NATO member states bordering, or close to Russia. Estimates of numbers vary, but for sure Russia currently has 2,000 operational TNW.

17 of 28 member states mentioned Russian reciprocity. Of those, six would have Russian reciprocity as a necessary precondition for any NATO TNW removal. One country even went so far as to say that for NATO to start reducing TNW deployment in Europe, Russia would first have to “fully and verifiably relocate all its TNW to behind the Ural mountains”. Others in this group left more room for interpretation on what form reciprocity should take, with comments like “It can’t be that we give everything and they give nothing”.

The problem with reciprocity as a condition for removal is that, according to several NATO delegations, Russia is unlikely to be very forthcoming on this. It is a concern shared by many outside experts. Russia has made it clear that the U.S. would need to relocate its remaining TNW back to U.S. territory before Russia will even contemplate discussing its own TNW arsenal. For an outsider this may seem an unreasonable demand by the Russians, but they

have a strong case. After the break-up of the Soviet Union, several of the new countries possessed nuclear weapons, including TNW. Russia put a lot of effort in regaining sole responsibility and ownership of all Soviet nuclear weapons, and relocated them to its own territory. It has been waiting for the U.S. to do the same since. Russia reasons that only if the U.S. withdraws its TNW from other countries, can the two former enemies discuss reductions of the TNW located on their territories on equal footing<sup>43</sup>. In addition, Russia does not regard its TNW as pairing NATO TNW. As discussed in the previous chapter, Russia realises that by now the NATO TNW have very little practical use. Russia’s main concern is the current overwhelming conventional superiority of NATO. TNW, for Russia, are a hedge against conventional – not nuclear - NATO capabilities.

Many diplomats we spoke to realise this complexity. For some it is a reason to be modest in their expectations as to what Russian reciprocal steps could look like. One diplomat said it would be helpful “if they would at least be a bit more transparent about numbers and locations”. Eight said they would prefer Russian reciprocity, without wanting to forego an autonomous NATO decision if the Russians refuse to negotiate about TNW. Three countries took a different approach, saying that they hoped for some Russian reciprocity, as it would help to move the debate within NATO forward but that they would certainly not object to an autonomous decision by NATO. One country openly criticized the link with the Russian TNW, saying: “reciprocity is unrealistic. It just prevents things from moving along within NATO”. Ten countries offered no opinion on the matter.

The internal division on the reciprocity issue is reflected in the very precise formulation in the Strategic Concept. “Agreement with Russia should be sought”, and “disparity has to be taken into account”. The formulation in no way blocks any autonomous decision, but at the same time makes it impossible to make a decision without some form of consultation with Russia. A problem noticed by many is that no timeframe is given for this process of aiming to seek Russian gestures. Several questions must be asked: Who will ask the Russians, and when? In what forum? Will this be an open-ended process? Will NATO as an alliance, or will the governments who comprise it, do nothing until Russia agrees? And, what if the Russians do not want to engage with NATO as a whole, or if they do, only to maintain a clear “Njet”? In the next chapter, we propose a scenario taking into account these questions.

42 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, § 26

43. Russian Federation (March 1, 2011): Statement by H.E. Mr. Sergey Lavrov, viewed on-line: [http://reachingcriticalwill.org/political/cd/2011/statements/part1/1March\\_Russia.pdf](http://reachingcriticalwill.org/political/cd/2011/statements/part1/1March_Russia.pdf)

### 3.3 27 or 28 – The French dis-connection

The role of France when it comes to NATO nuclear sharing and nuclear deterrence can be quite confusing to outsiders. As noted in the 2010 Strategic Concept, *“the independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France, which have a deterrent role of their own, contribute to the overall deterrence and security of the Allies”*.<sup>44</sup> However, France is the only NATO country that does not participate in the NATO Nuclear Planning Group. This means that nuclear sharing *policy* is decided on by consensus of the 28, including France. But implementation, or *posture*, is discussed and decided on by the 27 members of the NPG, excluding France. This ‘27/28 issue’ was brought up by many as problematic and unnecessarily complex.

In the course of our interviews, ten countries specifically mentioned France as an obstacle to removing U.S. TNW from Europe. Most of the countries criticising France are also part of the group openly advocating an end to U.S. nuclear deployment in Europe. Frustration with French inflexibility is tangible in many conversations at NATO HQ, and leads to biting comments such as *“Sarkozy just wants to be a big player and he needs nukes for that”*. The frustration with the French attitude is aggravated by the 27/28 division. This prevents the 27 NPG countries from bringing to a conclusion the discussion on changing, or ending, nuclear sharing. Those that are responsible for policy implementation and scenario planning for NATO-assigned nuclear weapons are unable to make policy changes that might better address practical implementation challenges.

According to some insiders, there was a flurry of discussion in the NPG in early 2010 to revisit current deployment scenarios of U.S. TNW, without necessarily changing NATO’s nuclear sharing policy. However, the open letter sent to Secretary General Anders-Fogh Rasmussen by the Foreign Ministers of Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Norway on 26 February 2010 requested *“a comprehensive discussion on these issues”*<sup>45</sup> at the Tallinn Foreign Ministers meeting, thereby extending the discussion to all 28 members. One diplomat indicated his disappointment with this, saying *“Tallinn was a strategic blunder, it brought [the TNW issue] to 28 which means France can block any consensus”*.

A number of critics of French policy interpret the French opposition as a way to prevent the spotlight from turning on the French arsenal. France has not particularly embraced the world free of nuclear weapons vision put forward by President Obama. Instead it has repeatedly called for ‘creating the conditions’ for such a world, and then only slowly and in the context of the NPT. In the Security Council, France never went further than stating at the 2009 Summit that it shares the *“commitment to a future world with fewer nuclear weapons and, perhaps one day, a world free of nuclear weapons”*.<sup>46</sup>

The perception among the ten countries that specifically mentioned France was that during the Strategic Concept consultation process the French tactic was to be inflexible on a wide range of topics, and in this way to be sure they could prevent any change to NATO’s nuclear policy. France originally opposed the idea of a NATO Missile Defence system; France blocked more forward-looking language on nuclear disarmament; France objected until the last moment to any plan for developing a civilian capacity; It was France – apparently – who was most vocal in opposing the adoption of ‘negative security assurance’ language similar to what the U.S. formulated in its Nuclear Posture Review. One diplomat lamented that *“France is holding conservative positions on many issues, and will likely trade them off piece by piece in order to keep the nuclear policy the way it is”*.

The French would certainly object to this interpretation. According to them, many NATO colleagues are too focussed on disarmament, losing sight of the comprehensive security picture. The French perception is that TNW deployment is but a small part of a finely tuned package of political and military deterrence and defence tools, as is missile defence. Also, according to France, no proper debate on TNW has taken place yet on the national level. Especially in Germany –said France– the debate is between the MOD and the MFA, where the MFA is pushing for an end to TNW deployment because of public and political pressure, while the MOD does not necessarily agree. And as to the French arsenal itself, France objected strongly to the idea that the overriding concern in Paris is that the spotlight will turn on them. Rather, French assessment of the security situation in Europe leads to the conclusion that their nuclear weapons still have a role to play in preventing future intra-European military rivalry. Or, as President Sarkozy put it in the UN Security Council: *“all of us may one day be threatened by a*

44 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, § 18

45 *ibid.*

46 Statement by Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, to the UN Security Council Summit Meeting on Nuclear Weapons, 24 September 2009. S/PV.6191

neighbour that has acquired nuclear weapons".<sup>47</sup> In the age of European continental integration in NATO and the EU, this is a radical position to take. On the other hand, France would argue it has history on its side. French diplomats responded fiercely to the German aim of ending nuclear sharing. One diplomat labelled the German proposal as "unthankful" because "Germany should not forget that the EU and NATO offered Germany the chance to rebuild and regain esteem. Nuclear sharing and other forms of burden sharing come with that package deal".

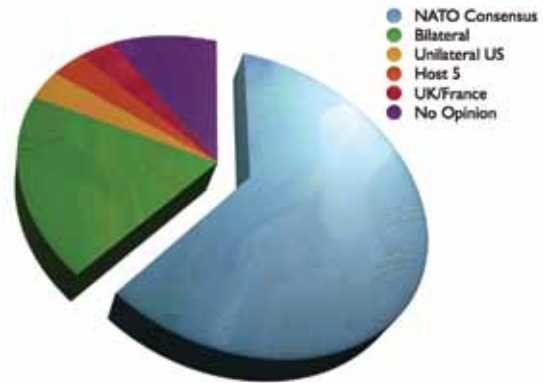
French resistance to nuclear policy change will be hard to overcome. Any change to nuclear sharing policy requires consensus at the level of 28. Deployment decisions can be made without France, by the NPG. But many countries – including some of the host states – have indicated that they prefer a negotiated outcome at the 28 level – thus including France. It is worrying that – in the interviews – no delegation presented a viable plan for how to deal with French objections. In chapter 4 we will suggest a scenario taking into account this important hurdle.

### 3.4 Alliance cohesion

After the Germans stepped forward in 2009 and openly said they desired an end to TNW deployment on their territory, many others were quick to respond that a 'unilateral' step by Germany would be unacceptable. "In together, out together" is how one delegate worded it. The concern about a rift within the alliance on this subject is reflected in the Strategic Concept: "National decisions regarding arms control and disarmament may have an impact on the security of all Alliance members. We are committed to maintain, and develop as necessary, appropriate consultations among Allies on these issues".<sup>48</sup> In addition, NATO will "ensure the broadest possible participation of Allies in collective defence planning on nuclear roles, in peacetime basing of nuclear forces, and in command, control and consultation arrangements".<sup>49</sup>

In our talks, many countries reaffirmed the importance of NATO-wide consensus on all policies, including nuclear policy. Seventeen countries mentioned consensus as a condition for removal. But not all countries share this view. Five respondents said, as far as they are concerned, the removal of TNW should be decided bilaterally between the

Who Decides?



U.S. and Russia, either as part of the next round of START talks, or through other mechanisms.

The Strategic Concept mentions "appropriate consultations", but does not elaborate on what those consultations may look like. One country stated that, at the end of the day, it is up to the U.S. to make the decision. The U.S. delegation however, went out of its way to make clear that – as far as they are concerned – the decision on how to "get rid of" TNW has to come from European allies. One country stated that "it would be only fair to leave the decision up to the host states. We would support their decision either way". Another country concluded that, in the end, it will be up to France and the UK more than anyone else, reasoning that, if the U.S. TNW are removed from Europe, the burden of nuclear deterrence will rest more heavily on the shoulders of the two European nuclear weapon states.

Policy change needs consensus of the 28, and changes to individual nuclear roles are discussed among 27 in the NPG. But the deployment of TNW in the five host countries is by bilateral agreement between the host and the U.S. One new NATO delegation recognized this, saying "the DCA<sup>50</sup> countries - they should have the right to the first say on what they want- that's only fair". Several delegations hinted at scenarios in which the policy remains unchanged – for now – while severe changes are made to the current deployments. Central storage in one location was suggested, as was a reduction in numbers, but also the idea of relocating all TNW to the U.S. while several European countries maintain their nuclear basing infrastructure in caretaker status, or keep their dual capable aircraft for nuclear tasks.

47 Statement by Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, to the UN Security Council Summit Meeting on Nuclear Weapons, 24 September 2009. S/PV.6191

48 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, § 26

49 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, § 19

50 DCA: Dual capable aircraft. Aircraft capable of flying both conventional and nuclear missions.



Of the host countries, none openly advocated any of those particular scenarios. A German diplomat concluded that *“Germany will not consider the possibility of bilaterally agreed changes to its nuclear task. NATO unity is too important”*. The same source however, hinted at possible reductions. The Dutch delegation said that *“There are a lot of scenarios on the table. The Netherlands has no preference, nor a policy on a specific modality. The Netherlands will not ask for removal unilaterally”*. The Italian delegation, while offering no opinion on removal, did say *“we have our values, our positions, what we value is consensus”*.

In this discussion, it is important to keep in mind that there are precedents in which a country previously hosting U.S. nuclear warheads negotiated a withdrawal without changing NATO policy. The most recent example is Greece. TNW were removed from Greece in the early years of this century. One Greek diplomat explains: *“We were lucky... about 10 years ago, the U.S. needed to upgrade the bombs”*. That made the bombs incompatible with the Greek Corsairs. Greece purchased F-16’s, and made it known to the U.S. that it wasn’t enthusiastic about the prospect of having to invest in modifying the F-16’s for nuclear missions. The modifications *“would have undermined the performance of the aircraft in missions that we actually need them for.”* The U.S. and Greece agreed that the B61 in Greece had become obsolete. Their original targets, Bulgaria and Romania, were in the process of becoming alliance members. So the bombs were removed by the U.S. The new nuclear role for Greece is a dormant one: Greece can still service DCA, whenever the need arises. The infrastructure is still there (WS3’s; runway). Greece will not purchase DCA, but it can support deployment if ever needed.

A strong reaffirmation of the transatlantic link and alliance solidarity on policy issues was mentioned by almost every delegation as a key priority in negotiating the new Strategic Concept. However, as the anecdote about Greece demonstrates, changes in specific posture issues, and moreover, on deployment locations and numbers, can be made at either the bilateral or NPG level. The decision to only decide on further reductions in consensus may be a political reality, but it is not a legal obligation. That said, in thinking through scenarios for NATO decision making on TNW withdrawal, it is the political reality that we have to take into account.

### 3.5 Secondary arguments

Russian reciprocity, French reluctance and the importance of maintaining Alliance cohesion are by far the most discussed obstacles on the way to TNW removal. There are, however, other potential arguments. Some of these were discussed

during the interviews, others are brought up in the extensive discourse on the subject.

#### Political role

Four countries brought up the concept of the political use of TNW as something to consider before removal. Three of those refer to the usefulness of the TNW as a bargaining chip in negotiations with Russia, thus linking it to the reciprocity argument already discussed. One country added that TNW could have a role in politically countering, or containing future threats. This line of argumentation used to take a more central role in the past. These days, most experts, and NATO delegates, regard the TNW as being of limited use both militarily and politically.

#### Inside proliferation

In expert literature and in statements by some NATO staff, a reason given to keep U.S. TNW in Europe is to prevent European states from developing their own nuclear weapons, despite the fact that this would be a direct violation of the NPT. Turkey is often mentioned in this context. In our interviews, not one single NATO delegation raised this as a concern. In fact, Turkey appeared slightly offended by the suggestion, and pointed out that Turkish governments have consistently denied that they would even consider reneging on their NPT commitment and developing their own arsenal.

#### Pecking order

Another possible obstacle discussed in literature is the idea that nuclear host countries might be reluctant to give up their role in nuclear sharing, because it raises their profile within NATO. In none of the talks was this mentioned. Moreover, it doesn’t fit with the recognition that the majority of host countries have clearly indicated they want the TNW phased out. In addition, it is good to take note of what one Greek diplomat said on this matter. Reflecting on the decision to withdraw all TNW from Greece at the beginning of this century, the Greek experience is that *“just because we have been a country with an active nuclear role, and are now no more, we can understand all sides to the debate. As a country that can be a bridge between different opinions on the matter, our opinion on the matter is taken very seriously, in our experience”*.

#### Bureaucratic interests

Apart from meeting with representatives from all national delegations at NATO HQ, we also interviewed several high-ranking NATO HQ staff. It seems that among the staff, there is more support for continued deployment of TNW than there is among the delegations. Staff brought up the argument, for example, that TNW deployment prevents European NATO countries from developing their own nuclear arsenal, and staff tended to stress the burden

sharing argument more than most delegations. In looking ahead, and examining scenarios for NATO decision making on ending TNW deployment, this is something to take into consideration. An explanation could be found in literature on bureaucratic mechanisms. For staff, a decision to phase out the TNW weapon system that has been central to the organisation's strategy is more than just a political decision. It affects staff jobs, department budgets and consequently it affects the decision-making autonomy of a certain part of the organisation.

### *Military conservatism*

French sources pointed out that – in Germany and perhaps in other countries as well - there is a difference in what the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA) want and what the Ministries of Defence (MOD) want. Disarmament and Non-Proliferation are MFA themes. Defence and arms procurement are MOD themes. It leads to differences in assessment on the functionality and relevance of weapon systems. For MFA's, TNW removal can be a political tool forcing a breakthrough in international relations. For MOD's, ending nuclear sharing has implications for defence strategies, and for personnel. Most of our talks were with the representatives of the political (MFA) part of the NATO delegations. In the few talks with representatives of NATO's military apparatus, there was no clear distinction in their position. In one case, the military attaché was actually more outspoken on the obsolescence of TNW than was his MFA counterpart. The current economic constraints could make it easier for MOD to accept changes to the nuclear posture. Just like TNW removal is the low hanging fruit for MFA delegates concerned with disarmament, it may as well be the low hanging fruit for MOD concerned with budget cuts.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The most important obstacles to be overcome on the road to TNW withdrawal from Europe are (1) the role of TNW as cornerstone of Alliance cohesion; (2) potential French opposition to supporting a consensus decision; and (3) the decision to first seek Russian reciprocity and the lack of clarity about the time frame in which NATO gives itself the opportunity to do the searching, as well as what will happen if Russia refuses. Those three obstacles together make it hard to imagine a rapid decision-making process on the future of nuclear sharing. Yet, Chapter 2 showed a strong and growing momentum toward phasing out the TNW. In the short run, it is almost inconceivable that the major proponents of TNW withdrawal would let the issue slide off the table. The major risk in getting from today to the day that NATO decides to withdraw TNW seems to be time. If the obstacles that still need to be overcome stall the process for too long, then the risk is that the opportunity for nuclear policy change will be

gone by the time NATO finally has some clarity from Russia on its readiness to take reciprocal steps. In the next chapter, the opportunities and obstacles are brought together, and a scenario is suggested to keep the process going, without losing the momentum that the attitudinal shift mentioned in chapter 1 provides.



*October 2010 meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels.  
Source: Latvian Foreign Ministry*

# 4. Withdrawing

Chapter 2 of this report showed that within NATO there is sufficient political will to end TNW deployment in European NATO member states. Half the Alliance admits to actively seeking such a scenario. Ten more would not object. Only three stated they would object, with only one – France – willing to invest political capital to try and block processes leading to withdrawal. Chapter 3 gave an overview of what the member states themselves perceive as the major obstacles to overcome. The three major obstacles are: (1) Before removing TNW, there should be an attempt to engage Russia in some form of reciprocal disarmament process, leading to more transparency and the relocation or removal of (parts of) the Russian TNW arsenal; (2) TNW removal should not undermine alliance cohesion; (3) Special attention needs to be given to French concerns for the effects of removal on the autonomous French nuclear capacity and responsibilities - France could otherwise block a '28' policy change.

In this last chapter, we look at the practical implications of these findings and propose a scenario by which NATO can achieve, by 2012, a consensus decision to end TNW deployment in Europe.

## 4.1 Finding Russian reciprocity

The Strategic Concept and our interviews both show that NATO is unwilling to decide on ending TNW deployment without first 'getting something' from the Russians. The Russians are not willing to begin talking about their TNW arsenal unless two conditions are met. First, a more comprehensive discussion on mutual disarmament, involving levels of conventional forces, missile defence, space security and strategic nuclear forces must take place. Second, the U.S. must physically relocate its TNW arsenal to its own territory. However, the U.S. cannot relocate its TNW until agreement is reached among NATO allies. And that brings us back to the top of this paragraph: Allies are unwilling to decide on ending TNW deployment without first 'getting something' from the Russians. This looming impasse is a tricky one to break.

The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) at first glance seems to be the right place to discuss a way out of the impasse, especially since the NRC agreed in Lisbon to "*continue dialogue on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation issues of interest*".<sup>51</sup> It is extremely unlikely however, that Russia

would be willing to negotiate a comprehensive package deal including nuclear weapons reductions with NATO as a whole. The question then remains: What would make Russia suddenly change its mind and want to engage in consultations on its TNW arsenal? The U.S. TNW are, after all, still in Europe.

The NATO Strategic Concept seems, at first glance, to reinforce the impasse. It states that, prior to any NATO decision on TNW reductions or withdrawal, NATO should "*aim [...] to seek Russian agreement to increase transparency on its nuclear weapons in Europe and relocate these weapons away from the territory of NATO member*".<sup>52</sup> The formulation is deliberately multi-interpretatable. In choosing this language, NATO leaves the option open to keep TNW deployed in Europe, by pointing at Russian unwillingness to take reciprocal steps. At the same time, the formulation leaves a narrow opening to end TNW deployment, if it can be clearly demonstrated that some attempt has been made to "aim to seek" Russian agreement. The Strategic Concept, in being deliberately vague on this point, allows NATO to justify both inaction and an attempt to seek reciprocal steps, even if the seeking does not produce immediate tangible results.

51 NATO – Russia Council Joint Statement, 20 November 2010

52 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, § 26

What the Strategic Concept fails to specify, is *who* is going to “seek agreement”; when that process will start; exactly *how much* reciprocity would suffice for NATO; *how long* NATO will continue attempts to seek Russian agreement; and what the consequences will be if Russia flat out refuses to talk about TNW?

President Obama took the lead in breaking the impasse, in his message to the Senate after ratifying the New START Treaty on February 2nd, 2011: “*The United States will seek to initiate, following consultation with NATO Allies but not later than 1 year after the entry into force of the New START Treaty, negotiations with the Russian Federation on an agreement to address the disparity between the non-strategic (tactical) nuclear weapons stockpiles of the Russian Federation and of the United States*”.<sup>53</sup> This message sets a clear one-year deadline for NATO to take the necessary steps to make the inclusion of TNW in the next round of U.S.-Russian reduction discussions possible.

The consultation among Allies mentioned by President Obama can take two forms within NATO. One is the policy track, involving all 28 Allies. Consultations on that level would address whether NATO should amend, or end nuclear sharing. The second possibility is to have a consultation among the 27 countries that are part of the Nuclear Planning Group, and as such involved in nuclear sharing and in the forward deployment of U.S. TNW in Europe. Consultation on this level would not result in a decision on policy changes, but could nevertheless be the key to breaking the impasse around Russian reciprocity. The NPG could mandate the U.S. to approach Russia with a clearly defined *offer*. The offer would be that NATO is ready to withdraw all U.S. TNW from Europe, if the Russians are willing to enter into negotiations on a wide range of defence and disarmament issues *including NATO concerns about Russian TNW and their locations*.

**STEP 1** The NPG mandates the U.S. to approach Russia and offer the removal of all American TNW from Europe, in return for Russia’s commitment to engage in comprehensive defence and disarmament talks that include NATO member concerns about Russian TNW and their locations.

53 U.S. Department of State (February 2, 2011): New START Treaty: Resolution of Advice and Consent to Ratification, obtained online: <http://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/153910.htm>

### Implications of the NPG mandate

The described mandate would not require a shift in NATO nuclear sharing policy - as the story of Greece demonstrated in Chapter 3. The mandate would not be tantamount to a formal decision on ending nuclear sharing. But it would tie the fate of the U.S. TNW deployed in Europe to the commitment of Russia to include its own TNW arsenal in future disarmament talks. It is likely that Russia would agree to such a scenario, as it addresses both Russian conditions: First, the U.S. relocates its TNW outside Europe at the beginning of the next round of comprehensive disarmament talks. And second, discussions on Russia’s own TNW arsenal will not happen without engaging on the broader disarmament questions.

Relocating the TNW back to the U.S., without already taking a final decision on the future of nuclear sharing, makes it possible to address with Russia NATO’s concerns about Russian TNW and their locations. A final decision on changing or ending existing nuclear sharing policies will be made subject to the reciprocal steps Russia is willing to take. It is not difficult to imagine then that Russia and the U.S. will agree to a new status quo in which Russia relocates all its TNW outside Europe, as does the U.S. The two former enemies could also agree on whether or not they are allowed to keep infrastructure needed for redeployment in caretaker status, or not. This way, the NATO allies get the reciprocity they aim for.

This solution also addresses the wish of some NATO members that the U.S. TNW should play a (modest) role as a bargaining chip: To draw Russia to the negotiation table to discuss Russian TNW. Russia would ‘give something’, albeit the impact of what they give will take a bit longer than some NATO allies may have hoped.

### Support for a mandate?

This report shows that only three NATO member states say they would object to an end to TNW deployment in Europe in the current situation. Would they block an NPG mandate likely resulting in eventual relocation of the TNW to the U.S.?

France would not be part of issuing the mandate because France is not part of the NPG. France formally has no role in deployment decisions. More importantly, the French concern that TNW should be regarded as part of a much more complex mix of defence and deterrence tools is met in this scenario. Better still, the French concern that TNW removal is primarily an MFA driven idea and not necessarily supported by MOD would be proven wrong, as the NPG is the responsibility of the defence side of NATO delegations, not the foreign policy side.

Although France would not be involved in issuing an NPG mandate, there are still two other opponents to TNW removal: Hungary and Lithuania. Hungary has indicated that it isn't so much opposed to withdrawal per se, but that it doesn't want to take unnecessary chances with a deterrence mix that has been working for so long. By taking this step by step approach, we believe that Hungary will have the opportunity to influence the withdrawal of TNW in such a manner that it can feel reassured that the new defence and deterrence mix will be equally reliable.

Lithuania, although constitutionally bound to not have nuclear weapons on its soil, has serious concerns about Russian TNW and would prefer no changes within NATO until the Russian TNW are, at least, relocated to centralised storage. So, would Lithuania agree, in the NPG, to such a mandate?

Lithuania has already, in a joint working paper to the NPT, called *“upon the United States of America and the Russian Federation to hold further disarmament negotiations, as soon as possible, aimed at further reducing their nuclear arsenals, including non-strategic nuclear weapons, as a concrete step towards their elimination”*.<sup>54</sup> While the diplomat we spoke with indicated opposition to changing NATO nuclear policy without Russian TNW withdrawal, he also indicated that Lithuania would not exert a great deal of political capital to keep the current situation. A more visible show of alliance solidarity by investment into static defence infrastructure in Lithuania would likely alleviate any concerns.

#### Timing

Preferably, the NPG mandate would come before, or early on in the consultation processes part of the Defence and Deterrence Posture Review (D&DPR) announced at the NATO Lisbon Summit. NATO will spend 2011 reviewing its entire defence and deterrence posture, including but not limited to, nuclear posture. Only if the “aiming to seek” Russian results in an outcome early in that process will the D&DPR be able to come to a decision, or a proposal, on withdrawal of TNW.

Currently the discussions in the North Atlantic Council are focusing on the modalities for the review. They are examining how the various NATO committees, including the High Level Group and the newly formed Arms Control Committee will engage throughout. It is expected that during the latter half

of 2011 the focus will be more on the substance of the Review and many insiders expect that a document will be ready for agreement by early 2012, when a NATO Summit is planned in the U.S. The countries advocating an end to TNW deployment have pushed for this review process exactly because they hope it will enable NATO to overcome internal obstacles. The “aiming to seek agreement” with Russia is a step that can, and should, be taken quickly so that other areas of concern can be focussed on without being held hostage to an eventual discussion with Russia on the issue.

#### 4.2 Maintaining NATO cohesion

Getting the consultation process with Russia underway through the ‘27’ in the NPG will allow NATO to address the second obstacle potentially blocking removal of TNW among all 28. A number of countries indicated that they would agree to end TNW deployment in Europe if, and only if, it will not undermine the cohesion of the Alliance. Keeping forms of burden sharing, maintaining the transatlantic link, alliance solidarity, all of these concepts, as we’ve shown in the previous chapter remain crucial to the identity of NATO and to the perception member countries have of how reliable, functional and useful the Alliance is to them. In discussing the opportunities that member states see for removal of TNW, what stood out was the sense that the function of TNW as a ‘glue that holds the Alliance together’ could be replaced by other forms of cooperation and burden sharing. Several countries stipulated they would prefer new ways to cooperate and share the burden, new ways that are more visible, but also that have more practical use for the current and future operations and missions of the Alliance. A clear picture of what that replacement could look like did not emerge during our talks with delegations. Some mentioned Missile Defence, while the Baltic states focussed more on the *visibility* of Alliance solidarity, including new infrastructure, more training manoeuvres and new or extended air defence missions.

The Defence and Deterrence Posture Review would certainly be the place to address those ideas. Our recommendation is that as part of the review process, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) tasks the Defence Policy and Planning Division to find new ways of sharing the burden and maintaining the transatlantic link. The resultant list of country specific wishes and demands would feed back into the Review process and keep the 2012 NATO summit as the target end date.

54 NPT/CONF.2010/WP.69, viewed at: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/legal/npt/revcon2010/papers/WP69.pdf>

**STEP 2** Before the June 2011 Defence Ministerial, NATO members should present acceptable alternatives that would replace the alliance cohesion functions of TNW deployment. The Defence Policy and Planning Division should then be tasked with the responsibility of merging these proposals to present one package proposal as part of the Defence and Deterrence Posture Review.

#### 4.3 Convincing France

The specific objections of France need to be addressed if there is going to be any policy change. It is worrying that during our interviews, no delegation presented a plan for how to 'deal with France'. Many seem to think that – once the other obstacles are cleared – pressure will make France cave in and accept a change to nuclear sharing policy, albeit begrudgingly. “*Arm twisting France into accepting the inevitable*”, is how one delegate worded it. Peer pressure may indeed work. As the current U.S. Ambassador to NATO Ivo Daalder pointed out in a 2008 Foreign Affairs article: “... As other nuclear powers move in a different direction, Paris’ ability to remain a holdout will diminish – as became clear in the 1990s when France finally decided to sign the NPT and, once again after two last series of nuclear tests, when it signed on to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. A democracy like France can remain an international outlier only for so long.”<sup>55</sup>

Given the concern about Alliance cohesion however, it may prove more prudent – and certainly more elegant – to thoroughly investigate the specific concerns of France, and see to what extent NATO, as an Alliance can accommodate her wishes and demands so that France feels sufficiently reassured to support a decision to end TNW deployment, rather than solely succumbing to overwhelming peer pressure and having to swallow it.

It is of course up to France to formulate its own demands and proposals, but following closely the input of France in recent disarmament and security debates gives a rough idea of the direction thinking is going in Paris. First and foremost, France seems preoccupied with wanting to maintain its favourable position in international relations, and within NATO, as a nuclear power. Additional assurance that removal of TNW will not in any way affect the French independent nuclear

capacity may be half the solution. Secondly, the interviews with French diplomats showed that France has a real concern that ‘inside NATO’, the bigger picture should not be lost. Again, the Defence and Deterrence Posture Review process seems the pivotal moment to provide reassurance on that front. When embedded in a comprehensive reassessment of European and NATO deterrence and defence needs, France may eventually become a reluctant proponent of ending TNW deployment, rather than a defiant opponent.

**STEP 3** As part of the D&DPR, special emphasis should be put on reassuring France that its independent nuclear capacity and role will remain unchanged after ending TNW deployment.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

This report demonstrates the overwhelming support within NATO for ending the deployment of U.S. TNW in Europe, and how the process is in danger of becoming deadlocked. Maintaining NATO TNW in Europe keeps Russia from discussing its TNW. Russian TNW make NATO keep its own in Europe. The scenario sketched in this chapter addresses the concerns shown by NATO allies about the Russian deployment of TNW close to the borders of NATO. It would do justice not only to the Alliance’s concerns about Russia, but also to Russian concerns about NATO’s TNW. If NATO truly seeks opportunities for further reductions, and if member states want to implement their NPT agreements in good faith, then NATO needs to take the bold steps described in this chapter. It needs to use the TNW as an opening gambit - sacrificed at the beginning of the game – as a gesture with a multiplier effect. This way further reductions and progress towards the vision of a nuclear weapons free world will be one small step closer. Without such a move, the chance of continued stalemate is too great and both NATO and Russia will, in a way, be keeping each other’s TNW. Not because they have much practical use, but just because no one is willing to take that first, small, step.

Allied support for continuing the current nuclear deployment situation is extremely low. There is a slim chance that the TNW can have a last positive contribution towards building a cooperative security climate in Europe. As Russia and NATO seek to adjust their mutual postures to the new reality, one in which they are no longer military opponents, but mutual security partners, action on TNW is long overdue.

55 Daalder, I & Lodal, J (2008): *The Logic of Zero: Towards a World Without Nuclear Weapons*, in: Foreign Affairs, November/December 2008, p. 93.



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Susi Snyder & Wilbert van der Zeijden  
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