Third Simons Symposium

« Eliminating Tactical Nuclear Weapons from Europe »

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« The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails »

William Arthur Ward
When, in a realistic outlook, we are looking for the issue of the removal of TNW or NSNW from Europe, it seems clear that the presence of these weapons in Europe is just a remaining of the Cold War and consequently « to adjust the sails » they must be withdrew from the European territory.

For the following main reasons:

- They are useless in terms of military and operational effectiveness: old gravity bombs US B61 - deployed under « dual-key » arrangements in five host nations: Belgium, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Turkey - with no perspective for a major conflict in Europe. In short these weapons serve no legitimate strategic purpose.
- The fact that they are based in Europe is a danger for the European security: accidents, terrorism etc...
- Several European countries ask for their withdrawal like Germany,
- The cost for their modernization is huge: $10 billions only for the bombs and not estimated for the aircrafts.

In conclusion we can say that removing these archaic and unnecessary weapons from the European continent would be not only logic but would be also contributing to broader nuclear security objectives.

However, there is a unexpected persistence of the US tactical nuclear arsenal in Europe.

Moreover the decision to modernize this arsenal is on the way to be taken.

NATO has stated both in its 2011 Strategic Concept and its 2012 Defense and Defense Posture Review (DDPR) that US forward deployed NSNW are critical to NATO remaining a « nuclear alliance » and to nuclear burden-sharing between allies.

For what reasons there is a so strong reluctance to get rid of these useless devices?

Reading and listening to eminent experts: atomic scientists, political and strategic analysts on the issue of the elimination of the TNW or NSNW from European continent i was and i am really surprised by their pessimistic view
about this issue. Roughly they say that, in concrete terms, it’s almost impossible and that the best thing to do was to not change anything.

The first lesson is that it’s very difficult for an expert to take a decision. There are always many good reasons to do nothing.

But more seriously that means that there are some difficulties to achieve this goal and that we have to face them in a realistic way.

Let me list some of them.

But before i should like to remind you some elements of the background.

The current situation of NSNW in Europe

- Definition of NSNW : any nuclear weapon not covered under the New START Treaty. TNW=NSNW
- The total Russian-US stockpiles :
  - US has 180-200 B-61 aircraft-delivered gravity bombs stored in underground bunkers at six bases in five countries : Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey
  - Russia has about 1300-1500 warheads at 15 sites (7 at centralized storage sites- 8 at operational bases).
  An estimated two-thirds of Russia’s TNW stockpile are stored in Western Russia with many located in close proximity to NATO countries, notably Eastern/Central European and Baltic NATO members.

But the total of these weapons in the two countries Russia-US is 2000 to 500 according to Federation of American Scientists (FAS) and SIPRI. Some other experts estimate the that the range of 2000 to 4000 is more exact and more than 5000 if inactive warheads are included

On the other side experts* give a different estimation based on a differentiation between offensive and defensive weapons.
*Igor Sutyagin a RUSI study: « Atomic accounting: a new estimate of Russia NSN Forces »

« The estimate of Russia’s stockpile of operational non-strategic warheads is almost fifty per cent lower than the traditional FAS and SIPRI assessments of approximately 2000 Russian tactical warheads. When applied to the situation in Europe, (this) methodology produces an estimate of 500 to 530 operationally assigned strictly « offensive » Russian non-strategic weapons in Western Russia.

• The current status is Zero deployed NSNW:
  Neither Russia nor the US keep their NSNW mated to delivery systems so none of these weapons would be considered deployed.
  Most of the Russian weapons have been consolidated at centralized storage facilities.
  The US also keeps its NSNW demated from delivery systems although some weapons are stored in close proximity to the delivery aircraft.

  So the verification procedures would verify the absence of NSNW on delivery systems a much simpler task than for Strategic NW.

• Neither US nor Russia currently deploy NSNW to sea.

• US bomb B-61 need a Life Extension Program at a cost of $10 Billions and consequently a modernization of NATO nuclear-certified Dual-Capable Aircraft (DCA) or their replacement as the German Tornado at a non-evaluated cost.

The obstacles for an elimination from Europe

These obstacles are of course different if we consider a withdrawal from Western Europe to East of Urals or a withdrawal only from Nato countries. But in the two options it is clear that the relation US-Russia-NATO is central.

• Political and Strategic issues:
  1. On NATO side there is no consensus: some countries ask for the withdrawal from their territories; some, want to keep these weapons in Europe as Eastern countries which consider that the
Russian storage facilities are too close of their borders or Turkey for which NATO nuclear umbrella enhance its security.

France and UK consider all their NW to be strategic and not tactical. But France has no nuclear forces committed to Nato and so is not a member of the Nuclear Planning Group but does make its voice heard in discussions of general strategy. Up to now France wish that these weapons stay in Europe. Nevertheless it is interesting to note that the french position may change. Indeed the french President asked some months ago to a former Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine a report* on France and NATO. One conclusion was that France must be flexible about the question of NSNW withdrawal

p.20 « France which has always stuck to the theory of minimum deterrence, should encourage US and Russia to reduce the quantity of their nuclear wraheads and has no reason to be against the elimination of the last « tactical » or « non-strategic « nuclear weapons from NATO- anachronic gravity bombs delivered from aircrafts- which would not impact the deterrence capacity of the Alliance »


2. On Russian side, NSNW allow to balance its perceived inferiority in conventional arms and the threat of Missile Defence

3. Some argue that if the weapons are withdrew to the east of Urals mountains, the impact on Asia would be extremely negative on China first with the perception of « incirclement » but also on the US allies Japan and ROK

4. Possibility of a conflict with the US Senate about ratification of a new Treaty
* Operational issues:

1. Difficulty to account the number of warheads in order to ensure balance and equity of the NSNW stockpiles.

2. Problem for inspection and verification of Russian storage facilities.

3. Risk and costs to move the Russian weapons behind the Urals. A better solution would not be to close only the storage sites close to the eastern countries borders and to put these warheads in the centralized storage sites on the western side of the Urals.

4. Risk of hidden arsenals and the need for suspect site inspections to verify the absence of undeclared NSNW.

5. The question of reciprocity: verifications on Russia sites will trigger a Russia requirement for inspections of US sites.

6. The question of maintaining capability for temporary redeployment of USNW: exercise «Reforger».

Regarding all these issues as obstacles, in general the conclusion is that, such an elimination is to complex and so not possible.
An elimination possible and feasible

Facing this reluctance coming from many experts we must come back to the reality and to the facts. These weapons are useless and expensive. They are also dangerous for the European security. In this situation why we would keep them?

We must get rid of them in Europe but to achieve this purpose we must adjust the sails and work for a solution which give insurance of security for all.

The general belief is that there are two main ways.

. One is an unilateral US withdraw following consultations within NATO and building up enhanced security guarantees.

In that perspective we have to keep in mind that financial constraints may force NATO to eliminate its NSNW rather than new political choices.

And also we must not overestimated the value and the importance of NSNW

. The other is a withdrawal from the western countries to the east of Urals following an agreement between US and Russia. This agreement, without any doubt, would be a part of a broader agreement on overall US and Russian weapons stockpiles with a sub-limit on deployed strategic weapons. An extension of New START Treaty.

Whatever the way it is clear that an NSNW agreement will need to be executed with agreements on other issues and be the result of a global negociation between US, Russia and NATO in which three major issues must be included: Missile Defense, resumption of Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) regime and building up new Security and Confidence measures.

But it exists, others ways. One is developed by « Global Zero »*. This way is the proposal to remove the TNW from military combat bases and relocating them to national storage facilities. It means that US weapons would be transferred to US homeland bases and that Russia weapons would be transferred to centralized storage facilities. This removal would provide an increase in early warning and decision time and therefore reduce cocern of a sudden nuclear attack.

February 2012

The other way is presented in an excellent paper written by the Dutch section of Pugwash.

« Tactical nuclear Weapons and the (lack of) logic and reciprocity »

Indeed, the unilateral way will never meet a consensus among NATO countries. The second way based on « reciprocity » is not only complicated but will make NATO dependent on Moscow veto.

In this paper the authors propose a dual approach, a combination of unilateral steps with informal forms of reciprocity and bilateral agreements. A process both unilateral and reciprocal which would be « reassuring within NATO and confidence_building for Russia »

**Conclusion**

In the present situation there is space for analysis by organisations like Pugwash and the Foundation Simons.

Global Zero had already brought its contribution.


As the Dutch section writes, Pugwash and the Simons Foundation, through their international network, could help preparing the ground for change.