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**THEATER NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN EUROPE:
THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE**

by

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**THEATER NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN EUROPE: THE CONTEMPORARY
DEBATE**

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ABSTRACT

Are U.S. nuclear weapons still needed in Europe now that the threat that brought them there is gone? This thesis examines whether basing theater nuclear weapons (TNWs) in Europe is useful, irrelevant or counterproductive for maintaining European security. U.S. and NATO policymakers adhere to political and military utility arguments, while others argue TNWs in Europe are irrelevant—their utility has been supplanted by political, cultural and economic interdependence, modern conventional capabilities and the existential deterrent of U.S. strategic nuclear weapons. Nonproliferation and arms control advocates argue TNWs are counterproductive because they enhance, rather than deter proliferation, undermine the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), and impede cooperation in the NATO-Russia security relationship.

This thesis demonstrates how economic and political ties, including widespread participation in nuclear planning, the increasingly important nuclear taboo, prospects for conventional deterrence and the U.S. strategic nuclear umbrella render TNWs in Europe irrelevant. Emphasizing their utility provides incentive for others to join the “nuclear club,” degrades the nonproliferation regime, and creates a roadblock for NATO-Russian arms control and nonproliferation efforts. This thesis recommends withdrawing U.S. theater nuclear weapons from Europe, relying instead on a strategy of conventional deterrence and reassurance while maintaining general nuclear deterrence via strategic forces.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War and the implosion of the Soviet Union dramatically changed the security environment of Europe, which previously had been envisaged as the Cold War battleground between NATO and the Red Army. With the virtual disappearance of the Soviet threat and the emergence of twenty-first century threats of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD)¹, allies on both sides of the Atlantic began to reevaluate the political and military utility of existing security strategies, including the forward basing of U.S. theater nuclear weapons (TNWs) in Europe.² These weapons had profound implications in shaping the political and military landscape of Europe in the second half of the twentieth century—deterring Soviet aggression, reassuring NATO Allies of American commitment and protection under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, and fostering stability in the midst of a hostile East-West relationship—yet their relative importance today is much less clear.

This thesis asks whether basing theater nuclear weapons in Europe is a useful, irrelevant or counterproductive strategy for maintaining security in Europe in today's security environment. Useful, in this context, refers to political and military utility for deterring aggression against Europe, maintaining U.S. nuclear commitments, dissuading other states from pursuing nuclear weapons, and defeating potential aggressors should conflict arise. U.S. policymakers adhere to the political and military utility arguments, especially in the wake of September 11 and the new emphasis on countering the proliferation and use of WMD. Others argue that TNWs in Europe are irrelevant, meaning that their political and military utility has been supplanted by political, cultural and economic interdependence, the ever-increasing capabilities of conventional forces and the existential

¹ WMD are “weapons that are capable of a high order of destruction and/or being used in such a manner as to destroy large numbers of people.” Usually, WMD refers to nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. See Introduction to *Countering the Proliferation and Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, ed. Peter L. Hays, Vincent J. Jodoin and Alan R. Van Tassel, USAF Institute for National Security Studies (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 2.

² Nomenclature for this category of nuclear weapons varies, including “tactical,” “sub-strategic,” “non-strategic,” and “battlefield.” This thesis uses “theater nuclear weapons” to identify this category of nuclear weapons.

deterrent provided by U.S. strategic nuclear weapons. Nonproliferation and arms control advocates vehemently argue that TNWs are counterproductive because they enhance, rather than deter proliferation, undermine the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), and impede progress in the NATO-Russia security relationship.

This thesis approaches the issue of forward basing TNWs in Europe from a pragmatic point of view, seeking to enhance European security while reducing the risk of nuclear conflict through cooperation. The thesis views international security in the neo-liberalist tradition, accepting as a starting position the fundamental paradigm set forth by neo-realism, that the international system is governed by anarchy, where states are the primary actors, and these states are motivated by power and state interests. While cooperation in national security affairs is inherently difficult, it is also increasingly important in a security environment marked by global threats and WMD. From this approach the thesis finds TNWs in Europe irrelevant in some ways and counterproductive in others. The thesis recommends removing U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe, relying instead on a strategy of conventional deterrence and reassurance while maintaining general nuclear deterrence via strategic forces. The remainder of this chapter offers a brief background on forward basing TNWs in Europe, discusses issues of definition regarding theater nuclear weapons, highlights the current policy debate, and describes the organization of the thesis.

A. BACKGROUND

For over fifty years the United States has stationed nuclear weapons on the European continent. Beginning in 1953, the United States introduced theater nuclear weapons in Europe as a military instrument designed to offset the perceived Soviet conventional military advantage, which emerged following the Second World War. NATO integrated TNWs into a strategy calling for immediate and overwhelming use of nuclear weapons in the defense of Europe, which ultimately became known as massive retaliation.

With the emergence of the Soviet capability to threaten the U.S. homeland during the 1960s, NATO adopted a flexible response strategy, under which TNWs created a condition of coupling between the United States and Europe and forged a transatlantic link. Formally adopted in 1967, flexible response emerged from the concept of extended deterrence, wherein the threat of strategic nuclear retaliation which deterred a Soviet attack on the United States was extended to deter a Soviet attack on Western Europe. NATO states disagreed over how to extend the U.S.-Soviet deterrence relationship to Europe, giving rise to various extended deterrence strategies, however the Allies agreed on the need to maintain Alliance cohesion in the larger context of the Cold War environment. The debate on extending deterrence centered on concerns within NATO over the U.S. commitment to European security and the credibility of the U.S. nuclear retaliatory threat if the Soviets invaded. The inherent ambiguity of flexible response as to when and how theater nuclear weapons would be used masked the debate while at the same time providing a seemingly coherent strategy for the defense of Europe. Thus, the strategy of forward basing U.S. theater nuclear weapons on European soil ultimately achieved the condition of coupling necessary to link U.S. and Western European security. Despite often acrimonious debate, the essential political and military utility of U.S. TNWs based in Europe—maintaining the transatlantic link and deterring Soviet conventional or nuclear aggression—remained the same throughout the remainder of the Cold War.

B. ISSUES OF DEFINITION

Before analyzing the strategy of forward basing U.S. theater nuclear weapons in today's strategic environment, the term itself must be defined. As a category, TNWs generally include a broad array of atomic explosives, including nuclear landmines, nuclear artillery shells and air-dropped or missile-launched nuclear warheads. Yet precisely defining this category of weapons is ambiguous at best. Unlike the threshold between conventional and nuclear weapons, it is inherently difficult to distinguish between theater and strategic nuclear weapons.

Nevertheless, attempts have been made to do so, based on range, yield, target, national ownership, delivery vehicle, capability and by exclusion.³

Range-based definitions have been useful in that differentiating between intercontinental weapons and shorter-range weapons used on the battlefield seems relatively easy. In this approach, intercontinental systems are classified as strategic and shorter-range systems are classified as theater weapons. Yet considering that some systems—tactical aircraft utilizing air refueling or Sea Launched Cruise Missiles (SLCMs)—can approximate the range of intercontinental nuclear weapons, the range-based definition can be problematic.

The yield of TNWs is generally, although not always, lower than that of strategic nuclear weapons. Theater nuclear weapon yields range from a low end of .1 kiloton (KT) to a maximum of 1 megaton.⁴ Some strategic weapons, on the other hand, have yields as low as 5 KT. Such overlap in weapon yields makes it difficult to define TNWs on this basis.

While classifications based on range or yield are helpful in determining capabilities of these weapons, they fall short of defining the true nature of these weapons precisely because these classifications leave open the question of how the weapons are to be used. A more useful means of defining these weapons could be by the types of targets they are intended to strike. In this regard, TNWs were intended to strike military targets on the battlefield that are connected with the employment of combat forces whereas strategic weapons were designed to attack the adversary's homeland, including nuclear missile sites, industry or political targets. Today, however, "tactical" targets can have strategic implications and vice versa, thus blurring the distinction between target types.

Another means of definition may be by national ownership. While the nuclear weapons of China, India and Pakistan possess strategic value to these countries, they would be considered theater nuclear weapons in the United

³ Andrea Gabbitas, "Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons: Problems of Definition," in *Controlling Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons: Obstacles and Opportunities*, ed. Jeffrey A. Larsen and Kurt J. Klingenberg, USAF Institute for National Security Studies (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 2001), 28.

⁴ Brian Alexander and Alistair Millar, "Introduction," in *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emerging Threats in an Evolving Security Environment*, ed. Brian Alexander, Alistair Millar, (Washington DC: Brassey's, 2003), 5.

States or Russia.⁵ Clearly, such a definition would complicate, rather than refine, nuclear issues, especially in the area of arms control.

Other means of defining TNWs such as by delivery vehicle or capability pose similar problems as those identified above. Using delivery vehicle as a definition creates difficulties because both strategic and theater nuclear weapons can be delivered from the same aircraft. Classifying weapons capable of destroying strategic targets as “strategic” and those only capable of taking out targets on the battlefield as “theater” once again blurs the distinction between target types.

Finally, theater nuclear weapons could be defined “by exclusion.” This approach entails identifying theater nuclear weapons as all of the nuclear weapons not counted under existing strategic arms control treaties. Such a definition makes sense because it avoids the pitfalls associated with the classifications identified above, yet it opens the door to including TNWs in future arms control negotiations. With respect to U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe—approximately 150 gravity bombs based in seven countries, this definition seems appropriate.⁶

C. THE CURRENT POLICY DEBATE

The contemporary debate centers on whether the strategy of forward basing U.S. theater nuclear weapons is useful, irrelevant or counterproductive to maintaining security in Europe in the twenty-first century. This debate is extremely significant in today’s security environment where proliferation and the potential use of weapons of mass destruction reign as the greatest security threat. The issues surrounding the debate are broad and complex, and they warrant serious analysis if NATO is to move beyond the Cold War security framework.

⁵ Gabbittas, “Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons,” 30.

⁶ Stanley R. Sloan, “NATO Nuclear Strategy Beyond the Cold War,” in *Controlling Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons: Obstacles and Opportunities*, Ed. by Jeffrey A. Larsen and Kurt J. Klingenberg, USAF Institute for National Security Studies (Washington D.C.: U.S. GPO, 2001), 48.

1. Political and Military Utility

At one end of the spectrum, proponents of the forward basing strategy cite its continued political and military utility in today's security environment. Official U.S. government documents identify general areas of utility for TNWs. First, their deployment on the European continent is "important to the continued viability of NATO's nuclear deterrent strategy."⁷ Second, they "provide greater flexibility in the design and conduct of military campaigns to defeat opponents decisively...Nuclear weapons could be employed against targets able to withstand non-nuclear attack (for example, deep underground bunkers or bio-weapon facilities)."⁸ This capability represents the possible role of TNWs in U.S. counterproliferation efforts. For U.S. policymakers, this utility is reflected consistently in the most recent *National Security Strategy*, *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, and *Nuclear Posture Review* (NPR). According to National Nuclear Security Administration administrator, Linton Brooks, the Nuclear Posture Review identifies four policy goals served by U.S. nuclear forces: Assure, Dissuade, Deter and Defeat.⁹

United States policymakers seek to assure friends and allies of the U.S. commitment to them and the capability to follow through on that commitment across a broad range of military contingencies. This assurance enhances nonproliferation by allowing NATO Allies to forgo attempts to develop nuclear weapons of their own. Policymakers also seek to dissuade potential adversaries from competing with U.S. capabilities through robust forces and infrastructure which they have no hope of matching. U.S. nuclear forces deter any threats that do arise by holding at risk the assets which a potential adversary values most. Finally, the NPR calls for the capability to decisively defeat any opponent in the event deterrence should fail.

⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, Nuclear Posture Review Report [Excerpts], 2002.
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm> (accessed July 2004), 44.

⁸ Ibid., 12-13.

⁹ Linton F. Brooks, "U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policies and Programs," Speech presented to the Carnegie International Nonproliferation Conference, June 21, 2004.
<http://www.ceip.org/files/projects/npp/resources/2004conference/speeches/brooks.doc> (accessed July 2004), 2.

On the other side of the Atlantic, NATO assigns equal utility to the continued deployment of U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe. In keeping with modern European tradition, however, NATO places greater emphasis on political utility. According to NATO's 1999 Strategic Concept, the Allies stated, "The fundamental purpose of the nuclear forces of the Allies is political: to preserve peace and prevent coercion and any kind of war."¹⁰ NATO places great emphasis on Alliance nuclear solidarity, stressing the value of risk- and burden-sharing through the forward basing of U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe. This solidarity is exemplified further in the Strategic Concept: "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."¹¹ Although the circumstances under which NATO would contemplate the use of nuclear weapons are extremely remote, Alliance officials nevertheless view forward basing of U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe as a useful strategy in today's security environment.

2. Political and Military Relevance

In the center of the contemporary debate, some see theater nuclear weapons in Europe as politically and militarily irrelevant. Analysts question whether TNWs deployed in Europe are responsible for maintaining the transatlantic link, or whether economic and political ties truly bind the United States and Europe. The description provided by William Wallace in "Europe, The Necessary Partner" paints a much more complex picture where "transatlantic relations are embedded in a dense network of multilateral links, including annual meetings of the Group of Eight major industrialized nations, semiannual consultations among top officials, and shared membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)."¹² According to then-

¹⁰ "The Alliance's Strategic Concept", approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C. 23-24 April 1999, NATO Press Release NAC-S(99)65. <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm> (accessed July 2004), para. 62.

¹¹ Ibid., para. 63

Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Wesley Clark, Europe and the United States remain linked by an “enormous degree of economic interdependence” which is complemented and reinforced “by political, cultural, and diplomatic ties of long standing.”¹³ This vision of the transatlantic relationship suggests a greater confluence of interests today which render the symbolic basing of a few hundred TNWs in Europe irrelevant.

Moreover, the same logic leading NATO to a reduced reliance on nuclear weapons for European security further supports the idea that TNWs have become irrelevant. If, as the 1999 NATO Strategic Concept asserts, “NATO’s ability to...mount a successful conventional defence has significantly improved,” and “The supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States,” then the deployment of TNWs on European soil is unnecessary.¹⁴ U.S. strategic forces, available for Alliance collective defense under Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty in the event of an attack on any NATO-member state, also serve to “preserve the peace and prevent coercion.” In this context, an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) armed with a low-yield warhead provides the same, if not greater utility than a gravity bomb dropped from a tactical aircraft based in Europe. The latter becomes irrelevant for European security.

Theater nuclear weapons based in Europe may also be seen as irrelevant from the standpoint of credibility and the “nuclear taboo.” To be credible, the target must believe the deterrer has the will to carry out its threats. According to deterrence scholar Patrick Morgan, “Threat credibility and effectiveness also depend on the perceived *legitimacy of the means*.”¹⁵ Given the long-standing “nuclear taboo” and the very real political consequences of using nuclear

¹² William Wallace, “Europe, The Necessary Partner,” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2001), vol. 80, no. 3, 17.

¹³ Wesley Clark, “The United States and NATO: The Way Ahead,” *Parameters* (Winter 1999/2000), vol. 29, iss. 4, 2.

¹⁴ The Alliance’s Strategic Concept, para. 62-64.

¹⁵ Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 276 [Emphasis in original].

weapons, especially in a preemptive manner, the likelihood of a U.S. president choosing to employ TNWs is remote. Efforts to make TNWs more “usable,” such as the current feasibility studies of a “robust nuclear earth penetrator” or “bunker buster,” may enhance the capabilities of TNWs, but will do little to alleviate the taboo against their use. From this standpoint, these weapons offer no real credibility advantage over low-yield strategic nuclear forces, and pose a far less credible threat than modern conventional forces.

In the eyes of the military, conventional deterrence may be more effective today than deterrence based on theater nuclear weapons. Due to the most recent Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), conventional forces, particularly within the context of overwhelming superiority by the United States, are well suited for this role. The technological advances in surveillance, information, and precision along with requisite investments in these capabilities have created “sophisticated nonnuclear weapons [that] can now hold at risk those assets most highly valued by potential aggressors...”¹⁶ For NATO, this translates into a reversal of the Cold War conventional imbalance in favor of the Soviet Union. If—and this seems highly unlikely given the post-Cold War security relationship with Russia—a future aggressive Russia threatened Europe, NATO would hold the advantage in conventional superiority. In the unlikely event that a conflict escalated to nuclear war, the supreme guarantee of European security would still be found in the U.S. strategic arsenal. U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe are no longer required to offset Russian conventional military power; they are irrelevant as a deterrent threat.

With respect to rogue states and proliferators, the concepts of rationality, retaliatory threat and unacceptable damage point to holding at stake what these states value most—regime survival. A distinction arises here between “unacceptable” and “unbearable” damage.¹⁷ While massive nuclear punishment may be unacceptable to the leader of a rogue regime, it may not be unbearable if

¹⁶ John C. Hopkins and Steven A. Maaranen, “Nuclear Weapons in Post-Cold War Deterrence,” *Post-Cold War Conflict Deterrence* (Washington DC: National Academy Press, 1997), 117.

¹⁷ Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 265.

the regime survives. The best way to deter proliferation and use of WMD by these regimes, according to Morgan, “is not by threatening a massive WMD response...but by being able to threaten destruction of the leaders and regime with conventional forces...”¹⁸ In this way, deterring the proliferation and use of WMD is feasible, and the credibility of the deterrence is enhanced by keeping the retaliatory threat below the nuclear threshold.

While the United States, and by extension, NATO, possess the world’s most capable conventional forces today, conventional deterrence will only be enhanced by future developments in strategic strike. According to the recently released *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Future Strategic Strike Forces*, the objective for strategic strike is: “To provide future Presidents an integrated, flexible, and highly reliable set of strike options with today’s tactical-level flexibility but on a global scale.”¹⁹ The Task Force recommends sweeping changes in U.S. strategic strike capability, particularly in conventional weapons. The recommendation for the Air Force to retain fifty Peacekeeper ICBMs and convert them to carry conventional warheads, for example, would provide a thirty-minute response capability for worldwide strategic strike.²⁰ This, along with other recommendations such as a new non-nuclear ballistic missile launched from the Navy’s cruise-missile submarine assets, will provide an enhanced, credible, conventional deterrent backed up by improved strategic nuclear forces.²¹ From its comprehensive analysis of strategic strike, the Task Force recommends eliminating the role of TNWs delivered by deployed dual-capable aircraft; the report asserts: “There is no obvious military need for these

¹⁸ Ibid., 276.

¹⁹ Defense Science Board, *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Future Strategic Strike Forces*, Office of the Undersecretary for Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, February 2004, 1-5.

²⁰ Ibid., 1-8.

²¹ The Task Force Report identifies the need for nuclear weapons that produce much lower collateral damage (great precision, deep penetration, greatly reduced radioactivity) and recommends research and development along these lines. See *Report of the Defense Science Board*, 1-10.

systems...”²² In the military context, as in the political, theater nuclear weapons based in Europe are irrelevant in today’s security environment.

3. Counterproductive in Today’s Security Environment

At the opposite end of the spectrum, many policy analysts and arms control advocates view TNWs forward based in Europe as counterproductive in today’s security environment. This position emerges from NATO’s schizophrenic approach to deterrence and nonproliferation.

Deterrence has changed since the Cold War. The difference is that today’s strategic environment is governed by a situation of general deterrence as opposed to immediate deterrence.²³ Theater nuclear weapons were deployed and maintained in Europe during the Cold War as a strategy based on the perception of an immediate deterrence situation. Although the security environment has changed dramatically, the strategy remained the same. The continued deployment of U.S. TNWs in Europe is a strategy in search of a threat.

The problem imposed by this situation is precisely that threats will emerge. This is the classic “security dilemma” and “spiral model” theory which still operates today. According to Robert Jervis, “When states seek the ability to defend themselves, they get too much and too little—too much because they gain the ability to carry out aggression; too little because others, being menaced, will increase their own arms and so reduce the first state’s security.”²⁴ Continuing to emphasize the utility of TNWs could have disastrous ramifications for nonproliferation because if the world’s greatest military power identifies a role for these weapons in national security, weaker states will surely follow suit.

²² Ibid., 5-13.

²³ Immediate deterrence exists in a crisis, or similar situation in which an opponent is contemplating and preparing an attack. The deterrer issues specific threats with specific military capabilities to coerce the opponent from attacking. In general deterrence, the deterrer maintains broad capabilities and issues general threats to keep any potential opponent from seriously thinking about attacking.

²⁴ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 64.

The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) is regarded as the cornerstone of the international effort to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Despite its long history and ardent support in many corners, the NPT has proven unsuccessful in disarming the nuclear-weapon states (NWS) and preventing the spread of nuclear weapons material to non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWS). Indeed, as the recent discoveries of Pakistan's proliferation activity demonstrates, the "spread and potential use of nuclear weapons remains all too real."²⁵ At a time when nonproliferation reigns as the world's greatest security concern, emphasizing the warfighting prospects and usability of theater nuclear weapons enhances, rather than deters, proliferation of WMD. In discussing the possible impact of the new Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, Binoy Kampmark acknowledges, "A new kind of proliferation is being encouraged in the field of smaller nuclear devices. The new strategy of the NPR suggests the employment of nuclear weapons against signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (Iraq, Syria, North Korea, Libya) notwithstanding that these countries officially do not have nuclear weapons. This merely encourages them to seek countering technologies."²⁶ Bush administration officials rebuff such conclusions, as NNSA Administrator Linton Brooks decried in June 2004: "I've never met anyone in the Administration who can foresee circumstances in which we would consider nuclear preemption to counter rogue state WMD threats."²⁷ Perception is reality, however, and for rogue states the perception is that nuclear weapons equate to strength and security. Emphasizing their utility, through the continued deployment in Europe, serves to codify this perception.

NATO's nuclear doctrine is at odds with member-state commitments to the NPT. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Alliance's controversial interpretation of the prohibition to transfer nuclear weapons under NPT Articles I and II. Many analysts and signatories to the NPT question whether NATO's

²⁵ George Perkovich and others, *Universal Compliance: A Strategy for Nuclear Security* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2004), 9.

²⁶ Binoy Kampmark, "America's Nuclear Deterrence in the Age of Terrorism," *Contemporary Review* (April 2003), vol. 282, no. 1647, 209.

²⁷ Brooks, "U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policies and Programs," 8.

nuclear sharing arrangements fall in line with the letter and spirit of the treaty. According to a Project on European Nuclear Non-Proliferation (PENN) Research Report, the U.S. view is that the NPT “does not deal with arrangements for deployment of nuclear weapons within allied territory as these do not involve any transfer of nuclear weapons or control over them unless and until a decision were made to go to war, at which time the treaty would no longer be controlling.”²⁸ This exception—the *treaty does not apply in time of war*—created a loophole through which NATO maintained its sharing arrangements for employing theater nuclear weapons deployed on Allied territory. In a specific effort to close the loophole, the 1985 NPT Review Document included language making the NPT provisions under Articles I and II controlling “under any circumstances,” however, this provision is more politically than legally binding.²⁹ The United States and NATO continue to subscribe to their controversial interpretation of the NPT.

The political implications for nonproliferation and future arms control efforts are potentially severe.³⁰ If, in the course of the War on Terrorism, NATO nuclear doctrine evolved to include a role for counterproliferation, such as is widely attributed to U.S. doctrine under the 2002 *Nuclear Posture Review*, U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe could conceivably be used against those possessing or believed to possess WMD or their means of delivery. According to the PENN Report, policy changes along these lines were in the works during the 2000 review of NATO’s strategy document MC400. NATO recognizes the controversial nature of this issue, as highlighted in an interview with a Senior NATO Diplomat: “It’s an uncomfortable topic that people prefer not to discuss. It does raise questions, I know, under the NPT, the negative security assurances.”³¹ Negative security assurances are promises given by the nuclear-weapons states not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapons states

²⁸ “Questions of Command and Control – NATO, Nuclear Sharing and the NPT”, *PENN Research Report 2000.1*, (Berlin: Project on European Nuclear Non-Proliferation, 2000). <http://www.bits.de/public/researchreport/rr00-1-1.htm> (accessed August 2004), 22.

²⁹ Ibid., 27.

³⁰ Ibid., 32.

³¹ Ibid., 33.

party to the NPT unless those states attack the nuclear-weapons state, or a state with which it has a security commitment, in association or alliance with another nuclear-weapons state. The outcome of these discussions, as well as details from the 2002 Defense Planning Committee and Nuclear Planning Group guidance on NATO's dual-capable aircraft posture, remain classified. Pursuing such a policy, however, could signal NATO's intent to violate the Negative Security Assurances given to NNWS in 1995, constitute a breach of Articles I and II of the NPT concerning nuclear sharing, and ultimately undermine NATO's nonproliferation and arms control efforts.

Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) are valuable nonproliferation and arms control tools, yet U.S. TNWs based in Europe undermine their effectiveness. CSBMs are intended to reduce the likelihood of armed conflict and prevent misunderstanding and miscalculation. According to Ronald Lehman, Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs), such as positive security assurances (PSAs)—commitments to aid nations threatened by WMD that have agreed to forego these weapons—and negative security assurances (NSAs)—commitments not to use WMD against nations who have agreed to forego these weapons, can be effective from a counterproliferation standpoint provided they are accompanied by “a change in either real intent or in real military capability.”³² While there is no guarantee that CSBMs will be effective, their intrinsic value is psychological, in the same way that the value of deterrence is psychological.

NATO's nuclear-weapon states have issued both positive and negative security assurances as well as pledged support for other CSBMs such as Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZ). Yet proliferation still occurs. NATO officials argue that the Alliance's “residual sub-strategic nuclear arsenal—which has been dramatically reduced and its land-based forces de-alerted and de-

³² Ronald F. Lehman, “Reassurance and Dissuasion: Countering the Motivation to Acquire WMD,” in *Countering the Proliferation and Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, ed. Peter L. Hays, Vincent J. Jodoin and Alan R. Van Tassel, (New York: McGraw-Hill., 1998), 108.

mated—is not responsible for nuclear proliferation.”³³ While U.S. TNWs in Europe may not be solely responsible for nuclear proliferation, NATO’s Janus-faced nuclear policy clearly contributes to the problem. According to a September 2003 Policy Brief issued by the Middle Powers Initiative, “The maintenance of a security policy based on nuclear weapons for the purpose of achieving greater political power, however, is extremely dangerous, since it inevitably invites others to follow suit.”³⁴ Moreover, emphasizing the utility of these weapons undermines NATO’s moral credibility in influencing other states to forego nuclear programs of their own. NATO’s nuclear schizophrenia hampers the effectiveness of CSBMs designed to promote nonproliferation.

U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe have also long been a source of friction in the NATO-Russia security relationship, and they continue to pose difficulties today. Both NATO and Russian officials tout partnership and cooperation as the foundation of their post-Cold War security relationship. From the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security to the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), established in May 2002, NATO member states and Russia endeavor “to work more closely together towards the common goal of building a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic Area.”³⁵ Yet the continued deployment of U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe serves as a roadblock to cooperation.

NATO and Russian policymakers maintain diametrically opposed positions on TNWs. NATO adheres to the political utility and deterrent effects of its TNW arsenal, while at the same time voicing a desire for Russia to reduce and gain control of its theater nuclear forces. Russia, on the other hand, refuses to “consider negotiations to control its tactical nuclear arsenal if the United States

³³ “Report on Options for Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs), Verification, Non-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament,” NATO Press Release M-NAC-2(2000)121, para. 100.

³⁴ “Middle Powers Initiative Brief on NATO Nuclear Policy,” September 2003. <http://www.middlepowers.org/mpii/pubs.html> (accessed July 2004).

³⁵ “NATO-Russia Relations.” <http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-russia/index.html> (accessed July 2004).

will not remove its nuclear weapons from Europe.”³⁶ Given the state of its conventional forces, Russia values the deterrent effect of its TNW arsenal much the same as NATO did during the Cold War. NATO enlargement only accentuates such Russian insecurities. By emphasizing the utility of these weapons, and maintaining a strategy of forward basing them in Europe, NATO perpetuates an immediate deterrence situation where one does not exist. Removing these weapons could be a first step toward persuading Russia that its TNWs are equally irrelevant and create the possibility for genuine arms control for theater nuclear weapons. Even if abandoning the long-standing policy of forward basing U.S. TNWs in Europe proves insufficient to induce Russia to eliminate its theater nuclear weapons, this step could remove an obstacle to further cooperation at relatively little strategic cost given that it still maintains general deterrence via U.S. strategic nuclear forces.

Opening the door to cooperation with Russia by removing U.S. theater nuclear weapons from Europe could have spillover effects in the area of nonproliferation. The security of Russia’s theater nuclear weapons is an issue of great concern in the West. This concern emerges from a lack of transparency in the Russian theater nuclear arsenal. Alexander and Millar point out, “The lack of information about the size of the Russian tactical nuclear weapons arsenal raises uncertainties regarding the security of the storage of these weapons as well as about their protections against accidental, unauthorized, or illicit use.”³⁷ This lack of transparency, combined with fears of “crime, corruption, incompetence, and institutional disintegration”³⁸ in Russia create concern over the possibility of these weapons falling into the hands of rogue states or terrorists. The concession of removing these weapons from Europe could pay dividends in

³⁶ Alistair Millar, “Russia, NATO, and Tactical Nuclear Weapons After 11 September,” in *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emerging Threats in an Evolving Security Environment*, ed. Brian Alexander, Alistair Millar, (Washington DC: Brassey’s, 2003), 90.

³⁷ Brian Alexander and Alistair Millar, eds., “Uncovered Nukes: An Introduction to Tactical Nuclear Weapons,” *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emerging Threats in an Evolving Security Environment*, 4.

³⁸ Alistair Millar, “Russia, NATO, and Tactical Nuclear Weapons After 11 September,” in *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emerging Threats in an Evolving Security Environment*, 83.

terms of cooperation with Russia in the nonproliferation effort. With respect to the NATO-Russian security relationship, maintaining the deployment of U.S. TNWs in Europe is a counterproductive strategy.

The broad and complex issues sketched above highlight the contemporary debate over whether TNWs are useful, irrelevant or counterproductive in today's security environment. The analysis and strategic course of action proposed by this thesis offers a practical means of achieving European security while moving closer to supporting Alliance-member commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

D. ORGANIZATION

Chapter II provides background on Cold War deterrence and theater nuclear weapons. This chapter explains why the United States deployed TNWs in Europe during the Cold War. It discusses the evolution of the strategy of forward basing these weapons in Europe within the framework of extended deterrence. The early years of the strategy are characterized by identifying TNWs as a military instrument of war within the context of massive retaliation. With the emergence of the Soviet capability to threaten the U.S. homeland, the Allies focused on extended deterrence and the strategy evolved into flexible response, under which TNWs created a condition of coupling between the United States and Europe, thereby forging the transatlantic link.

Chapter III analyzes the political and military utility of TNWs today. It explains why U.S. and NATO policymakers support the continued deployment of TNWs in Europe. Beginning with the immediate post-Cold War force structure changes, the chapter examines U.S. conceptions of post-Cold War European security and deterrence. Next, the chapter identifies emerging threats in the new security environment. It highlights the U.S. vision of a role for TNWs in this new environment, including counterproliferation, which emerges from the National Security Strategy and Nuclear Posture Review. The chapter then analyzes NATO's support for basing U.S. TNWs in Europe. It addresses NATO's Strategic

Concept and nuclear doctrine, arguments for maintaining the transatlantic link through the continued deployment of TNWs in Europe and issues of nuclear assurance. The chapter demonstrates that supporters of the TNW basing policy find political and military utility in these weapons not only for traditional deterrence, but also in a preemptive capacity for counterproliferation.

Chapter IV analyzes the political and military relevance of TNWs today. This chapter questions whether basing these weapons in Europe is necessary to maintain European security. The chapter begins by identifying the nature of the transatlantic link today as being primarily economic and political, with military links maintained via conventional forces. Within this context, Europe and the United States remain coupled, and the U.S. strategic nuclear forces still provide the supreme guarantee for European security. The chapter then identifies a usability paradox wherein attempts to make TNWs more “usable” fail because issues of credibility and the “nuclear taboo” raise serious questions about their potential use. Finally, the chapter addresses prospects for conventional deterrence, including the recent revolution in military affairs (RMA), NATO conventional superiority, conventional threats to rogue regimes and the future of strategic strike. The chapter demonstrates that the factors outlined above contribute to the irrelevance of TNWs based in Europe today.

Chapter V analyzes the argument that TNWs are counterproductive in today’s security environment. The chapter explains how forward basing TNWs in Europe negatively impacts nonproliferation and arms control efforts. It begins by exploring NATO’s schizophrenic approach to deterrence and nonproliferation. Under a situation of general deterrence, forward basing TNWs in Europe is a strategy in search of a threat. Emphasizing the utility of these weapons enhances rather than deters proliferation. The chapter then addresses the U.S. controversial interpretation of the NPT with regard to nuclear sharing, demonstrating the potentially severe consequences of this arrangement for nonproliferation and arms control. The continued deployment of TNWs in Europe and emphasis on their utility also undermines the confidence and security building measures issued by NATO’s nuclear-weapons states. The chapter

analyzes the impact of NATO's TNW policy on the NATO-Russia security relationship, addressing issues of partnership and cooperation, NATO Enlargement, arms control and nonproliferation. This chapter demonstrates how the TNW basing policy is counterproductive in today's security environment.

Chapter VI brings the analysis together for policy prescription, addressing the question of where to go from here. It begins by summarizing the arguments concerning political and military utility, relevance, and counter productivity of U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe. I then offer two policy options: (1) maintaining the status quo, and (2) withdrawing U.S. theater nuclear weapons from Europe. The political-military implications of each are evaluated. In the final analysis, the thesis recommends withdrawing theater nuclear weapons from Europe in favor of a strategy emphasizing conventional deterrence supported by reassurance and the general deterrent of strategic nuclear weapons in the background.

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II. THE COLD WAR – HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter provides historical background on Cold War deterrence and theater nuclear weapons. The chapter explains why the United States deployed TNWs in Europe during the Cold War; this rationale forms the basis of the political and military utility argument today. It begins with the early years of the strategy, characterizing TNWs as a military instrument of war within the context of massive retaliation. Faced with a conventional military imbalance with the Soviet Union, the U.S. officials viewed TNWs as a military solution for deterring a Soviet attack.

The chapter then turns to the evolution of the strategy of forward basing these weapons in Europe. With the emergence of the Soviet capability to threaten the U.S. homeland and the subsequent nuclear stalemate, European security became tied to the concept of extended deterrence. The chapter identifies the idea of coupling and discusses the debate surrounding the key issues of the credibility of the U.S. nuclear response and the U.S. commitment to Europe which were embedded in the various strategies of extended deterrence. Finally, the chapter details the development of flexible response, under which TNWs created a condition of coupling between the United States and Europe and forged a transatlantic link. It discusses the essence of flexible response, and the political-military strategic debate within which the strategy of forward basing TNWs evolved.

A. MASSIVE RETALIATION: A MILITARY INSTRUMENT OF WAR

NATO first deployed TNWs in Europe in October 1953 beginning with the 280mm atomic cannon, and the Honest John ballistic- and Matador ground-launched cruise missiles the next year. This deployment, which marked the beginning of the strategy of forward basing TNWs in Europe, began as a military instrument of war. The overarching strategy for the defense of Europe was massive retaliation, which called for immediate, massive nuclear retaliation against the Soviet Union in response to Soviet attack. Theater nuclear weapons,

Record points out, “were simply one element of a general strike plan, to be employed against the Soviets’ preponderant conventional forces in Europe in conjunction with strategic nuclear strikes against military and non-military targets in Russia itself.”³⁹ The perceived conventional military imbalance between the NATO Allies and the Soviet Union was a critical factor in the decision to deploy U.S. TNWs in Europe.

1. The Conventional Imbalance

From the beginning, NATO military planners operated on the perception that the Alliance sat on the losing side of a conventional military imbalance *vis a vis* the Soviet Union. As NATO historian Gregory Pedlow points out in “The Evolution of NATO Strategy, 1949-1969,” Western military planners “believed that NATO was greatly inferior in conventional military strength to the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites.”⁴⁰ This perception was largely based on practical considerations. Recovering from the effects of the Second World War, Allies on both sides of the Atlantic lacked the political and economic will and capacity to build their conventional forces to the levels required to deter or defend against the massive Soviet army. Recognizing this situation, NATO strategy document MC 14, “Strategic Guidance for North Atlantic Regional Planning,” contained a warning from the NATO Standing Group that, “the North Atlantic Treaty nations should not be misled into planning in the frame of mind prevailing at the end of World War II, which was largely based on the enormous military power available to the Allies at that time.”⁴¹ While NATO would require years to achieve previous force levels, the Soviet Union had “maintained, if not increased, her technical, military and economic capabilities.”⁴² The Standing Group further stated, “special emphasis must be laid on the necessity for

³⁹ Jeffrey Record, *NATO’s Theater Nuclear Force Modernization Program: The Real Issues* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 1981), 13.

⁴⁰ Gregory W. Pedlow, “The Evolution of NATO Strategy, 1949-1969,” *NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969*, Oct 98, NATO Archives. <http://www.nato.int/docu/stratdoc/eng/intro.pdf> (accessed July 2004), xi.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xiii.

⁴² *Ibid.*

developing methods to compensate for numerical inferiority.”⁴³ This perception of NATO conventional inferiority combined with U.S. nuclear dominance provided a ready military solution for the defense of Europe.

2. The Military Solution

Given the economic and political constraints, the military solution to the problem of European defense was relatively clear. Theater nuclear weapons “offered a cheap means of offsetting the conventional force imbalance in Europe,” and served as a “substitute for robust conventional defenses.”⁴⁴ By late 1954, nuclear weapons, including TNWs, became the military solution for the defense of Europe, and were fully integrated into NATO strategy. Indeed, NATO strategy document, MC 48, “The Most Effective Pattern of NATO Military Strength for the Next Few Years,” argued that “NATO would be unable to prevent the rapid overrunning of Europe unless NATO immediately employed these weapons both strategically and tactically.”⁴⁵ Thus, MC 48 sows the seeds of the massive retaliation strategy, formally associated with a later NATO strategy document, MC 14/2.

Once these weapons were forward based in Europe, they served as an even greater impetus for European conventional force reductions and increased reliance on their deterrent effects. As M. Leitenberg describes in *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: European Perspectives*, “European political leaders applied substantial pressure on the Eisenhower administration to constantly increase the numbers of TNWs in Europe.”⁴⁶ This pressure continued until the late 1960s when U.S. TNWs in Europe totaled approximately 7,000.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Record, *NATO's Theater Nuclear Force Modernization Program*, 13.

⁴⁵ Pedlow, “The Evolution of NATO Strategy,” xviii.

⁴⁶ M. Leitenberg, “Background Materials in Tactical Nuclear Weapons,” SIPRI, *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: European Perspectives* (New York: Crane, Russak & Company, Inc., 1978), 13.

⁴⁷ Ivo H. Daalder, *The Nature and Practice of Flexible Response* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 108.

By 1957 the acceptance of TNWs as the preferred military instrument of war was formalized through the first NATO “Guidelines” and the first equipping and training of non-US NATO forces with these weapons.⁴⁸ The implication was that “SACEUR thenceforth was to base his forward planning on the assumption that a large range of nuclear weapons gradually would be introduced into both NATO and Soviet bloc armories.”⁴⁹ Such was indeed the situation in Europe until 1960, “when it became clear that the credibility of threatening a massive nuclear strike against the Soviet Union had been undermined by the Soviet ability to retaliate against the American homeland.”⁵⁰ This new development spurred an evolution in the strategy of forward basing U.S. TNWs in Europe.

B. THE EVOLUTION OF STRATEGY: TOWARD THE TRANSATLANTIC LINK

With respect to Europe, the most salient aspect of deterrence as strategy has been extended deterrence. Given that both the United States and the Soviet Union possessed nuclear weapons and the most probable battleground in a severe conflict between these countries was Europe, NATO strategy became focused on extending the U.S.-USSR nuclear stalemate to the situation in Europe. Within this context, U.S. TNWs forward based in Europe reflected the heart and soul of extended deterrence. According to David Yost in *The US and Nuclear Deterrence in Europe*, “During the Cold War, NATO Europe’s leaders generally agreed that a US nuclear presence on the ground was one of the requirements for a credible extended deterrence.”⁵¹ These weapons underpinned the U.S. nuclear guarantee for European security, and, in the eyes of many, continue to do so today.

⁴⁸ Leitenberg, “Background Materials in Tactical Nuclear Weapons,” 15.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Daalder, *The Nature and Practice of Flexible Response*, 1.

⁵¹ David S. Yost, “The US and Nuclear Deterrence in Europe,” *Adelphi Paper 326* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 8.

1. Commitment and Credibility: The Condition of Coupling

The central idea behind extended deterrence was that U.S. and European security were inextricably linked via the U.S. nuclear deterrence relationship with the Soviet Union—a situation known as coupling. According to Ivo Daalder, in his book, *The Nature and Practice of Flexible Response*,

It is this extension of stability that people have had in mind when they refer to the requirement of achieving a condition of ‘coupling’ between the United States and Western Europe. NATO has sought to establish and maintain a condition of coupling through a strategy of extended deterrence—that is, using the extension of the threats that deter attack on the United States to deter attack on Western Europe.⁵²

In other words, Europeans wanted to make sure that American commitments to respond with nuclear weapons, if required, to a Soviet attack on Europe were solid. Some Europeans questioned whether the United States would risk “sacrificing New York to save Paris” even if the Soviets had not attacked the U.S. homeland. Coupling the United States to Europe in this regard served to ease European concerns about extended deterrence. Achieving a condition of coupling became a major factor in the evolution of the strategy of basing theater nuclear weapons in Europe because extended deterrence depended heavily on the credibility of the U.S. nuclear response and U.S. commitment to Europe.

With respect to credibility and commitment, the debate within NATO emerged from two camps. The first was concerned with the credibility of extended deterrence and constantly questioned the existence of coupling. Noting the strategic parity between the U.S. and Soviet strategic nuclear arsenals and the level of destructiveness associated with full-scale nuclear war, this camp questioned the credibility of a U.S. nuclear response to limited aggression. If it was no longer feasible to use nuclear weapons in response to conflict at lower levels, then Europe would face instability at these levels. This is the classic stability-instability paradox.

⁵² Daalder, *The Nature and Practice of Flexible Response*, 3.

The essence of this line of reasoning is reflected in former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's comments:

[The use of] strategic nuclear weapons against the Soviet homeland would lead almost certainly to a response in kind that would inflict unacceptable damage on Europe and the United States—it would be an act of suicide. The threat of such an action, therefore, has lost all credibility as a deterrent to Soviet conventional aggression.⁵³

Consequently, U.S. policy makers favored strategies that raised the nuclear threshold to avoid nuclear entrapment. Europeans, on the other hand, favored strategies that encouraged nuclear escalation in a conflict in order to avoid nuclear abandonment. This disparity led many in the first camp to question the existence of coupling between the United States and Europe. Achieving a condition of coupling held intrinsic value for those concerned with credibility because they viewed the NATO-Soviet relationship through a lens of immediate deterrence. If Europe was to live on the edge of crisis, it needed a credible extended deterrence strategy.

Those in the opposite camp concerned themselves not with a crisis of extended deterrence—indeed they saw the nuclear interdependence between the United States and the Soviet Union as a stabilizing factor at all levels of conflict—but rather with U.S. commitment to Europe. In this view, the NATO-Soviet relationship was based on a situation of general deterrence in which the existence of nuclear weapons on both sides was enough to deter. In order to maintain that situation it was essential to ensure U.S. involvement in any potential European war. To some, U.S. commitment was evident in shared political and economic ties as well as American national security interests. To others, however, U.S. commitment had to be symbolized, and this could only be accomplished by basing U.S. forces and nuclear weapons in Europe. As Lawrence Freedman explains, if “existential deterrence is to be extended, then

⁵³ Ibid., 5.

the deterrent must be seen to *exist*.”⁵⁴ Those concerned with U.S. commitment regarded these deployments as a necessary element to create a condition of coupling.

2. Strategies of Extended Deterrence

If achieving a condition of coupling through extended deterrence was to be the goal, the Allies needed an extended deterrent strategy that ensured both credibility and commitment. This was no simple matter. Disagreement existed within NATO over the various extended deterrence strategies and the role of TNWs.

Four extended deterrence strategies emerged from differing perspectives on the nature of the threat of Soviet attack and the probability of nuclear escalation. Daalder presents these perspectives as two dichotomies, “the Soviet threat is either high or low and nuclear escalation is either likely or it is not.”⁵⁵ The matrix in Figure 1 shows the relationship between the interaction of these perspectives and the corresponding extended deterrence strategy.⁵⁶

		Probability of Attack (Nature of Soviet Union)	
		LOW (Risk-averse)	HIGH (Risk-prone)
Probability of Escalation if Nuclear Weapons Used (Escalation Control)	HIGH (Uncontrollable)	PURE DETERRENCE	CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE
	LOW (Controllable)	ESCALATORY DETERRENCE	WARFIGHTING DETERRENCE

Figure 1. Extended-Deterrence Strategies Within the Strategic Concept of Flexible Response (From Daalder)

⁵⁴ Daalder, *The Nature and Practice of Flexible Response*, 9.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

The four strategies are defined as follows:

- Pure deterrence: The probability of attack is perceived as low and the probability of escalation as high. The strategy emphasizes the likely catastrophe that will result if an attack should occur. Because the threat is believed to be low, its acceptance of the inherent risk of total destruction should deterrence fail is deemed to be tolerable.
- Conventional deterrence: Both the probability of attack and the probability of escalation are believed to be high. The emphasis of the strategy is therefore on conventional defense in case of attack. Since the threat is assumed to be high, avoiding nuclear escalation becomes a key requirement of this strategy.
- Escalatory deterrence: The assumption is that both the Soviet threat and the probability of escalation are low. Because an attack is assumed to be unlikely, relying on nuclear escalation to deter an attack is deemed tolerable, particularly since escalation can to some extent be controlled.
- Warfighting deterrence: The Soviet threat is assumed to be high and the probability of escalation is perceived to be low. Because an attack is seen as probable, attempting to defeat the opponent is deemed desirable. Defeat can be accomplished by way of using nuclear weapons, since escalation can be controlled.⁵⁷

This discussion of extended deterrence strategy is important because it provides a context for understanding the strategic decisions and policy initiatives regarding forward basing of U.S. TNWs in Europe. Developing a consensus on a single extended deterrence strategy proved difficult given the differing perspectives of not only credibility and commitment but how these relate to differing views on the nature of the Soviet threat and the likelihood of escalation. These debates ultimately produced a strategy coherent enough to extend deterrence, yet ambiguous enough to ensure Alliance cohesion.

3. Flexible Response and Alliance Cohesion

The period from 1960 to 1967, a tumultuous period for NATO strategists, marked the beginning of a process in which TNWs were transformed from simply a military instrument of war to a political and military tool which fostered a transatlantic link between the United States and Western Europe. The

⁵⁷ Ibid.

underlying impetus for this transformation emerged from the debate outlined above. Faced with the very real possibility of a two-sided nuclear conflict in which Europe would be caught in the middle, NATO planners began to rethink the strategic situation in Europe. The United States promoted a new strategy of flexible response, which called for “the employment as appropriate of one or more of direct defense, deliberate escalation, and general nuclear response, thus confronting the enemy with a credible threat of escalation in response to any type of aggression.”⁵⁸ The proposal was hotly debated within NATO from 1962 to 1967, when the newly established NATO Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) finally adopted it.

The essence of the flexible response strategy was that conventional defense should be the preferred means of defending Europe from the outset of war with the Soviet Union. This reflected the belief that even the use of small nuclear armaments would inevitably lead to escalation and nuclear holocaust. Conventional forces would hold the line until either they were overrun by Soviet forces or the Soviets employed theater nuclear weapons. From that point, NATO’s theater nuclear weapons would be employed, either in direct defense against Soviet conventional forces or as a “warning shot across the bow” to signal NATO’s intention to escalate the conflict if the Soviet Union chose to continue. The final step on the escalation ladder would be a general strategic nuclear strike. The connection of this final step to the strategy, with the implications it carried in terms of Soviet retaliation against the American homeland, codified the strategy of extended deterrence and created the condition of coupling between the United States and Western Europe.

Although the NPG formally adopted the strategy of flexible response, this by no means meant there was complete agreement within NATO on implementation of the strategy. Differences existed over how and when TNWs should be employed in a crisis. These differences were reflected in the various strategies of extended deterrence—pure, conventional, escalatory and

⁵⁸ Daalder, *The Nature and Practice of Flexible Response*, 2.

warfighting. However, these disagreements over the implementation of flexible response existed within a larger political context, namely the Cold War itself. As Morgan points out, “For years the Cold War was conducted as if we were on the edge of sliding into immediate deterrence...Immediate deterrence was the primary consideration, dominating most thinking even about general deterrence.”⁵⁹ Within this context, however, Alliance cohesion stood as the dominant requirement. Regardless of the different views over how and when TNWs should be employed in a crisis, the Alliance had to remain united if deterrence was to succeed. Thus, “Flexible Response was a deliberately ambiguous strategic concept that encompassed rather than resolved differences over strategy,” yet “the ambiguous nature of Flexible Response was both necessary and sufficient to satisfy the overriding requirement of alliance cohesion.”⁶⁰ From its inception through the end of the Cold War, flexible response marked a period in which the utility of forward basing theater nuclear weapons in Europe transitioned to be more political than military. Instead of representing a military instrument of war, these weapons became a critical element in establishing the transatlantic link between the United States and Western Europe.

C. CONCLUSION

This chapter explored the rationale behind forward basing U.S. TNWs in Europe during the Cold War. Given the perceived conventional imbalance after the Second World War, NATO relied on TNWs to provide a military solution to the problem of deterring Soviet aggression and defending Western Europe. The massive retaliation strategy became untenable with the emergence of nuclear parity between the United States and the Soviet Union. This development spurred an evolution in NATO strategy focused on extending deterrence to Europe. Extended deterrence required a condition of coupling between U.S. and European security interests which could only be achieved through a credible U.S.

⁵⁹ Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 10.

⁶⁰ Daalder, *The Nature and Practice of Flexible Response*, 13.

nuclear response and a demonstrative U.S. commitment to Europe. Forward basing TNWs in Europe satisfied these requirements and solidified the transatlantic link. The ambiguity over when and how they would be used under flexible response masked the strategic debate over the various extended deterrence strategies in order to ensure Alliance cohesion. Above all, the utility of these weapons, and thus the strategy of basing them in Europe, stemmed from the overarching belief that the Cold War existed within the context of an immediate deterrence relationship.

The nature of this deterrence relationship changed significantly with the end of the Cold War, however the strategy did not. The logic of extended deterrence and the condition of coupling created by forward basing U.S. TNWs in Europe became entrenched in NATO strategic thought. In the contemporary security environment, both the United States and NATO as a whole cling to the political and military utility associated with these weapons during the Cold War.

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III. THEATER NUCLEAR WEAPONS: POLITICAL AND MILITARY UTILITY

This chapter analyzes the political and military utility of TNWs today. It explains why U.S. and European NATO policymakers support the continued deployment of TNWs in Europe. The chapter examines U.S. conceptions of post-Cold War European security and deterrence beginning with the immediate post-Cold War force structure changes. Next, it highlights the U.S. vision for TNWs in this new environment, including their role in counterproliferation, which emerges from the most recent *National Security Strategy* and *Nuclear Posture Review*. The chapter then analyzes NATO's support for basing U.S. TNWs in Europe. It addresses NATO's Strategic Concept and nuclear doctrine, NATO Enlargement, arguments for maintaining the transatlantic link through the continued deployment of TNWs in Europe and issues of nuclear assurance. The chapter demonstrates that supporters of the TNW basing policy find political and military utility in these weapons not only for traditional deterrence, but also in a new operational capacity in counterproliferation. The arguments presented in this chapter highlight one end of the contemporary debate on theater nuclear weapons in Europe examined by this thesis—that these weapons continue to have utility for European security in today's strategic environment.

A. THE UNITED STATES AND THE UTILITY OF TNWS

For nearly sixty years the United States has relied on nuclear deterrence for national security. The end of the Cold War and the implosion of the Soviet Union marked a tremendous turning point for international security, yet while the strategic dynamics changed dramatically, U.S. perceptions of the political and military utility of TNWs did not. Indeed, despite quantitative reductions, forward-deployed U.S. TNWs continue to maintain their Cold War roles and have begun to take on new ones.

1. Presidential Nuclear Initiatives and Post-Cold War European Security

In 1991 President George H. W. Bush astounded the world by presenting one of the most significant arms control and disarmament proposals in history. The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs) entailed a major unilateral reduction in U.S. theater nuclear weapons and a challenge to the Soviet leadership to embark on reciprocal efforts. These initiatives garnered acclaim from the international community, including British Prime Minister John Major who praised them as “bold...far-reaching, historic and imaginative.”⁶¹ The PNIs were not treaties, but rather specific disarmament pledges committing the U.S. and Soviet leaders to eliminate, remove and consolidate either all or portions of their TNW arsenals. Under the PNIs, all nuclear weapons of the respective countries’ ground forces were to be eliminated; all TNWs from ships, submarines and land-based naval aircraft were to be removed, with some eliminated and some centrally stored; some air force weapons were to be eliminated and others withdrawn to central storage facilities; and all Soviet nuclear air defense weapons were to be removed and some eliminated.⁶² In a 5 October speech to his nation, Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev outlined his reciprocal response to President Bush’s initiatives, stating that “by taking unilateral and bilateral steps and holding negotiations, we push forward the process of disarmament...”⁶³ Over the course of the 1990s, the two nations set about implementing the PNIs.

The U.S. theater nuclear arsenal now stands at approximately 1,120 weapons. This number includes 800 B61 gravity bombs and 320 Tomahawk land-attack cruise missiles (TLAM/Ns), of which only 150 B61 gravity bombs remain forward deployed Europe.⁶⁴ The Russian TNW arsenal, by contrast, totals approximately 3,380 weapons mixed between naval, air force and air

⁶¹ Joshua Handler, “The 1991-1992 PNIs and the Elimination, Storage, and Security of Tactical Nuclear Weapons,” in *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emerging Threats in an Evolving Security Environment*, ed. Brian Alexander, Alistair Millar, (Washington DC: Brassey’s, 2003), 20.

⁶² Ibid., 21.

⁶³ Mikhail Gorbachev, “The USSR’s Disarmament Measures: The Elimination of Tactical Weapons,” *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 1 November 1991, iss. 58, no. 2, 37.

⁶⁴ “U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2003,” NDRC Nuclear Notebook (July/August 2003). <http://www.thebulletin.org/issues/nukenotes/mj03nukenote.html> (accessed July 2004).

defense units.⁶⁵ Table 1 compares U.S. and Soviet/Russian theater nuclear weapon totals from 1991 to 2002.⁶⁶

Table 1. U.S. and Soviet/Russian TNW Totals (From Handler)

U.S. and Soviet/Russian TNW Totals		
	1991	2002
Estimated U.S. TNW		
Army/Marine Corps	3,040	0
Navy	1,150	320 SLCMs
Air Force	2,975	800 B-61 bombs
Air Defense	0	0
Total	7,165	1,120
Estimated Soviet/Russian TNW		
Ground Forces	4,800- 6,700	0
Navy	3,400- 5,000	640
Air Force	4,000- 7,000	1,540
Air Defense	2,800- 3,000	1,200
Total	15,000-21,700	3,380

While over three times the size of the U.S. arsenal, the Russian figure represents a dramatic decrease from the estimated 15,000-21,700 theater nuclear weapons deployed in the Soviet Union in 1991. Progress on implementing the PNIs demonstrates concrete effort toward disarmament, yet the initiatives as a whole fall short of total elimination of theater nuclear weapons. This reflects the continued value placed on these weapons and their deterrent effects for European security.

President Bush's proposed reductions in TNWs were a manifestation of the dramatic changes in international security at the dawn of the 1990s. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War carried the promise of a new security situation in Europe. However, by leaving some TNWs in Europe, U.S. policymakers also demonstrated caution. In the uncertain post-Cold War world, deterrence still played a vital role. Security analysts, including David Yost,

⁶⁵ Handler, "The 1991-1992 PNIs," 31.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

highlighted developments in Russian nuclear doctrine and possible negative developments in Russian politics as a rationale for sustaining a U.S. nuclear presence in Europe.⁶⁷ Russia's apparently increased reliance on nuclear weapons to offset declining conventional capabilities and its abandonment of a no-first-use pledge made NATO continue its emphasis on nuclear deterrence. Moreover, troubling indicators of a possible departure from democratization and cooperation with the West toward a Russian dictatorship, civil war or, at the very least, political instability motivated the Allies "to retain U.S. nuclear forces in Europe as a hedge against the unknown."⁶⁸ The fall of the Soviet Union by no means assured that Europe was safe from aggression in the early post-Cold War years. U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe, although reduced in quantity, retained their historical political and military utility.

By the dawn of the twenty-first century, the world witnessed the birth of a new strategic environment marked by the absence of conflict, or potential conflict, between great powers. In place of great power conflict, global security management and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction now dominate the security agenda. Here, attention focuses on rogue states seeking WMD for regional dominance or to counter perceived influence by the United States and its allies.⁶⁹ The strategic environment is further complicated by the ever-increasing possibility for mass-casualty terrorism. Awareness of this potentiality was heightened by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, which exposed the world to the potential damage that could be inflicted through asymmetric means. At a recent conference, Mohammed El Baradei, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, referred to threat of terrorists acquiring WMD materials as "a race against time."⁷⁰ Intelligence and security

⁶⁷ Yost, "The U.S. and Nuclear Deterrence in Europe," 14-20.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁹ Andrew J. Goodpaster, C. Richard Nelson, and Seymour J. Deitchman, "Deterrence: An Overview," *Post-Cold War Conflict Deterrence* (Washington DC: National Academy Press, 1997), 16.

⁷⁰ Mohammed El Baradei, "Remarks at the 2004 Carnegie International Nonproliferation Conference," 21 June 2004, BBC News. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3827589.stm> (accessed July 2004).

analysts, as well as government officials, agree that preventing the proliferation and use of WMD has become the highest priority in the twenty-first century security environment.

As a result, U.S. defense planning is now oriented around the unpredictability of world politics. As Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay portray in “A New Agenda for Nuclear Weapons,” “The United States continues to face an array of hostile enemies: potential rivals for global or regional leadership, rogue states hostile to U.S. interests, and terrorists implacably opposed to American values. Moreover, the dynamic nature of world politics means that existing threats could escalate rapidly and new ones could materialize without warning.”⁷¹ In this new strategic environment, U.S. officials see continued political and military utility in TNWs.

2. The National Security Strategy, Nuclear Posture Review and TNWs

The dramatic events of September 11 had a profound effect on U.S. national security strategy. The terrorist attacks instilled a feeling of vulnerability and a sense of urgency into the American psyche. The Bush administration’s 2002 *National Security Strategy* demonstrates this new outlook:

But new deadly challenges have emerged from rogue states and terrorists... the nature and motivations of these new adversaries, their determination to obtain destructive powers hitherto available only to the world’s strongest states, and the greater likelihood that they will use weapons of mass destruction against us, make today’s security environment more complex and dangerous... We must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies and friends.⁷²

Recognizing U.S. vulnerability to WMD terrorism and the consequences of waiting for such an event to occur, the Bush administration adopted a preemptive

⁷¹ Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, “A New Agenda for Nuclear Weapons,” Brookings Institution Policy Brief no. 94, 14 February 2002.
<http://www.ceip.org/files/projects/npp/pdf/pb94.pdf> (accessed July 2004), 2.

⁷² The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, 13.

strategy for national security. In the now-famous words of the *National Security Strategy*, “To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively.”⁷³ It is important to distinguish here between preemption and prevention; these two concepts are often misunderstood and misrepresented. Classical just war theorists, such as Hugo Grotius, described preventive war as using armed force “solely to eliminate an adversary’s ability to inflict future harm,” as opposed to preemptive war in which action is taken to prevent a future attack where the “danger was immediate and certain.”⁷⁴ The Bush administration seeks to redefine the concepts of prevention and preemption. The *National Security Strategy* states, “We must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries.”⁷⁵ Under this new logic, according to Jason Ellis of the Center for Counterproliferation Research at the National Defense University, “a preventive attack would be one undertaken to preclude a given actor from obtaining a particular weapons capability, while a preemptive attack would aim to degrade or destroy an existing capability.”⁷⁶ Preemption here entails offensive action which may become necessary after proliferation has occurred to stop hostile adversaries armed with WMD from threatening to use or actually using these weapons. In this context, these adversaries would pose an imminent threat to the United States, its forces, and its friends and allies.

The ink on the document barely had time to dry before this new strategy was put into action. The Bush administration’s insistence on dealing with Iraq’s perceived WMD threat, despite recently revealed intelligence flaws, demonstrates the powerful influence preemption now plays in U.S. foreign policy. As Michael Wheeler asserts in his chapter of *Nuclear Issues in the Post-September 11 Era*, “It is impossible to overstate how important this conclusion

⁷³ Ibid., 15.

⁷⁴ Gregory Reichberg, “Preemptive War,” *Commonweal*, 30 January 2004, vol. 131, iss. 2, 10.

⁷⁵ *National Security Strategy*, 15.

⁷⁶ Jason D. Ellis, “The Best Defense: Counterproliferation and U.S. National Security,” *The Washington Quarterly* (Spring 2003), vol. 26, iss. 2, 116.

[that preemption now plays a greater role in national security] is in driving American strategic thinking today.”⁷⁷ The logic of preemption found its way into the new U.S. nuclear doctrine as well.

Based on the complex and dynamic strategic environment and a new vision for national security, U.S. policymakers charted a new course for nuclear doctrine in the 2002 *Nuclear Posture Review* (NPR). In keeping with the force planning guidance laid down in the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), the NPR replaced old threat-based force planning calculations with a new capabilities-based approach. Rather than maintain a nuclear force posture designed for Cold War deterrence, the NPR calls for a mix of nuclear and non-nuclear capabilities designed to achieve specific policy goals. According to National Nuclear Security Administration administrator, Linton Brooks, the NPR identifies four policy goals served by U.S. nuclear forces: assure, dissuade, deter and defeat.⁷⁸

United States policymakers seek to assure friends and allies of U.S. commitment to them and the capability to follow through on that commitment across a broad range of contingencies. The NPR postulates the role of nuclear weapons in assurance as:

U.S. nuclear forces will continue to provide assurance to security partners, particularly in the presence of known or suspected threats of nuclear, biological, or chemical attacks or in the event of surprising military developments. This assurance can serve to reduce the incentives for friendly countries to acquire nuclear

⁷⁷ Michael O. Wheeler, “Nuclear Deterrence Issues in the Post-September 11 World: An American Perspective,” in *Nuclear Issues in the Post-September 11 Era*, Report by Fondation pour la Recherche Strategique in Paris, March 2003.
http://www.frstrategie.org/barreFRS/publications/recherches_doc/Telechargements/rechdoc30_eng.doc (accessed July 2004).

⁷⁸ Linton F. Brooks, “U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policies and Programs,” Speech presented to the Carnegie International Nonproliferation Conference, June 21, 2004.
<http://www.ceip.org/files/projects/npp/resources/2004conference/speeches/brooks.doc> (accessed July 2004), 2.

weapons of their own to deter such threats and circumstances. Nuclear capabilities also assure the U.S. public that the United States will not be subject to coercion based on a false perception of U.S. weakness among potential adversaries.⁷⁹

Assurance is not new in U.S. nuclear doctrine. Indeed, as pointed out in Chapter II, assuring NATO Allies of U.S. commitment became a central feature in the development of the flexible response strategy. In today's strategic environment, assurance is perhaps even more important as a tool for nonproliferation. According to the NPR, U.S. TNWs deployed on the European continent remain "important to the continued viability of NATO's nuclear deterrent strategy."⁸⁰ For U.S. policymakers, maintaining TNWs in Europe demonstrates political utility in achieving the policy goal of assurance, just as it did during the Cold War.

Policymakers also seek to dissuade potential adversaries from competing with U.S. capabilities through robust forces and infrastructure which they have no hope of matching. The NPR states,

U.S. military forces themselves, including nuclear forces will now be used to 'dissuade adversaries from undertaking military programs or operations that could threaten U.S. interests or those of allies and friends.'⁸¹ The capacity of the infrastructure to upgrade existing weapon systems, surge production of weapons, or develop and field entirely new systems for the New Triad can discourage other countries from competing militarily with the United States.⁸²

The concept of dissuasion dates back to nineteenth century European great-power relations, yet it emerged only recently in American strategic doctrine. According to defense analyst Richard Kugler, "The United States does not have a great deal of experience with dissuasion because the Cold War led it to see the world in terms of friends and foes and to view its strategy choices in terms of assurance or deterrence."⁸³ Between assuring allies and deterring enemies,

⁷⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, Nuclear Posture Review Report [Excerpts], 2002. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm> (accessed July 2004), 12.

⁸⁰ Nuclear Posture Review Report [Excerpts], 44.

⁸¹ Ibid., 9.

⁸² Ibid., 14.

⁸³ Richard L. Kugler, "Dissuasion as a Strategic Concept," Institute for National Security Studies, National Defense University, *Strategic Forum* (December 2002), no. 196, 2.

dissuasion offers a strategy for dealing with countries whose relationships vis-à-vis the United States are marked by “cool peace, mutual suspicions, and common incentives to avoid violence.”⁸⁴ For these relationships, U.S. policymakers envision political utility in TNWs, including those forward deployed in Europe, because these weapons make futile any attempts to threaten or coerce the Allies.

Under the new NPR, U.S. nuclear forces will deter any threats that do arise by holding at risk the assets which a potential adversary values most. According to the NPR:

Nuclear weapons play a critical role in the defense capabilities of the United States, its allies and friends. They provide credible military options to deter a wide range of threats, including WMD and large-scale conventional military force. These nuclear capabilities possess unique properties that give the United States options to hold at risk classes of targets [that are] important to achieve strategic and political objectives.⁸⁵

Deterrence theory is well documented, the elements of which hinge on severe conflict, rationality, retaliatory threat, unacceptable damage, credibility and stability.⁸⁶ Yet applying these principles in the new strategic environment poses a different set of challenges. To meet these challenges, the NPR calls for greater flexibility with respect to nuclear forces and planning. Deterrence now requires “nuclear attack options that vary in scale, scope and purpose” in order to “pose a credible deterrent to adversaries whose values and calculations of risk and of gain and loss may be very different from and more difficult to discern than those of past adversaries.”⁸⁷ For U.S. policymakers, this greater flexibility represents the utility of TNW today, including new weapons designed for hard and deeply buried targets (HDBT).

⁸⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁸⁵ Nuclear Posture Review Report [Excerpts], 7.

⁸⁶ Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 1.

⁸⁷ Nuclear Posture Review Report [Excerpts], 7.

Finally, the NPR calls for the capability to decisively defeat any opponent in the event deterrence should fail. Again, from the NPR:

Composed of both non-nuclear systems and nuclear weapons, the strike element of the New Triad can provide greater flexibility in the design and conduct of military campaigns to defeat opponents decisively. ...Nuclear weapons could be employed against targets able to withstand non-nuclear attack, (for example, deep underground bunkers or bio-weapon facilities).⁸⁸

This is where “the rubber meets the road” for U.S. nuclear doctrine and preemption. The NPR calls for the development of a new breed of smaller nuclear weapons with greater precision, lower yield, and greater penetration capability. In short, the administration is pushing for more “usable” nuclear weapons which could be applied against targets inaccessible to current conventional weapons. Combined with the recent trend toward preemption, these developments point to the emergence of a new role for TNWs in counterproliferation.

3. Theater Nuclear Weapons in Counterproliferation

Counterproliferation is not a new concept in U.S. security strategy. Indeed, the Department of Defense (DoD) has focused great attention on integrating counterproliferation capabilities into doctrine, training and equipment since the first Gulf War.⁸⁹ What is new today, however, is the level of attention counterproliferation receives, due in large part to the events of September 11. From the creation of the Defense Department’s Counterproliferation Initiative (CPI) in 1993, the issue is now elevated to the presidential level with the U.S. *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*. Published in 2002, the administration’s WMD Strategy ties in closely with the *National Security Strategy* and the NPR with respect to the WMD threat and U.S. capabilities for dealing with that threat.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 12-13.

⁸⁹ National Defense University, *At the Crossroads: Counterproliferation and the New National Security Strategy*, A Report of the Center for Counterproliferation Research (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2004), 18.

The strategy identifies three core pillars—counterproliferation, strengthened nonproliferation and consequence management. While the latter two are important, according to a recent National Defense University report, counterproliferation has “now assumed a more prominent role.”⁹⁰ This emerges from the realization that the proliferation and use of WMD now pose the greatest threat to the United States, its friends and allies. Therefore, as the strategy states, “U.S. military and appropriate civilian agencies must possess the full range of operational capabilities to counter the threat and use of WMD by states and terrorists against the United States, our military forces, and friends and allies.”⁹¹ As in the past, the administration seeks to deter potential aggressors from developing or using WMD. However, the strategy further stipulates the necessity to counter such threats preemptively, should deterrence fail. It calls for “capabilities to detect and destroy an adversary’s WMD assets before these weapons are used.”⁹² The U.S. strategy neither overtly stipulates that nuclear weapons will be used in a preemptive manner, nor does it rule out that very possibility. Indeed, the issue is left deliberately ambiguous, in the same way that U.S. policymakers purposely leave the option of a nuclear response to other forms of WMD attack ambiguous in the minds of potential adversaries. According to John Bolton, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, “If rogue states are not willing to follow the logic of nonproliferation norms, they must be prepared to face the logic of adverse consequences. It is why we repeatedly caution that no option is off the table.”⁹³ According to an October 2002 report prepared for Congress, this constitutes a requirement for which the administration sees a role for TNWs:

The Administration’s strategy outlines the need to react quickly to new intelligence and promptly target and deliver nuclear weapons

⁹⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁹¹ The White House, *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, December 2002, 2.

⁹² Ibid., 3.

⁹³ John R. Bolton, “Remarks to the Conference of the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis and the Fletcher School’s International Security Studies Program,” December 2, 2003. <http://www.state.gov/t/us/rm/26786.htm> (accessed August 2004).

to emerging targets. Non-strategic nuclear weapons deployed at bases overseas may be closer to the battlefield than strategic weapons based in the continental United States, and, therefore, may be able to respond more quickly. They also may carry fewer and smaller warheads than U.S. strategic nuclear weapons, which would make them better suited to discrete, precise attacks.⁹⁴

To enhance the utility of these weapons, the Bush administration introduced four nuclear initiatives in its FY2004 budget request. Based on the arguments put forward in the NPR, these initiatives called for lifting the congressional ban on low-yield nuclear weapons research and development; funding an Advanced Concepts Initiative (ACI) to begin studies on weapons technology and science; funding to study a Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP), which converts an existing bomb into a penetrating weapon; and funding to allow the United States the ability to conduct a nuclear test within 18 months of a presidential order (since 1996 the timeline has been 24-36 months).⁹⁵ These initiatives, advocates argue, would increase the effectiveness of U.S. TNWs, thereby providing the president with low-yield, low-collateral-damage nuclear options for deterring and defeating WMD-armed opponents.

From the end of the Cold War to the present, the U.S. policymakers have continually viewed TNWs as politically and militarily useful. These weapons retained their Cold War roles of assuring allies and deterring nuclear aggression against U.S. or NATO territory, while gaining new roles in dissuading potential competitors and countering the proliferation of WMD. According to Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith, “linking nuclear forces to multiple defense policy goals, and not simply to deterrence, recognizes that these forces...perform key missions in peacetime as well as in crisis or conflict.”⁹⁶ In

⁹⁴ Amy F. Woolf, *U.S. Nuclear Weapons: Changes in Policy and Force Structure* (Washington DC: The Library of Congress, 2002). <http://fas.org/spp/starwars/crs/RL31623.pdf> (accessed July 2004), 23.

⁹⁵ Jonathan Medalia, *Nuclear Weapon Initiatives: Low-Yield R&D, Advanced Concepts, Earth Penetrators, Test Readiness* (Washington DC: The Library of Congress, 2004). <http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars/crs/RL32130.pdf> (accessed August 2004), 1.

⁹⁶ Douglas J. Feith, “Statement of the Honorable Douglas J. Feith Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Senate Armed Services Hearing on the Nuclear Posture Review February 14, 2002.” <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2002/Feith.pdf> (accessed August 2004).

counterproliferation, the most controversial role, the Bush administration values the political and military utility of TNWs as a more credible deterrent than strategic forces, and a pre-emptive tool for defeating potential WMD threats should deterrence fail. Essentially, the new U.S. nuclear strategy represents a revival of warfighting deterrence, except instead of targeting the Soviet Union, the new strategy encompasses a broad array of threats.

B. NATO AND THE UTILITY OF TNWS

From the earliest days of the Cold War, NATO's European members have generally viewed U.S. TNWs on their soil as a fundamental requirement for European security. As Chapter II describes, NATO's security depended on the credibility of the U.S. nuclear response, the U.S. commitment to Europe and coupling between U.S. and European security interests. Theater nuclear weapons ultimately provided the glue that solidified extended deterrence and the transatlantic link. The disappearance of the Soviet, later Russian, threat had little effect on NATO's perception of the utility of these weapons; they serve the same roles as in the past—deterrence and Alliance cohesion. This section analyzes NATO's support for continuing the U.S. nuclear presence in Europe, addressing NATO's Strategic Concept and nuclear doctrine, NATO Enlargement, arguments for maintaining the transatlantic link and issues of nuclear assurance.

1. NATO's Strategic Concept

By early 1990, NATO recognized the gradual disappearance of the Cold War threat which U.S. nuclear weapons were originally intended to deter. Although it would be another two years before the Soviet Union collapsed, NATO leaders began to reevaluate issues of nuclear doctrine and strategy. With the London Declaration, issued at the summit meeting of July 1990, NATO leaders foresaw the Alliance moving “to adopt a new NATO strategy making nuclear

forces truly weapons of last resort.”⁹⁷ This new approach implied that NATO would no longer require its full complement of TNWs and, accordingly, spurred the introduction of the 1991 Presidential Nuclear Initiatives. NATO reduced its TNW arsenal by approximately 85 percent from 1991 to 1993, yet the political and military utility of the residual nuclear force remained firmly entrenched in NATO’s Strategic Concept.

NATO’s 1991 Strategic Concept recognized both continuity and change in the European security environment. The Soviet Union, although in a state of domestic turmoil and disarray, continued to represent a very real threat to the Allies. The Strategic Concept highlighted the requirement to view the risks and uncertainties of change in that country in light of the fact that the Soviets still possessed significant conventional military forces and nuclear forces comparable only to the United States.⁹⁸ As in the past, NATO had to consider these capabilities in planning for security and stability in Europe. Yet the Alliance also had to consider the effects of the dramatic changes occurring in Eastern and Central Europe. NATO’s security was subject to the “adverse consequences of instabilities that may arise from the serious economic, social and political difficulties, including ethnic rivalries and territorial disputes” faced by these countries.⁹⁹ The 1991 Gulf War demonstrated new southern periphery threats as well, particularly in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Emerging regional powers in these areas combined with new concerns about WMD and missile proliferation added to the diverse array of threats faced by NATO in the new security environment. The Alliance formulated two conclusions from its analysis of the new security environment: first, “the new environment does not change the purpose or the security functions of the Alliance, but rather underlines their

⁹⁷ Stanley R. Sloan, “NATO Nuclear Strategy Beyond the Cold War,” in *Controlling Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons: Obstacles and Opportunities*, ed. Jeffrey A. Larsen and Kurt J. Klingenger, USAF Institute for National Security Studies (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 2001), 45.

⁹⁸ “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept agreed by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council,” 1991.
<http://www.nato.int/docu/basic/b911108a.htm> (accessed August 2004), para. 10.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 9.

enduring validity;” second, that the “changed environment offers new opportunities for the Alliance to frame its strategy within a broad approach to security.” U.S. forward-based TNWs remained at the core of this new strategy.

Although NATO’s conventional forces remained important for security and response to aggression, the Alliance held tightly to the utility of its nuclear weapons. According to the Strategic Concept:

The fundamental purpose of the nuclear forces of the Allies is political: to preserve peace and prevent coercion and any kind of war. They will continue to fulfill an essential role by ensuring uncertainty in the mind of any aggressor about the nature of the Allies’ response to military aggression. They demonstrate that aggression of any kind is not a rational option.¹⁰⁰

Deterrence formed the bedrock of NATO’s nuclear doctrine. Although the Soviet Union remained a primary area of concern for the Allies in the immediate post-Cold War era, it no longer was the only one. Under the 1991 Strategic Concept, NATO sought to deter any and all would-be aggressors.

At the Washington Summit in April 1999, NATO officials released an updated version of the Strategic Concept. This document essentially reiterated NATO’s previous position, that “The fundamental purpose of the nuclear forces of the Allies is political: to preserve peace and prevent coercion and any kind of war.”¹⁰¹ The fundamental difference between this Strategic Concept and the previous version is NATO’s perception of the security environment. Whereas the 1991 Strategic Concept highlighted the Soviet Union as a primary security concern, the new version states, “A strong, stable and enduring partnership between NATO and Russia is essential to achieve lasting stability in the Euro-Atlantic area.”¹⁰² Russia’s vast nuclear arsenal is still an area of concern for NATO, but this concern revolves more around safety and security issues of

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., para. 54.

¹⁰¹ “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept, approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C. 23-24 April 1999”, NATO Press Release NAC-S(99)65. <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm> (accessed August 2004), para. 62.

¹⁰² Ibid., para. 36.

Russia's crumbling nuclear complex than around deterring a Russian threat. NATO does not discount the possibility of a future deterrence relationship vis-à-vis Russia, however unlikely, but the most recent Strategic Concept places greater emphasis on the growing threat of WMD proliferation and use. The 1999 Strategic Concept recognizes that "proliferation can occur despite efforts to prevent it and can pose a direct military threat to the Allies' populations, territory, and forces."¹⁰³ The Allies defense posture, therefore, needed the capability to deal effectively and appropriately with this new threat, which included a role for NATO's nuclear forces. To NATO's European members, however, the utility of these weapons has been and remains today essentially political—to deter aggression against the Alliance. As David Yost asserts, European defense planners believe "U.S. nuclear forces in Europe send a more potent deterrent message about U.S. commitments than would be the case if the Alliance relied solely on U.S. weapons at sea and in North America."¹⁰⁴ The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and subsequent attention placed on potential WMD terrorism further emphasized, for NATO, the utility of its TNWs in this regard.

2. NATO Enlargement

In 1996, NATO defense ministers reiterated the fundamental purpose of Alliance nuclear doctrine established in the 1991 Strategic Concept. However, in an attempt to reassure Moscow, the Defense Planning Committee and Nuclear Planning Group announced, "In the light of the changing security environment in Europe, NATO's nuclear forces have been substantially reduced, they are no longer targeted against anyone and the readiness of NATO's dual capable aircraft has been recently adapted."¹⁰⁵ As relations with Russia improved through the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (later renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council) and Russian participation in the Partnership for Peace

¹⁰³ Ibid., para. 22.

¹⁰⁴ Yost, "The U.S. and Nuclear Deterrence in Europe," 8.

¹⁰⁵ "Final Communiqué of the Defense Planning Committee and Nuclear Planning Group," 13 June 1996, NATO Press Release M-DPC/NPG-1(96)88. <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1996/p96-088e.htm> (accessed August 2004), para. 8.

program, NATO sought to enhance this cooperation by displaying a lower level of readiness to perform nuclear missions. Yet these changes did not constitute abandonment, on the part of NATO, of the perceived utility of its nuclear weapons. The communiqué claimed that “NATO’s current nuclear posture will, for the foreseeable future, continue to meet the requirements of the Alliance.”¹⁰⁶ NATO’s traditional view of the deterrent value of TNWs based in Europe remained strong.

Efforts toward cooperation with Russia were particularly important as NATO embarked on the process of enlargement precisely because this process inevitably raised fears in Russia that U.S. TNWs could move even closer to its borders. According the 1995 NATO enlargement study, “New members will be full members of the Alliance, enjoying all the rights and assuming all the obligations under the Washington Treaty.”¹⁰⁷ The study further explains, “New members will be expected to support the concept of deterrence and the essential role nuclear weapons play in the Alliance’s strategy of war prevention as set forth in the Strategic Concept.”¹⁰⁸ While the study identified no requirement to station nuclear weapons in new members’ territories, it also reserved the right for NATO to modify its force structure “as circumstances warrant.”¹⁰⁹ In short, NATO emphasized the utility its TNWs for Alliance security while it attempted to reassure Russia that these weapons posed no additional threat to its security.

3. Preserving the Transatlantic Link

NATO continues to value the utility of U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Alliance relations. As in the past, NATO today recognizes that the supreme guarantee for European security is provided by the strategic nuclear forces in the United States. As Chapter II demonstrates, U.S. TNWs during the Cold War symbolized the transatlantic link and coupled U.S. and European security

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ “Study on NATO Enlargement,” September 1995. <http://www.nato.int/docu/basic/txt/enl-9501.htm> (accessed Aug 2004), para. 68.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., para. 45.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, para. 58.

together under the U.S. strategic nuclear umbrella. For European NATO, forward-based TNWs continue to serve this role:

A credible Alliance nuclear posture and the demonstration of Alliance solidarity and common commitment to war prevention continue to require widespread participation by European Allies involved in collective defence planning in nuclear roles, in peacetime basing of nuclear forces on their territory and in command, control and consultation arrangements. 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.¹¹⁰

U.S. TNWs offer a visible manifestation of extended deterrence, tangibly demonstrating the transatlantic link. Without the U.S. nuclear presence in Europe, according to Yost, both potential adversaries and Americans might not take the nuclear promises as seriously.¹¹¹ Beyond that, however, these weapons are thought to enhance Alliance cohesion through nuclear risk and burden sharing. Countries accepting TNWs on their soil demonstrate solidarity by accepting the risks associated with them, including potential attacks on their territory aimed at destroying the weapons or the facilities they are stored in. These countries also share the burden of training for and potentially delivering these weapons in wartime. Moreover, the forward-basing policy allows non-nuclear-weapon states to play a role in Alliance decision making and nuclear policy implementation. All Alliance members participating in NATO's integrated military command structure (meaning all Allies except France) have a voice in the Nuclear Planning Group. Without European risk and burden sharing, the fear in non-nuclear Europe is that the United States would be able to exert even greater influence over NATO's nuclear doctrine.

Finally, some analysts suggest that U.S. nuclear weapons deployed in Europe are useful as placeholders. This argument views suggestions for adopting a "reconstitution" approach, in which U.S. TNWs could be reconstituted to the United States and brought back to Europe in case of emergency or crisis,

¹¹⁰ "The Alliance's Strategic Concept," April 1999, para. 63.

¹¹¹ Yost, "The U.S. and Nuclear Deterrence in Europe," 8.

as “ill-founded.”¹¹² Redeploying these weapons in a crisis, according to David Yost, could be construed as escalatory, perhaps even inviting a pre-emptive attack. With respect to transatlantic relations, the reconstitution approach would be problematic because once the responsibility for risk and burden sharing is removed, it may be politically much more difficult, if not impossible, to convince the European public to accept nuclear weapons on their soil again. Maintaining the strategy, on the other hand, prevents a potentially divisive debate within NATO and enhances Alliance cohesion, while making future weapons improvements politically easier. For NATO, widespread participation in nuclear sharing and nuclear consultative arrangements through maintaining the U.S. nuclear presence in Europe is a necessity for preserving the transatlantic link, especially in light of recent tensions in the transatlantic relationship and U.S. conventional force structure reductions in Europe.

4. Nuclear Assurance

NATO places great value on the nuclear assurance role of its TNWs in promoting nonproliferation within the Alliance. These weapons symbolize U.S. commitment to provide nuclear protection for its Allies, thereby reducing the incentive for individual states to develop nuclear weapons of their own. Withdrawing the U.S. nuclear presence could, in NATO’s view, signal disengagement which could trigger the pursuit of individual national nuclear weapons programs. Analysts point to Germany and Turkey as the two most likely examples.

For over fifty years, Germany has been satisfied under the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Studies have shown, however, that under different security conditions Germany may show an interest in a national nuclear weapons capability. David Yost highlights a 1995 survey of German political and civilian leaders which demonstrates, “It is the American presence on the Continent that allays most of Germany’s fears. It is American nuclear weapons in Germany...that provide her with guarantees against nuclear threats and blackmail...[and that are] the key for

¹¹² Ibid., 58.

diluting both security and nonsecurity motivations for Germany to become a nuclear power.”¹¹³ No European country wants Germany to become a nuclear power, hence the U.S. nuclear presence in Europe is useful in assuring Germany and preventing proliferation within NATO.

Turkey, likewise, has depended on the U.S. nuclear guarantee and continues to do so. Turkey’s geostrategic position vis-à-vis the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as the tumultuous Middle East raises genuine security concerns. As a result, Turkey’s commitment to non-nuclear weapon status under the NPT is highly dependent on NATO and the U.S. nuclear guarantee. According to Turkish Scholar Duygu Bazoglu Sezer, “the extended deterrence of the United States must remain convincing and credible to Turks as well as to *de facto* and *de jure* nuclear weapons states and potential proliferators.”¹¹⁴ In the case of Turkey, like Germany and other NATO non-nuclear-weapons states, the assurances provided by U.S. TNWs in Europe enhance NATO’s non-proliferation goals, thus increasing the utility of these weapons for the Alliance.

C. CONCLUSION

This chapter analyzes the political and military utility of TNWs today. It explains why U.S. and NATO policymakers support the continued deployment of TNWs in Europe. U.S. policymakers support the TNW policy for traditional reasons as well as emerging roles. The fall of the Soviet Union by no means assured that Europe was safe from aggression in the early post-Cold War years. U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe, although reduced in quantity by the PNIs, retained their historical political and military utility. In the twenty-first century strategic environment, U.S. officials see continued political and military utility in TNWs. The new defense policy goals—assure, dissuade, deter and defeat—outlined in the 2002 *Nuclear Posture Review*, combined with the Bush administration’s doctrine of preemption and focus on counterproliferation laid out

¹¹³ Ibid., 26.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 27.

in the *National Security Strategy* and *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, highlight the value U.S. policymakers place on the utility of these weapons today.

NATO, as well, supports the continued deployment of TNWs in Europe based on traditional arguments for their utility in Alliance security. From 1991 to 1999, the Allies' Strategic Concept emphasized their political utility in deterring any kind of war or coercion. Although focused more on the volatile situation in the East in the early part of the decade, relations with Russia improved with time and a great deal of effort. The Alliance offered reassurances to Russia regarding the status of its TNW arsenal and dual-capable aircraft readiness, yet at the same time it emphasized nuclear guarantees, roles and responsibilities to new members under the process of enlargement. NATO's nuclear doctrine today places greater emphasis on deterring threats posed by WMD proliferation and use. Throughout this period, just as during the Cold War, NATO continued to place great value on U.S. nuclear forces based in Europe and committed to NATO, which "provide an essential political and military linkage between the European and the North American members of the Alliance."¹¹⁵ For NATO, widespread participation in nuclear sharing and nuclear consultative arrangements is a necessity for preserving the transatlantic link. These arrangements assure Allies of U.S. commitment and symbolize the credibility of extended deterrence which alleviates the potential for proliferation within the Alliance. In terms of utility, then, NATO thinks politically while U.S. policymakers think both politically and operationally.

¹¹⁵ "Final Communiqué of the Defense Planning Committee and Nuclear Planning Group," 12 June 2003, NATO Press Release (2003)64. <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2003/p03-064e.htm> (accessed Aug 2004), para. 10.

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IV. THEATER NUCLEAR WEAPONS: POLITICAL AND MILITARY RELEVANCE

This chapter analyzes the political and military relevance of TNWs today. The chapter questions whether basing these weapons in Europe is necessary to maintain European security. The chapter begins by identifying the nature of the transatlantic link as being primarily economic and political, with military links maintained via conventional forces. Within this context, Europe and the United States remain coupled, and U.S. strategic nuclear forces still provide the supreme guarantee for European security. The chapter then identifies a usability paradox wherein attempts to make TNWs more “usable” fail because issues of credibility and the “nuclear taboo” raise serious questions about their potential use. Finally, the chapter addresses prospects for conventional deterrence, including the recent revolution in military affairs (RMA), NATO conventional superiority, conventional threats to rogue regimes, and the future of strategic strike. Chapter three demonstrated arguments for TNW utility; the arguments presented in this chapter highlight another aspect of the contemporary debate on theater nuclear weapons in Europe examined by this thesis—that TNWs in Europe are irrelevant for European security today.

A. THE TRANSATLANTIC LINK

Proponents of basing U.S. TNWs in Europe argue that the policy must be continued in order to maintain the transatlantic link between the United States and Europe. NATO’s Strategic Concepts, as well as subsequent NPG communiqués, repeatedly state that “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.”¹¹⁶ As earlier chapters demonstrate, this rationale emerged during the Cold War and remains an integral aspect of NATO nuclear strategy today. However, other analysts doubt that TNWs deployed in Europe are responsible for maintaining the

¹¹⁶ “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept,” April 1999, para. 63.

transatlantic link, claiming that economic and political ties bind the United States and Europe. Moreover, the fact that new Alliance members receive the benefits of nuclear protection by joining NATO and participating in the Nuclear Planning Group demonstrates that allowing TNWs on a particular country's soil is not a requirement a priori for extended deterrence. Finally, U.S. conventional forces based in Europe symbolize American commitment to European security and link the U.S. strategic nuclear deterrent to the protection of Europe. This discussion demonstrates the irrelevance of TNWs based in Europe vis-à-vis the transatlantic link.

1. Economic and Political Ties that Bind

The United States has a vested interest in European security—this is nothing new. The post-war reconstruction of Europe began in 1948 with the Marshall Plan, focusing on economic and political stability and prosperity as a precursor for security. In the great ideological struggle between East and West, the United States and Europe were inextricably tied by their shared beliefs in liberal democracy and capitalism. These beliefs were codified in the articles of the North Atlantic Treaty, along with the promise of collective defense found in Article Five. As the strategic environment developed, European civilization itself depended on the United States as the ultimate guarantor of security. Under the situation of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), the survival of Europe hinged on linking European security to the U.S. strategic nuclear response. U.S. theater nuclear weapons based in Europe provided this transatlantic link.

The old logic dictating that the transatlantic link must be maintained through U.S. TNWs stationed in Europe is exactly that—old logic. Europe is no longer threatened by a massive Soviet invasion and the potential destruction of the continent by full-scale nuclear war. Europe today faces threats to its economic and political stability and prosperity posed by WMD proliferation and terrorism. Casualties from such an attack would be severe, to be sure, but would fall far short of annihilation of both European and American civilization. The transatlantic link exists today not because of the approximately 150 U.S. gravity

bombs remaining in Europe¹¹⁷, but rather due to the fifty-plus years of economic and political interaction between Europe and the United States. According to former Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Wesley Clark, Europe and the United States remain linked by an “enormous degree of economic interdependence” which is complemented and reinforced “by political, cultural, and diplomatic ties of long standing.”¹¹⁸ As General Clark points out,

The figures speak volumes. U.S. trade with Europe, amounting to over \$250 billion annually, produces over three million domestic jobs. U.S. companies employ three million people in Europe. One in 12 factory workers in the United States is employed by a European Union (EU) firm operating in this country, of which there are some 4,000. Half of the world’s goods are produced by the United States and the EU. Ninety percent of humanitarian aid dispensed throughout the world comes from the United States and the EU. Companies from the EU form the largest investment block in 41 US states. Fifty-six percent of US foreign investment occurs in Europe. Europe buys 30 percent of U.S. exports. We should note too the large oil and gas reserves in the North Sea and particularly in the Caspian basin that provide a strategic hedge against disruption of supplies from the Middle East.¹¹⁹

This vast level of economic interdependence is supplemented by deep political integration as well. As William Wallace asserts, “transatlantic relations are embedded in a dense network of multilateral links, including annual meetings of the Group of Eight major industrialized nations, semiannual consultations among top officials, and shared membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).”¹²⁰ At the highest levels of state, the bond between the United States and Europe reaches beyond the military dimension.

¹¹⁷ Sloan, “NATO Nuclear Strategy Beyond the Cold War,” 48.

¹¹⁸ Clark, “The United States and NATO: The Way Ahead,” 2.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ William Wallace, “Europe, The Necessary Partner,” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2001), vol. 80, no. 3, 17.

At the 2002 NATO Summit in Prague, President Bush articulated the point:

We are committed to work toward world peace, and we're committed to a close and permanent partnership with the nations of Europe. The Atlantic Alliance is America's most important global relationship. We're tied to Europe by history; we are tied to Europe by the wars of liberty we have fought and won together. We're joined by broad ties of trade. And America is bound to Europe by the deepest convictions of our common culture -- our belief in the dignity of every life, and our belief in the power of conscience to move history.¹²¹

This vision of the transatlantic relationship suggests an extensive confluence of interests today which render the symbolic basing of a few hundred TNWs in Europe irrelevant.

2. Nuclear Roles and Extended Deterrence

Proponents of the TNW basing policy argue that widespread participation by European Allies in nuclear planning and roles, including accepting nuclear weapons on their territory, are a requirement for maintaining the transatlantic link. In this context, nuclear sharing enhances Alliance solidarity by ensuring that non-nuclear members have a voice in nuclear planning issues. According to Otfried Nassauer, director of the Berlin Information-center for Transatlantic Security, NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements have both political and technical mechanisms.¹²² The political mechanism involves consultation and cooperation between both nuclear and non-nuclear members through the Nuclear Planning Group. This group discusses nuclear doctrine, strategy and policy and determines operational requirements for NATO's nuclear force posture. Since 1979, the NPG has been open to all Alliance members participating in NATO's integrated military command structure, and it serves as the "central political mechanism of nuclear sharing."¹²³

¹²¹ "Remarks by the President of the United States, George W. Bush to the Atlantic Student Summit", 20 November 2002, *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly* (Winter 2002), 15.

¹²² Otfried Nassauer, *NATO's Nuclear Posture Review: Should NATO End Nuclear Sharing*, BITS Policy Note 02.1, April 2002. <http://www.bits.de/public/policynote/pn02-1.htm> (accessed August 2004), 3.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

The technical mechanism of nuclear sharing involves the capability to perform nuclear missions. Presently six non-nuclear NATO members have the capability to deliver U.S. TNWs via nationally-owned, dual-capable aircraft. According to Nassauer, these countries include Air Force units in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey.¹²⁴ France and Canada previously maintained such programs, but have since ended their participation—Canada did so in 1989. The remaining “traditional” NATO members participate only on the political side of nuclear sharing and reject the deployment of U.S. TNWs on their soil. NATO’s new members joining the Alliance under the process of Enlargement participate in nuclear sharing only through the political mechanisms as well. In the case of the new members, this arrangement emerged from NATO’s politically-binding pledges in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Charter that 1) no nuclear weapons would be deployed in the new states; 2) no infrastructure for the deployment of nuclear weapons will be maintained; and 3) NATO will not build infrastructure for the deployment of nuclear weapons in the new states.¹²⁵ Furthermore, Secretary of State Albright and Defense Secretary Cohen testified before Congress in 1997 that the Alliance has no plans to train pilots in the new member states for nuclear mission, provide dual-capable aircraft to these states or demand them to acquire such aircraft, or foment Programs of Cooperation with new members.¹²⁶ Interestingly, this disparate participation in the technical side of nuclear sharing has no impact on extended deterrence vis-à-vis the new members.

Nuclear deterrence within the NATO construct equally protects all members of the Alliance regardless of whether their role in nuclear sharing is political or technical. As Nassauer points out, “It is neither dependent on a member state’s possession or storage of nuclear weapons on its soil nor on its capability to launch them in case of war.”¹²⁷ This fact was reaffirmed for the new

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

members in NATO's enlargement study and subsequent agreements with Moscow. NATO members continue to influence Alliance nuclear policy through participation in the NPG, exemplified by Canada's experience after giving up its nuclear-delivery capability in 1989. The conclusion to draw from this discussion of nuclear roles in NATO is that extended deterrence remains intact through a transatlantic link embodied by NATO's institutionalized political arrangements. U.S. TNWs based on European soil are irrelevant in this regard.

3. Strategic Nuclear Forces

Throughout the history of the Atlantic Alliance, Europe consistently sought security under the U.S. strategic nuclear umbrella. NATO argues that forward deployed U.S. TNWs provide the essential linkage to these U.S. strategic nuclear forces. This argument, however, harkens back to the Cold War flexible response strategy in which the decision to use nuclear weapons would have occurred early in a conflict. An early decision on the use of TNWs was deemed necessary to support direct defense of Alliance territory or a step up the escalation ladder toward nuclear war at the strategic level. The U.S. nuclear umbrella today, however, is much less "automatic."¹²⁸ Indeed, NATO's Strategic Concept now suggests that "the circumstances in which any use of nuclear weapons might have to be contemplated by them are...extremely remote."¹²⁹ So remote, in fact, that readiness levels for NATO's dual-capable aircraft are now measured in months versus minutes and hours.¹³⁰ The rationale behind this posture emanates from NATO's vastly improved conventional defense capability. Notwithstanding recent European efforts at transformation, NATO's superior conventional capability resides with the U.S. conventional forces based in Europe and available for NATO defense. U.S. forces are fully integrated into NATO's military command structure from the tactical level to the strategic level, culminating with an American military officer serving as the Supreme Allied

¹²⁸ Sloan, "NATO Nuclear Strategy Beyond the Cold War," 53.

¹²⁹ The Alliance's Strategic Concept, para. 64.

¹³⁰ "NATO's Nuclear Forces in the New Security Environment," NATO Issues webpage, June 2004. <http://www.nato.int/issues/nuclear/sec-environment.htm> (accessed August 2004).

Commander Europe. U.S. commitment to European security is demonstrated through the continued deployment of these forces; given the importance of Europe to U.S. national security, this deployment is unlikely to end anytime soon. As President Bush said in Prague, “And nations in the family of NATO, old or new, know this: Anyone who would choose you for an enemy also chooses us for an enemy. Never again in the face of aggression will you stand alone.”¹³¹ Moreover, any assertion that removing U.S. TNWs from Europe would mean also removing U.S. conventional forces is simply false. Europe is currently the only place in the world where the United States stations both conventional and nuclear forces. Past reconstitution policies, in Japan and Korea, left U.S. conventional forces in place, and there is little indication that such a move in Europe would be any different. “In other words,” according to Nassauer, “the presence of U.S. troops does not depend on the simultaneous presence of nuclear weapons.”¹³² Although NATO’s conventional superiority effectively removed the requirement for TNWs to be used early in a conflict, the Alliance still relies on nuclear deterrence for WMD threats.

Today, according to NATO’s 1999 Strategic Concept, “The supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States.”¹³³ This means that U.S. strategic forces, available for Alliance collective defense under Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty, serve to preserve the peace and prevent coercion. In addition to the obligations under Article V, the U.S. strategic arsenal is further linked to Europe through conventional force deployments. As the newest U.S. *Joint Doctrine for Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction* asserts, “The full range of operational capabilities will be required to counter the threat and use of WMD by states and non-state actors against the United States, *our military*

¹³¹ “Remarks by the President of the United States, George W. Bush to the Atlantic Student Summit,” 16.

¹³² Nassauer, *NATO’s Nuclear Posture Review: Should NATO End Nuclear Sharing*, 8.

¹³³ The Alliance’s Strategic Concept, April 1999, para. 62.

forces, and friends and allies.”¹³⁴ Conventional deployments in Europe not only symbolize U.S. commitment to European security, they also enhance the credibility of nuclear deterrence since a nuclear attack on Europe would most assuredly affect American forces stationed there. Even if TNWs were withdrawn from Europe, the United States would maintain a strategic nuclear response option. Given the readiness status of NATO’s dual-capable aircraft, such an option, carried out with strategic bombers or Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), would provide greater operational flexibility. In this context, a strategic strike, utilizing a low-yield warhead provides the same, if not greater utility than a gravity bomb dropped from a tactical aircraft based in Europe. The latter becomes irrelevant for European security.

The nature of the transatlantic link today is primarily economic and political, with military links maintained via conventional forces. The United States and Europe are intricately bound by an enormous degree of economic interdependence and a complex network of institutional arrangements. Within this context, Europe and the United States remain coupled in ways far beyond the symbolic basing of U.S. theater nuclear weapons. Moreover, NATO’s technical nuclear sharing arrangements are no longer required to extend deterrence, as demonstrated by the nuclear guarantees provided under enlargement. NATO members continue to participate in nuclear policy decision making through the political mechanisms in the Nuclear Planning Group and the requirement for consensus in NATO decision-making. Finally, American conventional deployments, as well as the North Atlantic Treaty itself, link the U.S. strategic umbrella to European defense, providing equal or greater utility than forward deployed TNWs. As Harold Müller succinctly states, “Anyone who currently believes that the cohesion of the Atlantic alliance hinges on the

¹³⁴ Joint Publication 3-40, *Joint Doctrine for Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 8 July 2004. http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_40.pdf (accessed August 2004), III-1.

continued symbolism of yesteryear holds alliance cohesion in very low regard indeed.”¹³⁵ In terms of maintaining the transatlantic link, TNWs are irrelevant.

B. THE USABILITY PARADOX

Theater nuclear weapons based in Europe may also be seen as irrelevant from the standpoint of credibility and the “nuclear taboo.” To be credible, the target must believe the deterrer has the will to carry out its threats. According to deterrence scholar Patrick Morgan, “Threat credibility and effectiveness also depend on the perceived *legitimacy of the means*.”¹³⁶ Given the long-standing “nuclear taboo” and the very real political consequences of using nuclear weapons, especially in a preemptive manner, the likelihood of a U.S. president choosing to employ TNWs is remote. Efforts to make TNWs more “usable,” such as the current feasibility studies of a Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator or “bunker buster,” may enhance the capabilities of TNWs, but will do little to alleviate the taboo against their use. From this standpoint, these weapons offer no real credibility advantage over low-yield strategic nuclear forces, and pose a far less credible threat than modern conventional forces. The following discussion highlights the issues of credibility underlying current efforts to make nuclear weapons more “usable,” and then demonstrates why these efforts are irrelevant in light of the nuclear taboo.

1. Issues of Credibility

Credibility has been a fundamental issue throughout the history of nuclear deterrence. Successful deterrence relied on credibility because, as Morgan states, “it was not a state’s capacity to do harm that enabled it to practice deterrence, it was others’ *belief* that it had such a capacity. What deterred was not the threat but that it was believed.”¹³⁷ To make the threat believable, the

¹³⁵ Harold Müller, “Introduction” in *Europe and Nuclear Disarmament: Debates and Political Attitudes in 16 European Countries*, ed. Harold Müller (Brussels: European Interuniversity Press, 1998), 14.

¹³⁶ Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 276 [Emphasis in original].

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

deterrent needed the capability to inflict unacceptable damage and to convince the opponent the deterrent had the will to do so. With respect to capability, the deterrent needed only to make his capabilities known to potential aggressors. Will, however, was inherently more difficult to demonstrate. Communicating intent was very important in demonstrating commitment to carry out the threat of retaliation. During the Cold War, extended deterrence hinged on the credibility of NATO's threat to use TNWs either in direct defense or to escalate the conflict. With the security environment no longer controlled by the situation of MAD, Bush administration officials view credibility today differently.

From the late 1990s, many strategic analysts—now members of the current administration—began to rethink issues of credibility. As proliferation and possible use of WMD dominated the security agenda, these analysts addressed the “question of whether U.S. nuclear policy and forces (type and mix) provide credible deterrent against these emerging threats.”¹³⁸ This report coincided with the trend toward a capabilities-based approach to U.S. defense planning put forth in the 1997 *Quadrennial Defense Review*. The result was a shift in nuclear policy recommendations toward enhancing credibility by improving capability. Simply stating that U.S. nuclear weapons are a deterrent for WMD was no longer enough. In what is widely considered the blueprint for the 2002 NPR, the National Institute for Public Policy (NIPP) published a report entitled, *Rationale and Requirements for U.S. Nuclear Forces and Arms Control*. The NIPP report asserted,

Nuclear weapons can also be used in counterforce attacks that are intended to neutralize enemy military capabilities, especially nuclear and other WMD forces. The purpose of a counterforce strategy is to deter aggression, coerce compliance, and limit the damage that enemy forces can inflict.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Nuclear Deterrence, October 1998. <http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/nucdet.pdf> (accessed August 2004), 16.

¹³⁹ Keith Payne and others, *Rationale and Requirements for U.S. Nuclear Forces and Arms Control*, NIPP, January 2001. <http://www.ceip.org/files/projects/npp/pdf/nippnukes.pdf> (accessed August 2004), p. 5.

Counterproliferation became the main focus of U.S. nuclear strategy, and more “usable” nuclear weapons became the means. Officials identified the capability to defeat mobile systems and hardened WMD storage facilities and command bunkers as a requirement for deterrence. This capability exists with the B61-11, which was fully deployed to Europe in 1998, however the penetration capability is estimated to be only about twenty feet.¹⁴⁰ In order to improve nuclear weapons capabilities, the administration’s new nuclear initiatives call for studies on advanced concepts and the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator. If successful, these studies could produce new nuclear weapons designed to provide the president with low-yield, low-collateral-damage nuclear options for deterring and defeating WMD-armed opponents. Given the military penchant for having its most capable weapons “at the pointy end of the spear,” it is highly likely that the United States will seek to deploy these weapons in Europe, just as it did with the B61-11. In theory, these new nuclear capabilities will enhance deterrence, yet such efforts fail to address the second aspect of credibility—the will to use them.

2. The Nuclear Taboo

Making nuclear weapons more “usable” through improved capabilities does not necessarily increase the decision-maker’s willingness to use them. The issues surrounding the decision to employ nuclear weapons are complex; probability of kill and reducing collateral damage, radiation fallout and unnecessary suffering are only part of the equation. The domestic and international political consequences of the decision to use nuclear weapons, especially in a pre-emptive counterproliferation role, profoundly affect the decision-maker’s willingness to do so. The decision to employ nuclear weapons would constitute a violation of the near sixty-year-old “nuclear taboo.”

The nuclear taboo is not a new phenomenon in the discourse on nuclear strategy, yet with each passing year it grows stronger. According to T. V. Paul,

¹⁴⁰ Martin Butcher, *What Wrongs Our Arms May Do: The Role of Nuclear Weapons in Counterproliferation*, Physicians for Social Responsibility, August 2003. http://www.psr.org/documents/psr_doc_0/program_4/PSRwhatwrong03.pdf (accessed August 2004), 70.

the term refers to “an unwritten and uncodified prohibitory norm against nuclear use.”¹⁴¹ The nuclear taboo developed from the massive destructive power of these weapons. This potential for total destruction led states to consider their use only when national survival was at stake. To do otherwise would most assuredly bring long-term condemnation, regardless of the tactical or strategic advantages the state might gain. The historical evidence clearly demonstrates the power of the nuclear taboo.

Since nuclear weapons emerged on the international scene in 1945, no state has broken the taboo against their use. Despite their diversity and intense security situations, the nuclear powers—United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan and, reportedly, Israel—have found no reason to employ their nuclear arsenals. This implies, according to Paul, a global “recognition that nuclear weapons are unusable across much of the range of traditional military and political interests.”¹⁴² The United States was unwilling to use them in Korea and Vietnam, even though they could have contributed to military victory. The Soviets, and later Russians, also refrained from using nuclear weapons in Afghanistan and Chechnya. With each non-use decision, the norm against employing nuclear weapons grows stronger.

The normative basis for the nuclear taboo is supported by legal arguments as well. Provisions outlined under the laws of armed conflict govern U.S. decision making and are reflected in U.S. nuclear doctrine. The U.S. manual, *Doctrine for Joint Theater Nuclear Operations*, clearly states,

However, to comply with the law, a particular use of any weapon must satisfy the long-standing targeting rules of military necessity, proportionality, and avoidance of collateral damage and

¹⁴¹ T. V. Paul, “Nuclear Taboo and War Initiation in Regional Conflicts,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (December 1995), vol. 39, iss. 4, 701.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 703.

unnecessary suffering. Nuclear weapons are unique in this analysis only in their greater destructive potential...In some circumstances, the use of a nuclear weapon may therefore be inappropriate.¹⁴³

This portends a great degree of caution for decision-makers contemplating crossing the nuclear threshold. Moreover, the United States, Great Britain and France have made conditional pledges not to use nuclear weapons against signatories of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.¹⁴⁴ Such international legal considerations give nuclear-weapons states added reason to recognize the taboo against nuclear use.

The point of this discussion is that the nuclear taboo plays a very real role in determining a decision-maker's willingness to actually use nuclear weapons. In addition to rejecting international norms and potentially violating international law, the decision to employ nuclear weapons would undermine U.S. global moral leadership. Any U.S. president would likely be very hesitant to make such a decision. This applies to a decision to use any nuclear weapon—whether theater or strategic, forward deployed or launched from the United States—the nuclear taboo relates simply to crossing the nuclear threshold. Secretary of State Colin Powell made this point clear with regard to theater nuclear weapons in Europe: "No matter how small these nuclear payloads were, we would be crossing a threshold. Using nukes at this point would mark one of the most significant political and military decisions since Hiroshima."¹⁴⁵ The significance increases with the prospect of using TNWs in a pre-emptive counterproliferation role. Improved nuclear weapons may "lower the nuclear threshold" as some argue, but they will not remove it. Moreover, the decision to use nuclear weapons preemptively is highly dependent on accurate intelligence information. If the intelligence is wrong, as it appears to have been in the recent Iraq war, U.S.

¹⁴³ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-12.1, *Doctrine for Joint Theater Nuclear Operations*, 9 February 1996. http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_12_1.pdf (accessed August 2004), I-1.

¹⁴⁴ These negative security assurances apply except in the case of a non-nuclear-weapons state attacking these states or their allies as part of an alliance with another nuclear-weapons state.

¹⁴⁵ Colin Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 324.

leadership would not only violate the nuclear taboo, it would do so without justification. Such an outcome could entail irreparable damage to U.S. credibility and decrease national security in the long run.

The reality is that forward deployed TNWs pose no more credible threat than low-yield ICBMs or bombers based in the United States in terms of willingness to cross the nuclear threshold. This is especially true in Europe where, according to Stanley Sloan, “It is also uncertain whether America’s European allies would allow the United States to use its Europe-based weapons for any purpose other than deterrence or defense of the Alliance.”¹⁴⁶ Since these functions are provided by conventional forces and the U.S. strategic nuclear arsenal, TNWs deployed in Europe are irrelevant for maintaining security on that continent.

C. CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

The United States, and by extension, NATO, possess the world’s most capable conventional forces today. In the eyes of the military, conventional deterrence may be more effective than deterrence based on theater nuclear weapons. Supporters of a conventional deterrence strategy argue its merits based on military and political utility—in other words, what conventional forces can accomplish and how these capabilities affect adversaries’ decision-making. This section addresses prospects for conventional deterrence, including the recent revolution in military affairs (RMA), conventional threats to rogue regimes and the future of strategic strike.

1. The RMA and Conventional Combat Power

Deterrence, as noted earlier, is a function of capability and will. With respect to capability, modern conventional forces bring to bear vastly improved combat power owing in large part to the most recent revolution in military affairs. The technological advances in surveillance, information, and precision along with requisite investments in these capabilities have created “sophisticated

¹⁴⁶ Sloan, “NATO Nuclear Strategy Beyond the Cold War,” 50.

nonnuclear weapons [that] can now hold at risk those assets most highly valued by potential aggressors...”¹⁴⁷ Understanding the RMA and its implications for conventional combat power is key to understanding why modern conventional forces make TNWs irrelevant today.

According to Rand researcher Richard Hundley, “An RMA involves a paradigm shift in the nature and conduct of military operations which either *renders obsolete or irrelevant* one or more *core competencies* of a dominant player, or creates one or more new core competencies, in some new dimension of warfare, or both.”¹⁴⁸ Military historians have characterized developments such as the longbow, machine gun, blitzkrieg, carrier warfare and nuclear weapons as examples of an RMA. They most often result from technological advances, or rather a combination of technological advances, which lead to profound changes in the nature of warfare. Successful technological RMAs combine advances in technology with innovative doctrine and organizational change to exploit that new technology. Although experts debate whether the current military-technological revolution constitutes an RMA, it appears that advances in precision weaponry and information combined with doctrinal and organizational efforts in defense transformation demonstrate this to be the case.

Precision weaponry combined with advances in command, control, communications, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) during the 1991 Gulf War to produce devastating effects on Iraq’s military and infrastructure. That war demonstrated unequivocally the capabilities of modern conventional military forces both in terms of battlefield operations and strategic strike. Since that time, U.S. conventional weapons have greatly improved, both in their operational utility on the battlefield and capacity to hold specific classes of

¹⁴⁷ John C. Hopkins and Steven A. Maaranen, “Nuclear Weapons in Post-Cold War Deterrence,” *Post-Cold War Conflict Deterrence* (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1997), 117.

¹⁴⁸ Richard O. Hundley, *Past Revolutions, Future Transformations* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1999), 9.

targets at risk.¹⁴⁹ Table 2 highlights the conventional penetrating weapons capability currently found in the U.S. inventory.¹⁵⁰

Table 2. Conventional Earth Penetrators in the Current U.S. Arsenal (From Levi)

Earth Penetrator	Length	Penetration Abilities
BLU-109	8 feet	More than 6 feet of reinforced concrete
BLU-113	19 feet	More than 20 feet of concrete and more than 100 feet of earth
BLU-116	8 feet	More than 12 feet of reinforced concrete and more than 50 feet of earth; can survive impact in hard rock

According to a recent research report published by Air University, “The U.S. is now on the threshold of new conventional weapons technology which hold hardened and deeply buried targets at risk, as well as smart weapons that loiter over battle lines and target massed hostile forces. These target sets could only be previously destroyed using nuclear weapons.”¹⁵¹ These capabilities are being integrated into U.S. doctrine and force structure through defense transformation. As the Director, Force Transformation, Vice Admiral Cebrowski states, “The Department seeks to ensure that changes occur not only in the operating concepts we develop and the systems we acquire but also in our military culture and the processes that drive investment decisions.”¹⁵² The recent experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrate that defense transformation efforts are

¹⁴⁹ Lt Col Gary Lane provides a good assessment of current and developing conventional weapons capability in *New Conventional Weapons: Reducing the Reliance on a Nuclear Response Toward Aggressors* (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University, 2001). <https://research.au.af.mil/papers/ay2001/affellows/lane.pdf> (accessed August 2004). Michael Levi also provides a detailed discussion of non-nuclear earth-penetrating weapons in *Fire in the Hole: Nuclear and Non-nuclear Options for Counterproliferation*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Non-Proliferation Project, Global Policy Program, no. 31, November 2002. <http://www.ceip.org/files/pdf/wp31.pdf> (accessed August 2004), 17-21.

¹⁵⁰ Michael A. Levi, *Fire in the Hole: Nuclear and Non-nuclear Options for Counterproliferation*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Non-Proliferation Project, Global Policy Program, no. 31, November 2002. <http://www.ceip.org/files/pdf/wp31.pdf> (accessed August 2004), 17.

¹⁵¹ Lane, *New Conventional Weapons: Reducing the Reliance on a Nuclear Response Toward Aggressors*, 26.

¹⁵² Department of Defense, *Military Transformation: A Strategic Approach*, Fall 2003. http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library_files/document_297_MT_StrategyDoc1.pdf (accessed August 2004), Introductory Message.

beginning to bear fruit. In a December 2003 interview, Vice Admiral Cebrowski touted the first phase of Operation Enduring Freedom as indicative of “the way not just modern technology is taking hold, but more importantly, how information-age doctrine and organization are taking hold.”¹⁵³ The crossroads between technology and transformation point to the existence of an RMA in conventional combat power, through which capabilities now exist to perform missions and roles previously envisioned for TNWs. From this standpoint, capabilities for conventional deterrence render theater nuclear weapons irrelevant.

For NATO, this translates into a reversal of the Cold War conventional imbalance in favor of the Soviet Union. If—and this seems highly unlikely given the post-Cold War security relationship with Russia—a future aggressive Russia threatened Europe, NATO would hold the advantage in conventional superiority. In the unlikely event that Russia signaled its intention to escalate the conflict with TNWs, the supreme guarantee of European security would still be found in the U.S. strategic arsenal. U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe are no longer required to offset Russian conventional military power; they are irrelevant as a deterrent threat.

2. Rationality, Retaliation, and Unbearable Damage: Threatening Regime Survival

With respect to rogue states and proliferators, the concepts of rationality, retaliatory threat and unbearable damage point to holding at stake what these states value most—regime survival. A distinction arises here between “unacceptable” and “unbearable” damage.¹⁵⁴ While massive nuclear punishment may be unacceptable to the leader of a rogue regime, it may not be unbearable if the regime survives. The best way to deter proliferation and use of WMD by these regimes, according to Morgan, “is not by threatening a massive WMD response...but by being able to threaten destruction of the leaders and regime

¹⁵³ Paul Stone, “Cebrowski Sketches the Face of Transformation,” Armed Forces Information Service, December 29, 2003.
http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec2003/n12292003_200312291.html (accessed August 2004).

¹⁵⁴ Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 265.

with conventional forces...”¹⁵⁵ In this way, deterring the proliferation and use of WMD is feasible, and the credibility of the deterrence is enhanced by keeping the retaliatory threat below the nuclear threshold.

The assumption of rationality is a fundamental principle in the development of deterrence theory. Indeed, the very essence of deterrence presumes rational decision making by both the deterrer and challenger. In this context, rationality is defined as gaining information about the situation and one’s options for dealing with it, calculating the costs and benefits of those options and their probabilities of success or failure, and then choosing a course of action aimed at achieving the greatest gain or the minimum loss.¹⁵⁶ As Morgan asserts, deterrence “was not threatening an opponent so that he would behave; it was conscious, calculated threats to adjust the challengers’ cost-benefit calculations so he saw attacking as nonoptimal.”¹⁵⁷ While the assumption of rationality poses difficulties for deterrence theory and strategy, particularly in situations where deterrence has failed ostensibly due to irrationality, it remains an important element because regardless of whether actors *are* rational or *act* rational based on real preferences and perceptions in deterrence situations, the success of deterrence as strategy is based on rational outcomes. With respect to rationality, conventional forces pose a much more credible deterrent because they have the capability to destroy that which an adversary values most and the deterrer is much more likely to use them than nuclear forces.

Another fundamental principle of deterrence theory is the concept of a retaliatory threat. The idea here is linked closely to the notion of severe conflict, in that deterrence focuses on preventing war. Prevention, according to Morgan, “was to be achieved via manipulating the opponent’s thinking, making deterrence a *psychological* relationship.”¹⁵⁸ Faced with the destructive power of nuclear weapons, the goal became to convince the opponent that an attack would not

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 276.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 12.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 13.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

necessarily be met with defense, since defense in nuclear war was viewed as impossible, but rather with retaliation. The attacker could expect to be punished in kind for aggression. With nuclear weapons, this equated to the destruction and collapse of the attacker's society. Rogue leaders are much more concerned with the survival of their regimes and military capabilities. Here, conventional forces pose a more credible retaliatory threat because they would be used to target exactly those areas. This is all the more important given U.S. desires to be seen as a liberator of societies repressed by rogue regimes. The collateral damage associated with the use of even low-yield TNWs certainly does little to enhance such a reputation.

Related to the retaliatory threat is the principle of unacceptable damage. The question here is how much punishment is enough to deter? The answer to this question stems from the assumption of rationality. Essentially, the punishment required to deter attack must be sufficient to convince the attacker that the costs of attacking outweigh the benefits, thus making the attack appear not to be in the attacker's best interests. In the past it was relatively easy to assume the prospective punishment—destruction of the attacker's society—constituted unacceptable damage. Today however, deterrence is predicated on an understanding of the opponent's cost-benefit calculations and what that opponent values. Since rogues value regime survival, destruction of their society may be unacceptable, but not unbearable if the regime survives. Conventional forces today have the capability to destroy the regime without destroying the society. By threatening unbearable damage in the form of regime survival, conventional forces again provide a much more credible deterrent than low-yield TNWs.

This theoretical discussion highlights the value of conventional deterrence in today's strategic environment. If the goal is to deter rogue states and proliferators from threatening to use or using WMD, then deterrence must hold at risk that which these adversaries value most—regime survival. Based on the principles of rationality, retaliation and unbearable damage, conventional deterrence presents greater prospects for success than deterrence based on

TNWs. Moreover, should deterrence fail in a given conflict, decision-makers would be more likely to carry out their conventional threats. While no responsible government wants to go to war, such a situation would serve to reinforce the deterrent in the minds of future adversarial regimes. The capabilities of conventional forces and a decision-maker's increased willingness to use them over nuclear options to threaten regime survival demonstrate the irrelevance of TNWs today.

3. The Future of Strategic Strike

While the United States, and by extension, NATO, possess the world's most capable conventional forces today, conventional deterrence will only be enhanced by future developments in strategic strike. According to the recently released *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Future Strategic Strike Forces*, the objective for strategic strike is: "To provide future Presidents an integrated, flexible, and highly reliable set of strike options with today's tactical-level flexibility but on a global scale."¹⁵⁹ The Task Force recommends sweeping changes in U.S. strategic strike capability, particularly in conventional weapons.

The recommendation for the Air Force to retain fifty Peacekeeper ICBMs and convert them to carry conventional warheads would provide a thirty-minute response capability for worldwide strategic strike.¹⁶⁰ This, along with other recommendations such as a new non-nuclear ballistic missile launched from the Navy's cruise-missile submarine assets, will provide an enhanced, credible, conventional deterrent backed up by improved strategic nuclear forces.¹⁶¹ From its comprehensive analysis of strategic strike, the Task Force recommends eliminating the role of TNWs delivered by deployed dual-capable aircraft; the

¹⁵⁹ Defense Science Board, *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Future Strategic Strike Forces*, 1-5.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-8.

¹⁶¹ The Task Force Report identifies the need for nuclear weapons that produce much lower collateral damage (great precision, deep penetration, greatly reduced radioactivity) and recommends research and development along these lines. See *Report of the Defense Science Board*, 1-10.

report asserts: “*There is no obvious military need for these systems...*”¹⁶² In the military context, as in the political, theater nuclear weapons based in Europe are now irrelevant, and will become even more so in the future.

The most recent revolution in military affairs has provided the United States and NATO an unprecedented superiority in conventional forces. These modern forces not only can dominate on the battlefield, they now increasingly possess some capability to hold hard and difficult targets at risk in deterrence. Such a capability enables decision-makers to more credibly threaten regime survival in deterring the proliferation and use of WMD because conventional deterrence today is more effective vis-à-vis rationality, retaliation and unbearable damage. Prospects for conventional deterrence will only improve as new concepts for the future of strategic strike come on line. In light of these factors, U.S. TNWs forward deployed in Europe become irrelevant.

D. CONCLUSION

This chapter analyzed the political and military relevance of TNWs today. The nature of the transatlantic link is primarily economic and political, with military links maintained via conventional forces. Economic interdependence and dense institutional arrangements couple the United States and Europe in ways far beyond the symbolic basing of U.S. theater nuclear weapons. Without these weapons, NATO members would continue to participate in nuclear policy decision making through the political mechanisms in the Nuclear Planning Group and the requirement for consensus in NATO decision-making. American conventional deployments, as well as the North Atlantic Treaty itself, link the U.S. strategic umbrella to European defense, providing equal or greater utility than forward deployed TNWs.

Theater nuclear weapons based in Europe may also be seen as irrelevant from the standpoint of credibility and the nuclear taboo. Efforts to make TNWs more “usable,” such as the current feasibility studies of a Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator or “bunker buster,” may enhance the capabilities of TNWs, but will do

¹⁶² Ibid., 5-13 [Emphasis added].

little to alleviate the taboo against their use. From this standpoint, these weapons offer no real credibility advantage over low-yield strategic nuclear forces, and pose a far less credible threat than modern conventional forces.

Conventional deterrence, by contrast, may be more effective than deterrence based on theater nuclear weapons. Modern conventional forces not only can dominate on the battlefield, they now increasingly possess some capability to hold hard and difficult targets at risk in deterring the proliferation and use of WMD. As congressional research analyst Jonathan Medalia points out, “U.S. forces demonstrated the ability of ground troops to attack tunnel complexes in Afghanistan and the ability of precision conventional ordnance to destroy underground bunkers in Iraq. It would be better, in this view, to spend funds on improving the ability to destroy these targets with conventional means rather than on nuclear weapons.”¹⁶³ Conventional deterrence enables the United States to more credibly threaten what rogue leaders value most—regime survival—and this capability will only improve in the future. This chapter demonstrates that the factors outlined above contribute to the irrelevance of TNWs based in Europe today.

¹⁶³ Jonathan Medalia, *Nuclear Weapon Initiatives: Low-Yield R&D, Advanced Concepts, Earth Penetrators, Test Readiness* (Washington DC: The Library of Congress, 2004). <http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars/crs/RL32130.pdf> (accessed August 2004), 54.

V. THEATER NUCLEAR WEAPONS: COUNTERPRODUCTIVE IN TODAY'S SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

This chapter analyzes the argument that TNWs are counterproductive in today's security environment. The chapter explains how forward basing TNWs in Europe negatively impacts nonproliferation and arms control efforts. It begins by exploring NATO's schizophrenic approach to deterrence and nonproliferation. Under a situation of general deterrence, forward basing TNWs in Europe is a strategy in search of a threat. I show that emphasizing the utility of these weapons enhances rather than deters proliferation. The chapter then addresses the controversial U.S. interpretation of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty (NPT) with regard to nuclear sharing—the United States considers the NPT prohibitions on transferring nuclear weapons to be non-controlling during wartime—demonstrating the potentially severe consequences of this arrangement for nonproliferation and arms control. The continued deployment of TNWs in Europe and emphasis on their utility also undermines Alliance cohesion and the confidence and security building measures issued by NATO's nuclear-weapon states. The chapter also analyzes the impact of NATO's TNW policy on the NATO-Russia security relationship, addressing issues of partnership and cooperation, TNW utility in Russia, arms control and nonproliferation. The arguments presented in this chapter highlight that the TNW basing policy is counterproductive in today's security environment.

A. ALLIANCE SCHIZOPHRENIA: DETERRENCE AND NONPROLIFERATION

NATO officials claim the Alliance's nuclear policies support both deterrence and nonproliferation. According to NATO's latest Strategic Concept, the Allies' nuclear forces "continue to fulfill an essential role by ensuring uncertainty in the mind of any aggressor about the nature of the Allies' response

to military aggression.”¹⁶⁴ NATO further stipulates that the “Allies have maintained a long-standing commitment to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation as an integral part of their security policy...”¹⁶⁵ This schizophrenic approach to security—emphasizing the utility of TNWs which simultaneously attempting to convince others they are not necessary for security—complicates nonproliferation efforts. According to a September 2003 policy brief, this approach “undermines the moral credibility of NATO and its member States when promoting WMD nonproliferation worldwide.”¹⁶⁶ The shift from a situation of immediate deterrence to one of general deterrence and the implications of this shift vis-à-vis theater nuclear weapons and nonproliferation; the discontinuity between NATO’s nuclear sharing and the NPT; and the impact of U.S. TNWs in Europe on Alliance cohesion and CSBMs demonstrate why these weapons are counterproductive in today’s security environment.

1. Immediate to General Deterrence: Implications for Nonproliferation

Theater nuclear weapons were deployed and maintained in Europe during the Cold War as a strategy based on the perception of an immediate deterrence situation. With its enormous conventional and nuclear military capability, the Soviet Union was seen as an aggressive expansionist enemy willing to invade Western Europe on a moment’s notice. Deterrence, however, has changed since the Cold War. The difference is that today’s strategic environment is governed by a situation of general deterrence as opposed to immediate deterrence. According to Morgan,

¹⁶⁴ “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept, approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C. 23-24 April 1999,” NATO Press Release NAC-S(99)65. <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm> (accessed August 2004), para. 62.

¹⁶⁵ “NATO’s Positions Regarding Nuclear Non-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament and Related Issues,” 3 June 2004. <http://www.nato.int/issues/nuclear/position.htm> (accessed August 2004).

¹⁶⁶ “Middle Powers Initiative Brief on NATO Nuclear Policy,” September 2003. <http://www.middlepowers.org/mpi/pubs.html> (accessed July 2004), 2.

In general deterrence an actor maintains a broad military capability and issues broad threats of a punitive response to an attack to keep anyone from seriously thinking about attacking. In immediate deterrence the actor has a military capability and issues threats to a specific opponent when the opponent is already contemplating and preparing an attack. Thus an immediate deterrence situation is a crisis, or close to it, with war distinctly possible, while general deterrence is far less intense and anxious because the attack to be forestalled is still hypothetical.¹⁶⁷

Morgan's vision accurately describes the world today. Instead of a focusing on a single, monolithic threat, NATO now asserts the "security of the Alliance remains subject to a wide variety of military and non-military risks which are multi-directional and often difficult to predict."¹⁶⁸ Although the security environment has changed dramatically, NATO strategy remained the same. The continued deployment of U.S. TNWs in Europe is a strategy in search of a threat.

The problem imposed by this situation is precisely that threats will emerge. This is the classic "security dilemma" and "spiral model" theory which still operates today. According to Robert Jervis, "When states seek the ability to defend themselves, they get too much and too little—too much because they gain the ability to carry out aggression; too little because others, being menaced, will increase their own arms and so reduce the first state's security."¹⁶⁹ Continuing to emphasize the utility of TNWs could have disastrous ramifications for nonproliferation because if the world's greatest military power identifies a role for these weapons in national security, weaker states will surely follow suit. An Indian general reportedly asserts that "if the U.S. and others keep nuclear weapons to deal with regional threats, then nuclear discrimination remains and 'There is no alternative to nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles if you are to live in security and with honor.'"¹⁷⁰ In this context, maintaining U.S. TNWs in Europe undermines the fundamental purpose of the NPT.

¹⁶⁷ Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 9.

¹⁶⁸ "The Alliance's Strategic Concept", April 1999, para. 20.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 64.

¹⁷⁰ Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, 278.

The nuclear nonproliferation treaty is regarded as the cornerstone of the international effort to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Despite its long history and ardent support in many corners, the NPT has proven unsuccessful in disarming the nuclear-weapon states (NWS) and preventing the spread of nuclear weapons material to non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWS). Indeed, as the recent discoveries of Pakistan's proliferation activity demonstrate, the "spread and potential use of nuclear weapons remains all too real."¹⁷¹ At a time when nonproliferation reigns as the world's greatest security concern, emphasizing the warfighting prospects and usability of theater nuclear weapons enhances, rather than deters, proliferation of WMD. In discussing the possible impact of the new Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, Binoy Kampmark acknowledges, "A new kind of proliferation is being encouraged in the field of smaller nuclear devices. The new strategy of the NPR suggests the employment of nuclear weapons against signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (Iraq, Syria, North Korea, Libya) notwithstanding that these countries officially do not have nuclear weapons. This merely encourages them to seek countering technologies."¹⁷² Bush administration officials rebuff such conclusions, as Nuclear National Security Agency (NNSA) Administrator Linton Brooks decried in June 2004: "I've never met anyone in the Administration who can foresee circumstances in which we would consider nuclear preemption to counter rogue state WMD threats."¹⁷³ Perception is reality, however, and for rogue states the perception is that nuclear weapons equate to strength and security. Emphasizing their utility, through their continued deployment in Europe, serves to codify this perception, thus making the strategy counterproductive to European security.

¹⁷¹ George Perkovich, et. al., *Universal Compliance: A Strategy for Nuclear Security* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2004), 9.

¹⁷² Binoy Kampmark, "America's Nuclear Deterrence in the Age of Terrorism," *Contemporary Review* (April 2003), vol. 282, no. 1647, 209.

¹⁷³ Brooks, "U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policies and Programs," 8.

2. NATO Nuclear Doctrine and the NPT

NATO's nuclear doctrine is at odds with member-state commitments to the NPT. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Alliance's controversial interpretation of the NPT prohibition to transfer nuclear weapons. Many analysts and signatories to the NPT question whether NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements fall in line with the letter and spirit of the treaty.

The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty was signed on July 1, 1968 and entered into force March 5, 1970. In addition to recognizing the existence of nuclear-weapon states (United States, United Kingdom, France, China and the Soviet Union—succeeded by Russia) and non-nuclear weapon states (all others), the treaty obligated all states to refrain from transferring nuclear weapons or weapons-related technology between them. These stipulations are contained in Articles I and II:

- **Article I:** Each nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly; and not in any way to assist, encourage, or induce any non-nuclear weapon State to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or control over such weapons or explosive devices.
- **Article II:** Each non-nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to receive the transfer from any transferor whatsoever of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or of control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly; not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; and not to seek or receive any assistance in the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.¹⁷⁴

At the time the NPT was negotiated, U.S. theater nuclear weapons were already deployed to Europe and NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements were in place. Obviously, NATO wanted these arrangements to remain intact under the NPT, and the U.S. interpretation of the treaty aimed to do just that. According to

¹⁷⁴ Department of State, *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*. <http://www.state.gov/t/np/trty/16281.htm#treaty> (accessed August 2004).

a Project on European Nuclear Non-Proliferation (PENN) Research Report, the U.S. view is that the NPT “does not deal with arrangements for deployment of nuclear weapons within allied territory as these do not involve any transfer of nuclear weapons or control over them unless and until a decision were made to go to war, at which time the treaty would no longer be controlling.”¹⁷⁵ This exception—*the treaty does not apply in time of war*—created a loophole through which NATO maintained its sharing arrangements for employing theater nuclear weapons deployed on Allied territory. NATO’s position creates a situation in which, according to a once-classified description of nuclear sharing, “As a result of NATO’s commitment to the nuclear mode of defense, the non-nuclear NATO partners in effect become nuclear powers in time of war.”¹⁷⁶ NATO states its position on the controversy directly in a 2004 fact sheet:

- The Alliance’s arrangements for basing U.S. nuclear gravity bombs in Europe are in compliance with the NPT. When the Treaty was negotiated, these arrangements were already in place. Their nature was made clear to key delegations and subsequently made public. They were not challenged.
- The U.S. nuclear weapons based in Europe are in the sole possession and under constant and complete custody and control of the United States. They are fitted with sophisticated Permissive Action Links (PAL) that guarantee absolute positive control by the U.S. and prevent unauthorized use.¹⁷⁷

The second point is not debated, although it only applies until a decision is made to transfer control of the weapons to a NATO pilot charged with delivering them in time of war. The controversy emerges with respect to the first point.

There are indications that the U.S. interpretation was not widely known at the time the NPT was signed. In a 1968 letter to the Secretary of Defense, Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach stated, “We do not believe it

¹⁷⁵ Martin Butcher and others, *Questions of Command and Control: NATO, Nuclear Sharing and the NPT*, PENN Research Report 2000.1 (Berlin: Project on European Nuclear Non-Proliferation, 2000). <http://www.bits.de/public/researchreport/rr00-1-1.htm> (accessed August 2004), 22.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁷⁷ “NATO’s Positions Regarding Nuclear Non-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament and Related Issues,” 3 June 2004.

would be in our interest or that of our allies to have a public discussion of the US interpretations prior to the time when the NPT is submitted to the Senate for advice and consent.”¹⁷⁸ It appears that this was indeed the case as the first public release of the U.S. interpretation came on 9 March 1968, eight days after the official NPT signing ceremony, in a document entitled *Questions on the Draft Non-Proliferation Treaty asked by US Allies together with Answers given by the United States*.¹⁷⁹ Records indicate that the *Questions and Answers* document was shown to the NATO Allies, the Soviets, and key members of the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC)—the multilateral body conducting the negotiations on the treaty—prior to the signing ceremony.¹⁸⁰ However, other parties were not privy to the U.S. interpretation of the treaty prior to acceding to it, and non-NATO ENDC states unaware of NATO’s nuclear sharing arrangements would not have understood the implications of the *Questions and Answers* document. In a specific effort to close the loophole nearly twenty years later, the 1985 NPT Review Document included language making the NPT provisions under Articles I and II controlling “under any circumstances.”¹⁸¹ This provision, however, is more politically than legally binding. The United States and NATO continue to subscribe to their controversial interpretation of the NPT.

The political implications for nonproliferation and future arms control efforts are potentially severe.¹⁸² On one hand, other NWS such as Russia, China or Pakistan could follow the same logic and create similar nuclear sharing arrangements with NNWS. In this case, NATO has “established a pattern it does not want others to emulate.”¹⁸³ On the other hand, the possibility exists for NATO to create the conditions under which nuclear sharing could be put into action—simply by declaring war. If, in the course of the War on Terrorism, NATO

¹⁷⁸ Butcher, et. al., *Questions of Command and Control: NATO, Nuclear Sharing and the NPT*, 23.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 25.

nuclear doctrine evolved to include a role for counterproliferation, such as is widely attributed to U.S. doctrine under the 2002 *Nuclear Posture Review*, U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe could conceivably be used against those possessing or believed to possess WMD or their means of delivery. According to the PENN Report, policy changes along these lines were in the works during the 2000 review of NATO's strategy document MC400.

NATO recognizes the controversial nature of this issue, as highlighted in an interview with a Senior NATO Diplomat: "It's an uncomfortable topic that people prefer not to discuss. It does raise questions, I know, under the NPT, the negative security assurances."¹⁸⁴ The outcome of these discussions, as well as details from the 2002 Defense Planning Committee and Nuclear Planning Group guidance on NATO's dual-capable aircraft posture, remain classified. Pursuing such a policy, however, could signal NATO's intent to violate the Negative Security Assurances given to NNWS in 1995, constitute a breach of Articles I and II of the NPT concerning nuclear sharing, and ultimately undermine NATO's nonproliferation and arms control efforts.

This is not to suggest that NATO is necessarily considering such actions, but rather that the nuclear sharing arrangements codified by the existence of U.S. TNWs on European soil raise international concerns for the nonproliferation regime. According to a BASIC report, "More than 100 nations including South Africa, Egypt and the entire Non-Aligned Movement, have consistently expressed concern that members of NATO, especially Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey, as well as the United States, are themselves nuclear proliferators, acting against the intent and possibly the letter of the NPT."¹⁸⁵ The situation exacerbates the "haves" versus "have nots" dilemma created by the NPT in that NATO's NNWS exploit a loophole in order to get nuclear weapons while other NNWS cannot. NATO's continued support for keeping U.S. TNWs in

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 33.

¹⁸⁵ Nigel Chamberlain and Nicola Butler, "Time to Put Article I Under the Spotlight," BASIC Briefing for the 2004 Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, April 2004.
<http://www.basicint.org/nuclear/NPT/2004pc/bref1.htm> (accessed August 2004).

Europe undermines international confidence in the NPT and is clearly counterproductive in today's security environment.

3. Alliance Cohesion

NATO argues that the U.S. nuclear presence in Europe is necessary to maintain Alliance cohesion and the transatlantic link. Ironically, arguments supporting the utility of TNWs today may actually divide NATO, making the forward basing policy counterproductive to European security. This possibility emerges from the potential role of TNWs in NATO counterproliferation policy.

NATO nuclear policy has traditionally mirrored U.S. policy. This is not surprising given that the United States provides the preponderance of NATO's nuclear assets. The recent shift in U.S. nuclear policy, however, has raised concerns for some Allies over the future course of NATO policy. Some Allies take issue with the possibility of using nuclear weapons in counterproliferation, particularly in a preemptive fashion as potentially envisioned by the U.S. *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*. One senior European diplomat has strongly staked out the European position on the issue: "If you think we are going to let the Americans throw nuclear weapons around on Europe's periphery, then you must be crazy."¹⁸⁶ During a recent NATO exercise, however, this is precisely the issue that divided the Allied participants.¹⁸⁷ According to the Center for European Security and Disarmament (CESD), the United States attempted to introduce preemptive conventional and possibly nuclear strikes as part of Crisis Management Exercise CMX 2002—a move which was "met with strong resistance from all other NATO nations except Turkey."¹⁸⁸ The following excerpt from CESD's *NATO Notes* best describes the dynamics of the situation:

¹⁸⁶ Martin Butcher, *What Wrongs Our Arms May Do: The Role of Nuclear Weapons in Counterproliferation*, Physicians for Social Responsibility, August 2003. http://www.psr.org/documents/psr_doc_0/program_4/PSRwhatwrong03.pdf (accessed August 2004), 54.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

It is still unclear how the organization [NATO] could actually contribute were the U.S. to decide to take pre-emptive action. At the moment, there is some agreement among NATO insiders that that 'the Alliance will not be the primary vehicle to carry out such an initiative.' One official points out that 'even if there was evidence that a rogue state was imminently launching an attack with NBC weapons, the Allies would not be able to do anything and the U.S. would have to go it alone. At best, NATO could give political support or another invocation of Article V.' In NATO's last crisis management exercise (CMX 2002), NATO tested its response to a scenario in which a Middle Eastern country was ready to attack Turkey with biological and chemical weapons, and in which bio-terrorist attacks had already been carried out on NATO territory. Facing the reluctance of the other Allies to agree on pre-emptive action, the United States and Turkey declared themselves ready for such strikes, with or without the participation of others. The demonstrated lack of cohesion among the Allies, coupled with NATO's cumbersome decision-making process, has most likely led the United States to confirm that during a real crisis, operating through the Alliance would not be efficient.¹⁸⁹

The lack of cohesion actually forced NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson to end the exercise early "to prevent open conflict emerging between allies."¹⁹⁰ The reality is that when faced with the potential requirement to transition from political deterrence to actually contemplating the use of U.S. forward-deployed TNWs in response to a WMD threat, Alliance cohesion would very likely unravel.

In this regard, the contemporary debate bears some resemblance to the debates over nuclear doctrine in the 1960s. NATO strategy is left ambiguous such that the United States can interpret it as supporting its emerging doctrine while other NATO nations can argue that it does not. The ability to do so is extremely important for NATO's European members because if such a contentious issue emerged in public debate, European governments may well face a repeat of the domestic political unrest of the 1970s and 1980s regarding nuclear issues. Today the European public treats nuclear weapons with ambivalence. According to Harald Müller, "Reports about the chaotic situation in the nuclear world, and about the illegal trading that goes on in it, have not

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 55.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

aroused the same kind of public concern as did the previous perception of an immediate threat of nuclear war.”¹⁹¹ No European government can openly admit to planning to fight and win a nuclear war, especially one against an adversary armed with non-nuclear WMD, in which preemptive nuclear strikes might be launched from European soil; such a pronouncement would most assuredly reopen old wounds. Under the current basing policy, NATO’s European members may well find themselves playing an advanced version of two-level games with the United States in which domestic politics exert a great deal of influence over Alliance strategy.¹⁹² Removing the remaining U.S. TNWs from Europe, on the other hand, would alleviate these pressures on the Allies and avoid a situation where Alliance cohesion is placed in jeopardy due to disagreement over the use of forward-based U.S. nuclear weapons. In this context, maintaining the forward-basing policy unnecessarily endangers Alliance cohesion and is therefore counterproductive to European security.

4. Confidence and Security Building Measures

Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) are valuable nonproliferation and arms control tools, yet U.S. TNWs based in Europe undermine their effectiveness. CSBMs are intended to reduce the likelihood of armed conflict and prevent misunderstanding and miscalculation. According to Ronald Lehman, Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs), such as positive security assurances (PSAs)—commitments to aid nations threatened by WMD that have agreed to forego these weapons—and negative security assurances (NSAs)—commitments not to use WMD against nations who have agreed to forego these weapons, can be effective from a counterproliferation standpoint provided they are accompanied by “a change in either real intent or in

¹⁹¹ Harold Müller, “Introduction” in *Europe and Nuclear Disarmament: Debates and Political Attitudes in 16 European Countries*, ed. Harold Müller (Brussels: European Interuniversity Press, 1998), 26.

¹⁹² See Jeffrey W. Knopf, “Beyond Two-Level Games: Domestic-International Interaction in the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Negotiations,” *International Organization* (Autumn 1993), vol. 47, no. 4, 599-628. Knopf expands the two-level game concept to a “three-and-three” approach to better explain domestic-international interaction and the influential role of domestic actors particularly in an alliance context.

real military capability.”¹⁹³ While there is no guarantee that CSBMs will be effective, their intrinsic value is psychological, in the same way that the value of deterrence is psychological.

The psychological value of CSBMs stems from the notion of positive reciprocity. Cooperation theorists explain how and why cooperation succeeds in international relations using this concept. In essence, these theorists argue, according to David Cortright and Andrea Gabbitas, that “Positive responses to conciliatory gestures offer the best prospect for mutually beneficial cooperation.”¹⁹⁴ Utilizing game theory, Robert Axelrod demonstrates how a simple tit-for-tat strategy in which one actor responds in kind to gestures of another actor, proves highly successful for achieving cooperation.¹⁹⁵ The 1991 Presidential Nuclear Initiatives stand as a powerful example of positive reciprocity and demonstrate the ability of CSBMs to foster cooperation in the nuclear arena.

NATO’s nuclear-weapon states have issued both positive and negative security assurances as well as pledged support for other CSBMs such as Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZ). Yet proliferation still occurs. NATO officials argue that the Alliance’s “residual sub-strategic nuclear arsenal—which has been dramatically reduced and its land-based forces de-alerted and demated—is not responsible for nuclear proliferation.”¹⁹⁶ While U.S. TNWs in Europe may not be solely responsible for nuclear proliferation, NATO’s Janus-faced nuclear policy clearly contributes to the problem. According to a September 2003 Policy Brief issued by the Middle Powers Initiative, “The maintenance of a security policy based on nuclear weapons for the purpose of

¹⁹³ Ronald F. Lehman, “Reassurance and Dissuasion: Countering the Motivation to Acquire WMD,” in *Countering the Proliferation and Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, ed. Peter L. Hays, Vincent J. Jodoin and Alan R. Van Tassel, (New York: McGraw-Hill., 1998), 108.

¹⁹⁴ David Cortright and Andrea Gabbitas, “Incentives for Nuclear Restraint,” in *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emerging Threats in an Evolving Security Environment*, ed., Brian Alexander, Alistair Millar (Washington D.C.: Brassey’s, 2003), 134.

¹⁹⁵ See Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

¹⁹⁶ “Report on Options for Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs), Verification, Non-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament,” NATO Press Release M-NAC-2(2000)121, para. 100.

achieving greater political power, however, is extremely dangerous, since it inevitably invites others to follow suit.”¹⁹⁷ Moreover, emphasizing the utility of these weapons undermines NATO’s moral credibility in influencing other states to forego nuclear programs of their own. The PNIs were an incremental step toward changes in intent and capability; however they stopped short of demonstrating real change. NATO’s reluctance to take the next step hampers the effectiveness of CSBMs designed to promote nonproliferation.

NATO simultaneously promotes nuclear deterrence and nonproliferation in its security policies. This schizophrenic approach emphasizing the value of U.S. TNWs in Europe is actually counterproductive to European security because it undermines NATO’s nonproliferation efforts. Theater nuclear weapons in Europe represent a holdover from the Cold War situation of immediate deterrence. Today, emphasizing the utility of these weapons enhances, rather than deters, proliferation of WMD. Moreover, NATO’s nuclear doctrine is at odds with member states NPT commitments. The nuclear sharing arrangements in NATO are seen by many as *de facto* proliferation due to the controversial U.S. interpretation of Articles I and II. Continued reliance on the forward-basing policy runs counter to the goals of the nonproliferation regime. This policy also threatens Alliance cohesion due to differing positions on the actual role of forward-based U.S. TNWs in NATO counterproliferation policy. Finally, NATO’s continued reliance on forward-based TNWs for political power limits the success of CSBMs designed to promote cooperation in nonproliferation. Contrary to NATO doctrine, the U.S. TNWs in Europe are actually counterproductive for European security.

B. THE NATO-RUSSIA SECURITY RELATIONSHIP

U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe have also long been a source of friction in the NATO-Russia security relationship, and they continue to pose difficulties today. Both NATO and Russian officials tout partnership and

¹⁹⁷ “Middle Powers Initiative Brief on NATO Nuclear Policy,” September 2003. <http://www.middlepowers.org/mpii/pubs.html> (accessed July 2004), 2.

cooperation as the foundation of their post-Cold War security relationship, yet the continued deployment of U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe serves as a roadblock to cooperation. Given the state of its conventional forces, Russia values the deterrent effect of its TNW arsenal much the same as NATO did during the Cold War. NATO enlargement only accentuates such Russian insecurities. By emphasizing the utility of these weapons, and maintaining a strategy of forward basing them in Europe, NATO perpetuates an immediate deterrence situation where one does not exist. Removing these weapons could be a first step toward persuading Russia that its TNWs are equally irrelevant and create the possibility for genuine arms control for theater nuclear weapons. Opening the door to cooperation with Russia by removing U.S. theater nuclear weapons from Europe could have spillover effects in the area of nonproliferation as well, in the form of increased transparency and improved security of the Russian TNW arsenal. With respect to the NATO-Russian security relationship, maintaining the deployment of U.S. TNWs in Europe is a counterproductive strategy.

1. Partnership and Cooperation

With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the NATO-Russia security relationship has moved steadily toward partnership and cooperation. This trend actually began while the dissolution of the Soviet Union was taking place; formal relations between the two emerged during the inaugural meeting of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (later renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council). This new council was specifically created to “foster a new cooperative relationship with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.”¹⁹⁸ From this cautious beginning, relations improved as Russia joined the Partnership for Peace program in 1994 and participated alongside NATO peacekeepers in Bosnia in 1996. From the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security to the NATO-Russia Council (NRC),

¹⁹⁸ “Evolution of NATO-Russia Relations.” <http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-russia/evolution.html> (accessed August 2004).

established in May 2002, NATO member states and Russia endeavored “to work more closely together towards the common goal of building a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic Area.”¹⁹⁹ Despite setbacks from differing perspectives on the crisis in Kosovo, NATO-Russia relations improved significantly during this period.

Today the NRC serves as a “mechanism for consultation, consensus-building, cooperation, joint decision and joint action,” in which the Allies and Russia work together as equals “at 27.”²⁰⁰ NATO and Russia work as partners, cooperating in areas of mutual interest such as “the fight against terrorism, crisis management, non-proliferation, arms control and confidence-building measures, theatre missile defence, logistics, military-to-military cooperation, defence reform and civil emergencies.”²⁰¹ Despite this atmosphere of partnership and cooperation, theater nuclear weapons continue to have utility in Russia.

2. TNW Utility in Russia

Russian perceptions of the utility of theater nuclear weapons figure prominently in the NATO-Russia security relationship precisely because Russian views and policies reflect the difficulty of cooperation on this issue. According to David Yost, Russian declarations and actions reveal the “great and possibly increasing importance” of TNWs in Russia today. Russian perceptions provide insight into why U.S. TNWs in Europe serve as a roadblock to cooperation on arms control and counterproliferation.

Russian observers have attributed several functions to their theater nuclear weapons. First, Russia values these weapons for deterrence. Although

¹⁹⁹ “NATO-Russia Relations.” <http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-russia/index.html> (accessed August 2004).

²⁰⁰ “NATO-Russia Council: NATO Member States and Russia Working Together as Equal Partners in Areas of Common Interest.” <http://www.nato.int/issues/nrc/index.html> (accessed August 2004). The “at 27” reference represents the 26 NATO member states and Russia working as equals as opposed to the previous “26+1” reference under the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) arrangement created by the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act.

²⁰¹ “NATO-Russia Council: The NRC’s Authority, Tasks and Responsibilities.” <http://www.nato.int/issues/nrc/tasks.html> (accessed August 2004).

Russia has concerns about deterring other countries from possible aggression and use of WMD by non-nuclear weapon states and non-state actors, NATO remains the primary nuclear threat of concern. Russian military officials cite, “The presence and high level of combat readiness of nuclear weapons is the best guarantee that the U.S. and NATO will not try to establish their ‘order’ in our country as well, like the way it was done in Yugoslavia.”²⁰² The second function of Russia’s TNWs is to compensate for the adversary’s conventional superiority. Russia’s economic problems have decimated its defense budgets and left its conventional military capability in a state of decay. Russian TNWs are seen as a means to “enable the country’s armed forces to avoid defeat in combat.”²⁰³ A third function of Russia’s TNWs is for the unique concept of “de-escalation” of conventional conflicts.²⁰⁴ Russian military theorists suggest that using limited TNW strikes might convince an adversary to end a conventional conflict while avoiding the possibility of further escalation to full-scale nuclear war. A fourth function is to offset reductions in strategic nuclear forces. “Against the background of continuing reductions in strategic nuclear weapons, the role of forces equipped with operational-tactical and tactical nuclear weapons is increasing.”²⁰⁵ Other functions have been identified as well, although these merely constitute variations of the four described above.²⁰⁶

Russia values its theater nuclear weapons for political reasons as well.²⁰⁷ Preservation of its status in international politics, maintaining a position of regional importance, and wielding diplomatic leverage are cited as political rationales for Russia’s continued reliance on TNWs. Moreover, NATO enlargement is a source of consternation and outright fear in Russian security circles. NATO has consistently repeated its “three noes”—no intention, no plan,

²⁰² David Yost, “Russia’s Non-strategic Nuclear Forces,” *International Affairs* (July 2001), vol. 77, no. 3, 534.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 535.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 537.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 534-537.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 537.

and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons in new-member states, yet, despite these reassurances, Russia continues to regard such deployments as a threat to its security.²⁰⁸ Russian perceptions of the utility of TNWs stem from Cold War legacy impressions of NATO as a primary threat. These perceptions run contrary to the spirit and intent of partnership and cooperation in the contemporary NATO-Russia security relationship. The implications are expressed clearly in a Middle Powers Initiative policy brief: “As NATO and Russia are working to achieve ‘a common and comprehensive security based on the allegiance to shared values, commitments and norms of behavior,’² deploying tactical nuclear weapons that pose an unnecessary threat is damaging. Worse, these continued deployments stimulate the quest for new military rationales.”²⁰⁹ This situation hinders prospects for arms control and nonproliferation.

3. Arms Control

NATO and Russian policymakers maintain diametrically opposed positions on TNWs. NATO adheres to the political utility and deterrent effects of its TNW arsenal, while at the same time voicing a desire for Russia to reduce and gain control of its theater nuclear forces. Russia, on the other hand, refuses to “consider negotiations to control its tactical nuclear arsenal if the United States will not remove its nuclear weapons from Europe.”²¹⁰ This Russian position is certainly not new; indeed such demands date back to earliest deployments of U.S. TNWs in Europe. Arms control for TNWs has received sporadic attention over the last several years. During the Helsinki summit in 1997, Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin issued the following joint statement: “The Presidents also agreed that in the context of START III negotiations their experts will explore, as separate issues, possible measures relating to nuclear long-range sea-launched

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 538.

²⁰⁹ “Middle Powers Initiative Brief on NATO Nuclear Policy,” 2.

²¹⁰ Alistair Millar, “Russia, NATO, and Tactical Nuclear Weapons After 11 September,” in *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emerging Threats in an Evolving Security Environment*, ed. Brian Alexander, Alistair Millar, (Washington DC: Brassey’s, 2003), 90.

cruise missile and tactical nuclear systems...”²¹¹ The Bush administration effectively killed the START III process, replacing it with the Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions (SOR), which made no reference to TNWs. Both countries have concerns about the problem of TNWs, however neither side has pushed the issue to the forefront. The real problem for arms control lies in finding a way to move beyond Cold War rhetoric and advance cooperation.

The success of the 1991 PNIs demonstrates one way to achieve cooperation. Leaders in both countries capitalized on opportunities created by the end of the Cold War to pursue unilateral, non-legally binding agreements. These very aspects, however, fuel arms control advocates criticism of the PNIs as lacking transparency and not being irreversible.²¹² The current Bush administration seems to prefer this unilateral approach; it views negotiated arms control agreements as “clumsy, time-consuming, and inflexible”²¹³ and only reluctantly agreed to codify the SOR agreements in a formal treaty. The administration’s logic is highlighted by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld’s contention: “arms control treaties are not for friends.”²¹⁴ In some ways, both views have merit. Unilateral reductions can bring about reciprocal cuts in nuclear forces, while codifying these actions in legally binding, transparent, and verifiable agreements assure both sides that promises will be carried out. As Daalder and Lindsay argue in a recent Brookings Institution policy brief,

Unilateral reductions are useful for jumpstarting weapons cuts. But both the process of reductions and the resulting force ceilings

²¹¹ Linton F. Brooks, “Diplomatic Solutions to the ‘Problem’ of Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons,” in *Controlling Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons: Obstacles and Opportunities*, ed. Jeffrey A. Larsen and Kurt J. Klingenger, USAF Institute for National Security Studies (Washington D.C.: U.S. GPO, 2001), 203.

²¹² Joshua Handler, “The 1991-1992 PNIs and the Elimination, Storage, and Security of Tactical Nuclear Weapons,” in *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emerging Threats in an Evolving Security Environment*, ed. Brian Alexander, Alistair Millar, (Washington D.C.: Brassey’s, 2003), 31.

²¹³ Jonathan Dean, “Tactical Nuclear Weapons and the Promise of Arms Control,” in *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emerging Threats in an Evolving Security Environment*, ed. Brian Alexander, Alistair Millar, (Washington D.C.: Brassey’s, 2003), 160.

²¹⁴ Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, “A New Agenda for Nuclear Weapons,” Brookings Institution Policy Brief no. 94, 14 February 2002.

<http://www.ceip.org/files/projects/npp/pdf/pb94.pdf> (accessed July 2004), 2.

should be fully binding to give not just Russia, but also the United States, confidence that statements of intent will in fact become reality. Uncertainty about current and future intentions and capabilities promotes suspicion and stimulates others to hedge, a process that ultimately feeds upon itself...To paraphrase Ronald Reagan, trust but codify.²¹⁵

Analysts have mixed views on prospects for unilateral initiatives and TNW arms control. William Potter and Nikolai Sokov argue that a U.S. initiative to remove its residual TNWs in Europe could “go a long way towards dispelling Russian fears about NATO and could help to revive the spirit of the parallel 1991 initiatives.”²¹⁶ On the other hand, David Yost conjectures that the Russians might simply “pocket” a U.S. unilateral withdrawal as something they have long demanded or interpret such a move as indication of decreased U.S. commitment to European security—either way, they would be unlikely to pursue meaningful disarmament.²¹⁷ Daalder and Lindsay disagree:

The era in which such weapons performed a useful deterrent role has long passed. Even the 150 or so tactical bombs deployed in Europe with U.S. and NATO forces no longer fulfill any useful function at a time when NATO is inviting Russia to join its key deliberations, including talks on weapons of mass destruction. Eliminating these non-strategic weapons should also give Russia a powerful incentive to follow suit, and destroy the many thousands of weapons it still maintains in service and storage.²¹⁸

Even if abandoning the long-standing policy of forward basing U.S. TNWs in Europe proves insufficient to induce Russia to eliminate all of its theater nuclear weapons, this step could remove an obstacle to further cooperation at relatively little strategic cost, given the nature of the transatlantic link today, NATO’s conventional superiority, and the general deterrent of U.S. strategic nuclear forces. “Furthermore,” according to Cortright and Gabbitas, “Russia’s current interest in a cooperative relationship with the United States appears to follow a

²¹⁵ Ibid., 7.

²¹⁶ William C. Potter and Nikolai Sokov, “The Nature of the Problem,” in William C. Potter, Nikolai Sokov, Harald Müller and Annette Schaper, *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Options for Control* (Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 2000), 14.

²¹⁷ Yost, “Russia’s Non-strategic Nuclear Forces,” 548-549.

²¹⁸ Daalder and Lindsay, “A New Agenda for Nuclear Weapons,” 7.

GRIT strategy centered around positive responses to U.S. policy moves, making it more likely that U.S. carrots could produce further Russian cooperation...”²¹⁹ Maintaining the U.S. TNWs is counterproductive for cooperation in arms control; in addition, these weapons further complicate cooperation in nonproliferation.

4. Nonproliferation

International interest in preventing the proliferation and use of WMD skyrocketed in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States. This interest has extended into the NATO-Russia security relationship as evidenced by the creation of the NATO-Russia Council in 2002 “which reinforced the need for coordinated action to respond to common threats.”²²⁰ One of the major areas of concern for nonproliferation, and hence a substantial roadblock to cooperation in this area, is the Russian TNW arsenal.

The security of Russia’s theater nuclear weapons is an issue of great concern in the West. This concern emerges from a lack of transparency in the Russian theater nuclear arsenal. Alexander and Millar point out, “The lack of information about the size of the Russian tactical nuclear weapons arsenal raises uncertainties regarding the security of the storage of these weapons as well as about their protections against accidental, unauthorized, or illicit use.”²²¹ This lack of transparency, combined with fears of “crime, corruption, incompetence, and institutional disintegration”²²² in Russia create concern over the possibility of these weapons falling into the hands of rogue states or terrorists. This is precisely where U.S. interests lie with respect to Russian TNWs. As Secretary of

²¹⁹ Cortright and Gabbitas, “Incentives for Nuclear Restraint,” in *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emerging Threats in an Evolving Security Environment*, 154. GRIT refers to the concept of graduated and reciprocated initiatives pioneered by Charles Osgood. See Charles E. Osgood, *An Alternative to War or Surrender* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962).

²²⁰ “NATO-Russia Relations: Building a Lasting and Inclusive Peace in the Euro-atlantic Area.” <http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-russia/index.html> (accessed August 2004).

²²¹ Brian Alexander and Alistair Millar, eds., “Uncovered Nukes: An Introduction to Tactical Nuclear Weapons,” *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emergent Threats in an Evolving Security Environment*, 4.

²²² Millar, “Russia, NATO, and Tactical Nuclear Weapons After 11 September,” in *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emerging Threats in an Evolving Security Environment*, 83.

State Colin Powell described, the U.S. is “concerned with them more from the standpoint of we really don’t want these nukes loose anywhere; and as a proliferation problem more so than a war-fighting problem. It’s almost a disposal problem more so than a war fighting problem.”²²³ The United States, NATO and the international community have put forth various programs and proposals aimed at dealing with the “loose nukes” problem.

U.S. efforts to deal with the “loose nukes” problem began in 1991 with the Nunn-Luger program, so named for its congressional sponsors, Senators Richard Luger and Sam Nunn. This set of initiatives included U.S. funding and technological assistance to help the newly independent states (NIS) of the former Soviet Union in deal with problems associated with their Cold War era nuclear stockpile. Nunn-Luger evolved into the broader cooperative threat reduction (CTR) programs beginning in 1997, which are intended to:

- facilitate the elimination, and the safe and secure transportation and storage, of nuclear, chemical and other weapons and their delivery vehicles;
- facilitate the safe and secure storage of fissile materials derived from the elimination of nuclear weapons;
- prevent the proliferation of weapons, weapons components and weapons related technology and expertise; and
- expand military to military and defense contacts.²²⁴

The CTR has become a central element of the U.S. nonproliferation effort, and has garnered support from the international community. At the 2002 G-8 summit in Canada, officials from the world’s leading economies created the Global Partnership Against the Proliferation of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, pledging \$20 million over ten years to the cause. As of 2002, the CTR had accomplished much:

²²³ Ibid., 86.

²²⁴ Jason D. Ellis and Todd Perry, “Nunn-Luger’s Unfinished Agenda,” *Arms Control Today* (October 1997), vol. 27, no. 7, 14.

To date, Nunn-Lugar has deactivated more than 6,000 nuclear warheads, along with hundreds of bombers, missiles, and submarines. It is employing tens of thousands of Russian weapons scientists so they are not tempted to sell their knowledge to the highest bidder. The program also has made progress toward protecting and safeguarding nuclear material, biological weapons laboratories, and chemical weapons stockpiles. Beyond statistics, the Nunn-Lugar program has served as a bridge of communication and cooperation between the United States and Russia, even when other aspects of the relationship were in decline. It has improved military-to-military contacts and established greater transparency in areas that used to be the object of intense secrecy and suspicion.²²⁵

Despite such success, transparency has yet to be achieved vis-à-vis theater nuclear weapons.

NATO has approached the subject several times with little success. In December 2000, NATO proposed a set of transparency measures aimed at conducting reciprocal data exchanges on TNWs. These proposals were included in a broad document entitled “Options for Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs), Verification, Non-proliferation and Arms Control” designed to “enhance mutual trust and promote greater openness and transparency on nuclear weapons and safety issues between NATO and Russia.”²²⁶ Despite such efforts, “information presented by the Russian was extremely vague.”²²⁷ The Russian refusal to share information on TNWs hinges on the continued deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe. Recognizing this, some NATO members have suggested greater effort on the part of the Alliance. In Lloyd Axworthy’s 2000 address to the North Atlantic Council, the Canadian official stated,

Can we not be more transparent about how many nuclear gravity bombs we have left, and where they are located? Can NATO not unilaterally reduce the number of remaining bombs further, and call

²²⁵ Richard Luger, “The Next Steps in U.S. Nonproliferation Policy,” *Arms Control Today* (December 2002), vol. 32, no. 10, 3.

²²⁶ “NATO’s Positions Regarding Nuclear Non-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament and Related Issues,” 3 June 2004.

²²⁷ Millar, “Russia, NATO, and Tactical Nuclear Weapons After 11 September,” in *Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Emerging Threats in an Evolving Security Environment*, 87.

for a proportional parallel action by the Russian Federation? Could we not take these sorts of measures to increase confidence with others, especially Russia, in order to pave the way for greater Russian openness on their huge sub-strategic stockpiles?²²⁸

The U.S. nuclear presence in Europe is a reminder of the Cold War mentality. The forward basing policy serves as a roadblock to cooperation at a time when the NATO-Russia relationship centers on partnership and cooperation. The concession of removing these weapons from Europe could pay dividends in terms of cooperation with Russia in the nonproliferation effort.

U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe have also long been a source of friction in the NATO-Russia security relationship, and they continue to serve as a roadblock to cooperation. Today the NATO-Russia Council serves to enhance consultation, consensus-building, cooperation, joint decision and joint action, yet in this environment, the utility placed by both NATO and Russian in their respective TNW arsenals prevents real cooperation in TNW arms control as well as counterproliferation. A unilateral withdrawal of the U.S. TNWs might jump-start arms control discussions if Russia continues to follow a GRIT strategy centered on positive reciprocity. At the very least, removing these weapons from Europe could lead to increased transparency on Russian TNWs, a key element in the current international nonproliferation effort.

C. CONCLUSION

This chapter analyzed the argument that TNWs are counterproductive in today's security environment. The chapter explains how forward basing TNWs in Europe negatively impacts nonproliferation and arms control efforts. NATO simultaneously promotes nuclear deterrence and nonproliferation in its security policies. This schizophrenic approach emphasizing the value of U.S. TNWs in Europe is actually counterproductive to European security because it undermines NATO's nonproliferation efforts. Theater nuclear weapons in Europe represent a holdover from the Cold War situation of immediate deterrence. Today,

²²⁸ William C. Potter, "Practical Steps for Addressing the Problem of Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons," in *Controlling Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons*, 218.

emphasizing the utility of these weapons enhances, rather than deters, proliferation of WMD. Moreover, NATO's nuclear doctrine is at odds with member states NPT commitments. The nuclear sharing arrangements in NATO are seen by many as *de facto* proliferation due to the United States' controversial interpretation of Articles I and II. Continued reliance on the forward-basing policy runs counter to the goals of the nonproliferation regime. This policy also threatens Alliance cohesion due to differing positions on the actual role of forward-based U.S. TNWs in NATO counterproliferation policy. Finally, NATO's continued reliance on forward-based TNWs for political power limits the success of CSBMs designed to promote cooperation in nonproliferation. Contrary to NATO doctrine, the U.S. TNWs in Europe are actually counterproductive for European security.

Both NATO and Russia continue to hold their TNWs in high regard. This emphasis on the utility of these weapons creates an immediate deterrence situation where one does not exist. This situation is particularly problematic as NATO and Russia pursue a security relationship based on partnership and cooperation. Even if abandoning the long-standing policy of forward basing U.S. TNWs in Europe proves insufficient to induce Russia to eliminate all of its theater nuclear weapons, this step could remove an obstacle to further cooperation at relatively little strategic cost, given the nature of the transatlantic link today, NATO's conventional superiority, and the general deterrent of U.S. strategic nuclear forces. Maintaining the U.S. TNWs is counterproductive for cooperation in arms control, however, these weapons further complicate cooperation in nonproliferation. The U.S. nuclear presence in Europe is a reminder of the Cold War mentality. Removing these weapons could, in fact, lead to increased transparency of the Russian TNW arsenal, and provide greater opportunities to improve the safety and security of these weapons and keep them out of the hands of rogue states and terrorists. This chapter demonstrates how maintaining the policy of forward-basing U.S. theater nuclear weapons is counterproductive to European security today.

VI. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

People who read a long thesis, to coin a phrase, deserve a short concluding chapter. To that end, this chapter succinctly brings the analysis together for policy prescription, or in other words, where do we go from here? It begins by summarizing the arguments concerning political and military utility, relevance, and counter productivity of U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe. I then offer two policy options: (1) maintaining the status quo, and (2) withdrawing U.S. theater nuclear weapons from Europe. The political-military implications of each are evaluated. In the final analysis, the thesis recommends withdrawing theater nuclear weapons from Europe in favor of a strategy emphasizing conventional deterrence supported by reassurance and the general deterrent of strategic nuclear weapons in the background.

A. POLITICAL AND MILITARY UTILITY

Arguments supporting the political and military utility of U.S. TNWs in Europe emerge from the rationale behind forward basing U.S. TNWs in Europe during the Cold War. Given the perceived conventional imbalance after the Second World War, NATO relied on TNWs to provide a military solution to the problem of deterring Soviet aggression and defending Western Europe. The massive retaliation strategy became untenable with the emergence of nuclear parity between the United States and the Soviet Union. This development spurred an evolution in NATO strategy focused on extending deterrence to Europe. Extended deterrence required a condition of coupling between U.S. and European security interests which could only be achieved through a credible U.S. nuclear response and a demonstrated U.S. commitment to Europe. Forward basing TNWs in Europe satisfied these requirements and solidified the transatlantic link. The ambiguity over when and how they would be used under flexible response masked the strategic debate over the various extended deterrence strategies in order to ensure Alliance cohesion. Above all, the utility of these weapons, and thus the strategy of basing them in Europe, stemmed

from the overarching belief that the Cold War existed within the context of an immediate deterrence relationship. The nature of this deterrence relationship changed significantly with the end of the Cold War, however the strategy did not. The logic of extended deterrence and the condition of coupling created by forward basing U.S. TNWs in Europe became entrenched in NATO strategic thought.

U.S. policymakers support the TNW policy for traditional reasons as well as emerging roles. The fall of the Soviet Union by no means assured that Europe was safe from aggression in the early post-Cold War years. U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe, although reduced in quantity by the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs), retained their historical political and military utility. In the twenty-first century strategic environment, U.S. officials see continued political and military utility in TNWs. The new U.S. defense policy goals—assure, dissuade, deter and defeat—outlined in the 2002 *Nuclear Posture Review*, combined with the Bush administration's doctrine of preemption and focus on counterproliferation laid out in the *National Security Strategy* and *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, highlight security concerns that make administration officials reluctant to give up options.

NATO, as well, supports the continued deployment of TNWs in Europe based on traditional arguments for their utility in Alliance security. From 1991 to 1999, the Allies' Strategic Concept emphasized their political utility in deterring any kind of war or coercion. Although focused more on the volatile situation in the East in the early part of the decade, relations with Russia improved with time and a great deal of effort. The Alliance offered reassurances to Russia regarding the status of its TNW arsenal and dual-capable aircraft readiness, yet at the same time it emphasized nuclear guarantees, roles and responsibilities to new members under the process of enlargement. NATO's nuclear doctrine today places greater emphasis on deterring threats posed by WMD proliferation and use. Throughout this period, just as during the Cold War, NATO continued to place great value on U.S. nuclear forces based in Europe and committed to NATO, which "provide an essential political and military linkage between the

European and the North American members of the Alliance.”²²⁹ For NATO, widespread participation in nuclear sharing and nuclear consultative arrangements is a necessity for preserving the transatlantic link. These arrangements assure Allies of U.S. commitment and symbolize the credibility of extended deterrence which alleviates the potential for proliferation within the Alliance. In terms of utility, then, NATO’s European members think mainly politically while U.S. policymakers think both politically and operationally.

B. POLITICAL AND MILITARY RELEVANCE

Many analysts question the political and military relevance of TNWs in Europe today. The nature of the transatlantic link is primarily economic and political, with military links maintained via conventional forces. Economic interdependence and dense institutional arrangements couple the United States and Europe in ways far beyond the symbolic basing of U.S. theater nuclear weapons. Without these weapons, NATO members would continue to participate in nuclear policy decision making through the political mechanisms in the Nuclear Planning Group and the requirement for consensus in NATO decision-making. American conventional deployments, as well as the North Atlantic Treaty itself, link the U.S. strategic umbrella to European defense, providing equal or greater utility than forward deployed TNWs.

Theater nuclear weapons based in Europe may also be seen as irrelevant from the standpoint of credibility and the nuclear taboo. Efforts to make TNWs more “usable,” such as the current feasibility studies of a Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator or “bunker buster,” may enhance the capabilities of TNWs, but will do little to alleviate the taboo against their use. From this standpoint, these weapons offer no real credibility advantage over low-yield strategic nuclear forces, and pose a far less credible threat than modern conventional forces.

²²⁹ “Final Communiqué of the Defense Planning Committee and Nuclear Planning Group,” 12 June 2003, NATO Press Release (2003)64. <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2003/p03-064e.htm> (accessed Aug 2004), para. 10.

Conventional deterrence, by contrast, may be more effective than deterrence based on theater nuclear weapons. Modern conventional forces not only can dominate on the battlefield, they now possess the capability to hold hard and difficult targets at risk in deterring the proliferation and use of WMD. As congressional research analyst Jonathan Medalia points out, “U.S. forces demonstrated the ability of ground troops to attack tunnel complexes in Afghanistan and the ability of precision conventional ordnance to destroy underground bunkers in Iraq. It would be better, in this view, to spend funds on improving the ability to destroy these targets with conventional means rather than on nuclear weapons.”²³⁰ Conventional deterrence enables the United States to more credibly threaten what rogue leaders value most—regime survival—and this capability will only improve in the future. For these reasons, TNWs based in Europe are irrelevant for European security today.

C. COUNTERPRODUCTIVE IN TODAY’S SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

TNWs in Europe are actually counterproductive in today’s security environment, particularly because of their negative impact on nonproliferation and arms control efforts. NATO simultaneously promotes nuclear deterrence and nonproliferation in its security policies. This schizophrenic approach emphasizing the value of U.S. TNWs in Europe is actually counterproductive to European security because it undermines NATO’s nonproliferation efforts. Theater nuclear weapons in Europe represent a holdover from the Cold War situation of immediate deterrence. Today, emphasizing the utility of these weapons enhances, rather than deters, proliferation of WMD because it sends a signal that even the world’s greatest power sees TNWs as potentially usable and as necessary for security. Moreover, NATO’s nuclear doctrine is at odds with member states Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) commitments. The nuclear sharing arrangements in NATO are seen by many as *de facto* proliferation due to the United States’ controversial interpretation of Articles I and

²³⁰ Jonathan Medalia, *Nuclear Weapon Initiatives: Low-Yield R&D, Advanced Concepts, Earth Penetrators, Test Readiness* (Washington DC: The Library of Congress, 2004). <http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars/crs/RL32130.pdf>, (accessed August 2004), 54.

II—that these restrictions do not apply in times of war. Continued reliance on the forward-basing policy runs counter to the goals of the nonproliferation regime. This policy also threatens Alliance cohesion due to differing positions on the actual role of forward-based U.S. TNWs in NATO counterproliferation policy. Finally, NATO's continued reliance on forward-based TNWs for political power limits the success of confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) designed to promote cooperation in nonproliferation because it undermines NATO's moral credibility in influencing other states to forego nuclear weapons programs of their own. Contrary to NATO doctrine, the U.S. TNWs in Europe are actually counterproductive for European security.

Both NATO and Russia continue to hold their TNWs in high regard. This emphasis on the utility of these weapons creates an immediate deterrence situation where one does not exist. This situation is particularly problematic as NATO and Russia pursue a security relationship based on partnership and cooperation. Even if abandoning the long-standing policy of forward basing U.S. TNWs in Europe proves insufficient to induce Russia to eliminate all of its theater nuclear weapons, this step could remove an obstacle to further cooperation at relatively little strategic cost, given the nature of the transatlantic link today, NATO's conventional superiority, and the general deterrent of U.S. strategic nuclear forces. Maintaining the U.S. TNWs is counterproductive for cooperation in arms control, and these weapons further complicate cooperation in nonproliferation. The U.S. nuclear presence in Europe is a reminder of the Cold War mentality. Removing these weapons could, in fact, lead to increased transparency on the Russian TNW arsenal, and provide greater opportunities to improve the safety and security of these weapons and keep them out of the hands of rogue states and terrorists. For these reasons, maintaining the policy of forward-basing U.S. theater nuclear weapons is counterproductive to European security today.

D. POLICY OPTIONS

Two potential policy options emerge from this analysis. The first is to maintain the status quo, in which U.S. theater nuclear weapons remain forward-based in Europe. The second is withdrawing these weapons from Europe and relying on other means to provide security for the Atlantic Alliance. The remainder of this chapter highlights the political and military implications of each and provides final recommendations for the future.

1. Status Quo

U.S. and Allied risk assessments and interests could lead to a decision to maintain the TNW deployments in Europe for the foreseeable future. In this view, threat uncertainties in future Russian political and military developments could create a desire among NATO officials to maintain a hedge in nuclear capabilities. However, given recent statements by both U.S. and Allied officials regarding the NATO-Russia security relationship, perhaps an even greater impetus lies in the threat of WMD proliferation and use. NATO's increasing role in "out of area" operations and its proximity to volatile areas in the Middle East could support a continued reliance on a theater nuclear deterrent. The fact that these weapons are closer to potential adversaries than those stationed in the United States could enhance U.S. counterproliferation strategy, and future upgrades, as envisioned in the *Nuclear Posture Review*, to an existing NATO capability may be politically easier to achieve. Traditional political arguments for Alliance cohesion could be maintained, including reassuring Allies of U.S. commitment and credibility and ensuring widespread sharing of nuclear roles and responsibilities.

The status quo policy option has potential drawbacks as well. Maintaining these weapons in Europe and emphasizing their utility creates an immediate deterrence situation where one does not exist. If the greatest military power, and by extension, the strongest alliance in the world, claim TNWs are required for security, then smaller, less powerful states in much more precarious security situations will surely follow suit. These weapons enhance, rather than deter, proliferation of WMD. NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements are seen as

incompatible with the letter and intent of the NPT, and maintaining these arrangements could undermine the Alliance's position in supporting nonproliferation. Moreover, stressing TNW utility reduces the psychological effectiveness of CSBMs designed to reassure non-nuclear weapon states and increases incentives for these states to acquire WMD. NATO's adherence to TNW utility complicates relations with Russia as well, and could continue to hinder prospects for cooperation on arms control and nonproliferation. This is particularly troublesome when the security and stability of Russia's nuclear complex is an area of deep concern with respect to the threat of nuclear terrorism.

2. Withdrawal

The United States and its Allies could, on the other hand, choose to withdraw the U.S. TNWs from Europe, relying instead on other means to provide security for Europe. Such a policy would recognize the growing irrelevance of these weapons, given their decreasing credibility, the increasing importance of the nuclear taboo, and the capabilities inherent in modern U.S. and Allied conventional combat power. Conventional forces today can dominate on the battlefield and also increasingly possess some capability to destroy hardened and difficult targets. New conventional initiatives will enhance these capabilities in the future. From the standpoint of rationality, retaliation and unbearable damage, conventional deterrence via modern forces may be more effective for threatening regime survival—a key factor in deterring, dissuading and defeating potential rogue states and WMD proliferators. Removing U.S. TNWs from Europe would be an important disarmament step which could signal a change in real intent and real capability away from reliance on nuclear weapons for security. This would enhance the effectiveness of CSBMs and provide greater reassurance for both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear weapon states. By making NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements irrelevant, withdrawal would increase the credibility of Allies' commitments to the NPT and enhance international efforts to stop the proliferation of WMD. Moreover, removing the

residual U.S. nuclear presence in Europe would eliminate a significant roadblock to cooperation in NATO-Russia relations, which could lead to a reduction in Russian theater nuclear forces or at least increased transparency on the size and security of the Russian arsenal.

Withdrawing the TNWs from Europe could be seen as a reduction in U.S. capability and removal of an option for the president in a crisis situation. In reality, this is unlikely to be the case. Given that the readiness of NATO's dual-capable aircraft for nuclear missions is now measured in months rather than minutes or hours, response time is now shorter for a strategic strike launched from the United States than it is for a tactical strike launched from NATO territory, should the worst possible scenario actually arise. Arguments regarding the time factor apply primarily to the potential for preemptive strikes; however, it is highly unlikely that NATO would allow the preemptive use of nuclear weapons based in Alliance territory. Such a decision could, in fact, greatly impact Alliance cohesion.

The strongest criticism against removing U.S. TNWs from Europe revolves around the very issue of Alliance cohesion. NATO's conception of the transatlantic link and the essential political and military role of TNWs in maintaining a condition of coupling between the United States and Europe have become institutionalized to the point of bureaucratic opposition. Yet the transatlantic link now reaches far beyond the symbolic basing of a few hundred nuclear gravity bombs on European soil. Deep economic interdependence and dense institutional integration, combined with U.S. conventional commitments and the ultimate security guarantee of U.S. strategic nuclear deterrence in the background characterize the nature of the transatlantic link today. As former Supreme Allied Command Europe, Wesley Clark, properly asserts, "evolution and adaptation of the comfortable security fixtures of the past should be no cause for concern, for through such prudent adjustments we equip ourselves to confront the flux of events that time shall surely bring."²³¹ The time in which U.S.

²³¹ Wesley Clark, "The United States and NATO: The Way Ahead," *Parameters* (Winter 1999/2000), vol. 29, no. 4, 14.

TNWs played a pivotal role in European security is long past; these weapons are now in some ways irrelevant and counterproductive in others.

E. CONCLUSION

This thesis examines whether basing theater nuclear weapons in Europe is a useful, irrelevant or counterproductive strategy for maintaining security in Europe today. The underlying issues inherent in the contemporary debate are broad and complex, if not highly polemical. The thesis approaches the issue of forward basing TNWs in Europe from a pragmatic point of view, seeking to enhance European security while reducing the risk of nuclear conflict through cooperation. While cooperation in national security affairs is inherently difficult, it is also increasingly important in a security environment marked by global threats and WMD. Based on this approach, the findings of this thesis support a policy recommendation of withdrawing U.S. theater nuclear weapons in Europe, relying instead on a strategy of conventional deterrence and reassurance while maintaining general nuclear deterrence via strategic forces.

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