

DGAP REPORT

(Nuclear) Sharing is Caring¹

European Views on NATO Nuclear Deterrence and the German Nuclear Sharing Debate

Edited by Sophia
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¹ Variations of the "caring/sharing" title have been used by many authors recently, in reference to the nuclear issue. The earliest source we found is: "Caring about Sharing: A Review of Nuclear Weapons Sharing," Columbia University, Center for Nuclear Policies, K=1 Project (August 01, 2012): k1project.columbia.edu/news/caring-about-sharing (Last accessed May 27, 2020).

INTRODUCTION

In May 2020, the German security policy community has been debating the country's engagement in NATO's nuclear sharing agreement. An interview given by Rolf Mützenich, chairman of the SPD, to *Der Tagesspiegel* at the beginning of May sparked a controversy around the question of whether Germany should continue to host US tactical nuclear weapons on its territory and provide the dual-capable aircraft (DCA) that could deliver those weapons if push came to shove. Critics suggest that the current arrangement is obsolete and that any decision to replace the current German DCA fleet should be accompanied by a broad debate about German participation in nuclear sharing.

One key question in the debate is how a German withdrawal would be seen among our allies in the EU and NATO. So we asked them! We were interested in three main questions:

1. What do our partners think about NATO's nuclear strategy in general and nuclear sharing in particular?
2. How do they see the German role?
3. And what would be the consequences of a German withdrawal?

We asked security experts from different European countries to share their views². All of them graciously volunteered their time and thought. Their opinions are personal views but provide valuable insight into how the German debate is seen from the outside, and they can help German policy makers understand the concerns of some of our closest allies. While these contributions are just a couple of individual snapshots, the responses indicate directions for future research on nuclear deterrence and arms control as well as for key areas that a political dialogue would have to touch upon.

² To date (May 27, 2020), the compilation includes 10 responses. This number can increase as we seek the views of more experts. Updated versions of this report will be published continuously.

Summary

How does your government view the importance of nuclear deterrence and NATO’s nuclear sharing agreement for its own security and European security?

While we received different opinions and viewpoints, one conviction unified all of them: Nuclear deterrence is the cornerstone of NATO’s security strategy and therefore vital for European security. All respondents also supported NATO’s nuclear sharing agreement for a variety of reasons. Some pointed out the importance of nuclear sharing in signaling the credibility of NATO’s extended deterrence; others added that the agreement was an important way of giving NATO allies a voice and sharing the risks and responsibilities of NATO’s nuclear strategy. H.E. Darius Jonas Semaška, Lithuanian Ambassador to Germany, acknowledged that nuclear sharing and the availability of low-yield nuclear weapons prevents Russia from achieving “strategic dominance and escalation control.” And Prof. Dr. Alexander Mattelaer from the Belgian Egmont Institute reminded us that NATO’s nuclear sharing was crucial in preventing some European allies – including Germany – from seeking their own nuclear deterrent.

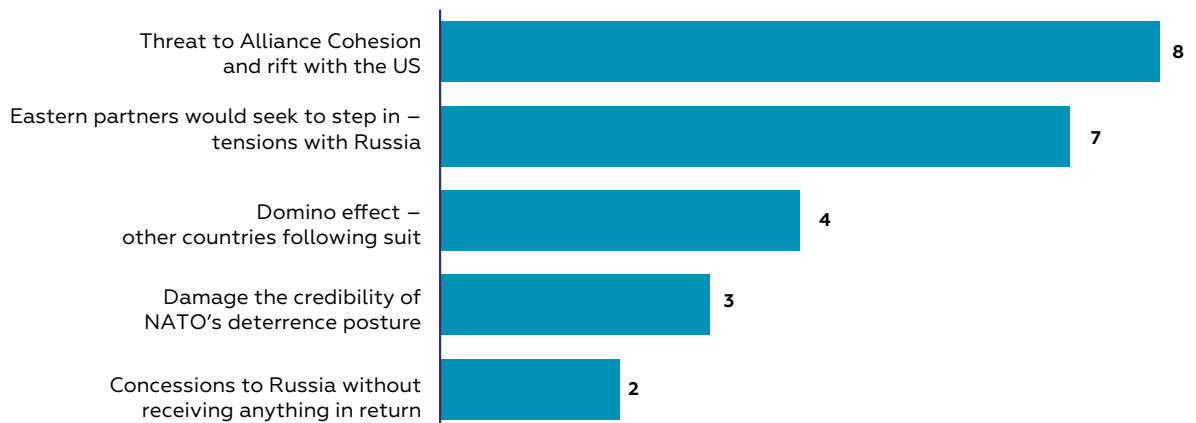
“NATO’s nuclear sharing serves important political, military and strategic purposes.”

H.E. Darius Jonas Semaška

In the view of your government: What difference does Germany’s participation in nuclear sharing make? (Why) is Germany important in nuclear sharing?

The most important argument put forth by most of our experts was that Germany’s participation in NATO’s nuclear sharing agreement is an important symbol of Germany’s commitment to the Alliance. Many added that especially a unilateral withdrawal, without consultation with NATO allies, would be a

Figure 1: Consequences of a German Withdrawal from Nuclear Sharing (10 respondents)



worrisome signal and would have to be replaced by a commensurate conventional contribution in order to assuage Germany's NATO partners. Almost half of our respondents thought that Germany's participation was important for the credibility of NATO's extended deterrence. They thought that it was essential for one of NATO's most powerful members to actively share the burden of NATO's nuclear strategy and to be a strong voice in the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG). Dr. Bruno Tertrais pointed out that Germany's active contribution to nuclear sharing was crucial for bridging "the strategic culture gap" between Berlin and Paris.

“NATO’s indivisible nuclear bond has helped to pacify (inter alia) the Franco-German rivalry for European dominance.”

Prof. Dr. Alexander Mattelaer

What would be the plausible/probable effects within NATO and for European security, if Germany were to leave nuclear sharing?

“If Germany left, it would open a Pandora’s box.”

Charly Salonius-Pasternak

Eight of our colleagues were especially concerned about the consequences for NATO's cohesion if Germany were to leave nuclear sharing. They pointed out that a unilateral German withdrawal could lead to a rift with Washington, adding fuel to the flames of an already strained relationship. Many also feared that NATO members in the East – such as Poland – would seek to replace Germany in hosting the tactical nuclear weapons on their territory. This would likely lead to tensions with Russia as such a move would be in direct violation of the NATO-Russia Founding Act (1997). Another worry was that other allies such as Italy and Belgium might follow Germany's example and withdraw from nuclear sharing as well, which would provide even more incentive to move the weapons eastward, potentially risking an arms race with Russia. A number of respondents also worried that a German withdrawal would harm the credibility of NATO's deterrence posture. Our Italian and Norwegian colleagues pointed out that any removal of tactical nuclear weapons should only be considered as part of a negotiation with Russia about arms control and certainly should not be a concession without getting anything in return.

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BELGIUM

Prof. Dr. Alexander Mattelaer, Senior Research Fellow, Egmont Institute

How does your government view the importance of nuclear deterrence and NATO's nuclear sharing agreement for its own security and European security?

Belgium contributes personnel and means to NATO's nuclear deterrence and subscribes to the notion that NATO will remain a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons exist. Despite the controversy this policy occasionally generates, Belgium has supported NATO's nuclear deterrence for three reasons. First and foremost, NATO's deterrence posture has made unrestrained conflict with Russia nearly unthinkable. The enduring success thereof has provided the foundation of European security. Secondly, by making the security of all allies indivisible, it has obviated the need for more allies to acquire nuclear arsenals of their own – thus countering proliferation pressures. Thirdly, NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements have provided participating allies with a meaningful voice on deterrence matters they would not have had otherwise. This aligns with Belgium's longstanding preference for multilateral solutions and dialogue.

In the view of your government: What difference does Germany's participation in nuclear sharing make? (Why) is Germany important in nuclear sharing?

German participation in NATO's nuclear sharing (together with that of other DCA nations) helps ensure that the NATO's nuclear posture is not shaped by the nuclear weapon states alone and that the voice of other allies gets taken into account – at least to some extent. By sharing the effort and risk the nuclear mission entails, these nations contribute to sharing the overall burden within the Alliance in a way that is unique – and therefore difficult to compensate conventionally. DCA constitute a unique tool for signaling purposes and strengthening the credibility of extended deterrence. Finally, NATO's indivisible nuclear bond has helped to pacify (inter alia) the Franco-German rivalry for European dominance – the ultimate specter haunting Belgian national security thinking. In essence, discontinuing nuclear sharing would raise the question of how committed Germany remains to its own security as well as that of its neighbors.

What would be the plausible/probable effects within NATO and for European security, if Germany were to leave nuclear sharing?

The first-order effect would be the increased polarization of the European security debate. If Germany were to discontinue the nuclear mission, it would in all likelihood increase political pressure in other capitals to either follow suit (thus 'exporting' the intra-government disagreements we see in Berlin today) or alternatively intensify the calls for others to take Germany's place (e.g. by Poland joining the community of DCA nations and destabilizing the relationship with Russia further). In the absence of Alliance unity, the second-order effect would be the progressive weakening of NATO's deterrence posture – which would become increasingly reliant on the (already tenuous) willingness of Washington, London and Paris to underwrite NATO deterrence and leave Europe's eastern flank more exposed. The third-order effect might encompass the erosion of the Euro-Atlantic order and the rekindling of Westphalian dynamics on the European continent itself – hardly a prospect that any Belgian government would welcome.

ESTONIA

Sven Sakkov, Director, International Centre for Defense and Security (ICDS)

How does your government view the importance of nuclear deterrence and NATO's nuclear sharing agreement for its own security and European security?

Estonia's National Security Concept stipulates that NATO's ultimate security guarantee is its nuclear deterrent. This must be credible and available in the Alliance's European territory³. The fact that NATO was, is and remains a nuclear alliance is politically uncontroversial in Estonia.

In the view of your government: What difference does Germany's participation in nuclear sharing make? (Why) is Germany important in nuclear sharing?

Germany is the biggest country in the European part of NATO, a very wealthy country with formidable armed forces. In Estonian political circles Germany is considered to be too much of an advocate of Russia and not enough of an advocate of Central-

3 "National Security Concept of Estonia," State Chancellery of Estonia (2017): (accessed June 12, 2020).

Eastern European security. German participation in NATO's nuclear sharing has demonstrated that when it comes to the life-and-death issues and Article 5, Germany is a responsible NATO ally. By its potential withdrawal Germany would undermine that notion.

What would be the plausible/probable effects within NATO and for European security, if Germany were to leave nuclear sharing?

According to the National Security Concept, the credibility and political impact of NATO's deterrence is largely determined by the Alliance's unity and performance, as well as its capabilities and available resources. Germany leaving the nuclear sharing arrangement would have a detrimental effect on the cohesion of the Alliance. There will inevitably be a question of moving US B61 nuclear bombs from Germany to Poland and replacing Germany in a sharing role with Poland. Also there is bound to be public opposition to the hosting of nuclear weapons. Outside the expert community the fact that several European countries are hosting B61s and are party to nuclear sharing is not very well known. German political discussions will change that. The only country benefiting from these fissures will be the Russian Federation.

FINLAND

Charly Saloniuss-Pasternak, Senior Research Fellow, Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA)

How does your government view the importance of nuclear deterrence and NATO's nuclear sharing agreement for its own security and European security?

Historically and as a whole, nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence are rarely discussed in public in Finland, either in official public documents or by members of the government. When the subject is broached, it is within a broader framework of arms reduction/disarmament discussions, or during the past few years through an acknowledgement that nuclear weapons have reentered broader discussions about security (in a way not seen since the Cold War). However, in private, almost all politicians recognize that nuclear weapons have historically had a stabilizing influence, and quite a few see that nuclear weapons and the deterrence they provide are an aspect of strategic stability. Among some there is a wistful sense of a lost opportunity in the late 2000s-early 2010s, when "things could have gone another way," with Obama talking about Global

Zero, NATO discussing whether there was a need for (US) tactical weapons in Europe etc. However, with the rather rapid recent changes nuclear deterrence is now recognized in Finland as a key tool in maintaining stability (particularly among the senior civil servants). It is rarely if ever acknowledged, that during the Cold War this strategic stability also benefited Finland; though the dark side was that apparently both NATO and the Warsaw Pact quite a few nukes on Finnish territory.

In the view of your government: What difference does Germany's participation in nuclear sharing make? (Why) is Germany important in nuclear sharing?

Germany's role in NATO is again under debate; and clearly, the United States (not only Trump) feels that Germany is not carrying the burden it should. German withdrawal would explode the US-German relationship, which has already suffered in past years. Without participation in nuclear sharing Germany's role in NATO would change dramatically. There is in Finland a keen appreciation of the domestic policy issues at hand, and that because of it, multiple governments have "kicked the can down the street," in terms of replacing the capabilities that make Germany's contribution possible. Ultimately, German participation is seen as good, and unless it was as a component of a long-term and thoughtful NATO-wide process and reevaluation of how "the nuclear bit" is done, "it would be scary if Germany withdrew unilaterally."

What would be the plausible/probable effects within NATO and for European security, if Germany were to leave nuclear sharing?

If Germany left, it would open a Pandora's box. The view is that multiple NATO member states east of Germany would want to participate – with Poland mentioned explicitly (and not positively) – and that this would likely have many negative consequences.

Russian responses would be immediate and long-term; any chance of rapprochement would disappear for a long time. It would also upset the newfound balance in the Baltic Sea region (BSR), with direct consequences to Finland and other BSR littorals. An offence-defence arms race cycle would be likely, with Russia feeling forced to significantly strengthen its western defenses, "requiring" a response by NATO etc. etc. In one sentence: Unilateral German withdrawal from (technical) nuclear sharing would have significant negative consequences for European security.

FRANCE

Dr. Bruno Tertrais, Deputy Director, Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS)

How does your government view the importance of nuclear deterrence and NATO's nuclear sharing agreement for its own security and European security?

The French government continues to see nuclear deterrence as a central pillar of both French and European security. It is seen as providing an anchor of stability in a world increasingly defined by the competition and friction between great powers.

In the view of your government: What difference does Germany's participation in nuclear sharing make? (Why) is Germany important in nuclear sharing?

German participation in nuclear sharing is important to France in at least three respects: national, NATO and EU. First, it ensures a direct and material German responsibility in nuclear weapons management. It is important to ensure that divergences between France and Germany and the "strategic culture gap" do not broaden. Second, it ensures that one of the most important members of NATO is directly involved in nuclear deterrence. Third, it ensures that the biggest EU member has a direct responsibility in nuclear affairs.

What would be the plausible/probable effects within NATO and for European security, if Germany were to leave nuclear sharing?

This depends on the context and circumstances: If it were to be a forced decision by the US administration, the consequences would be dramatic. If Germany were to take this decision with the consent of NATO partners it would be regrettable, but its impact would be limited if it happened within the context of a general and consensual "reshuffling" of NATO's nuclear posture (for instance, Polish sharing, etc.). If Germany decides unilaterally – without the consent of its NATO partners – it would be Berlin's sovereign right. But it could seriously damage the political credibility of NATO's deterrence posture, especially given that it could have serious "ripple effects" (debates in the Netherlands, Belgium etc.). Finally, the argument according to which "extended deterrence can exist without sharing" is moot, since we are not starting from scratch but talking about a radical change in NATO policy.

ITALY

Prof. Dr. Alessandro Marrone, Head of Defence Programme, Institute of International Affairs (IAI),

Dr. Stefano Silvestri, Scientific Advisor, former president, IAI

How does your government view the importance of nuclear deterrence and NATO's nuclear sharing agreement for its own security and European security?

NATO membership and the bilateral relations with the US are crucial elements in shaping Italian policy concerning tactical nuclear weapons. The Atlantic Alliance is deemed a cornerstone of national security and nuclear sharing is considered an important component of Italy's participation in it. The US is recognized as a key ally and hosting American tactical nuclear weapons is part of such bilateral relations. There is a broad political consensus on such an overall approach, as proved by the strong continuity of Italy's nuclear policy despite frequent changes in Italian governments. Rome has ensured Dual Capable Aircraft (DCA) to its military firms with Tornado and now with F-35. While several European countries are buying F-35s, Italy is the only one – beside of course UK, which has its own nuclear deterrent – procuring certified dual capable F-35s to maintain its nuclear sharing role. Moreover, during the post-Cold War period, the US military presence in Italy has increased. American bases, including those hosting tactical nuclear weapons, have been modernized, upgraded, and in some cases enlarged. Such overall continuity on military nuclear policy takes place without much political debate upon it, and governments are keen to stay the course without engaging public opinion.

In the view of your government: What difference does Germany's participation in nuclear sharing make? (Why) is Germany important in nuclear sharing?

In Italy there is no official, explicit position in this regard. However, the following points can be made. First, Germany's participation in nuclear sharing means Italy is not the only major European country to host US tactical nuclear weapons without having its own deterrent. The German contribution embodies collective defence and solidarity, both among Europeans and at transatlantic level, and therefore it helps Rome to stay the course of nuclear sharing. Should Germany abandon this role, anti-nuclear movements in Italy would have a new, strong

argument to advocate a similar choice by Rome. Above all, the negative effects of Germany stepping back on European security and NATO would harm Italy's national security and interests.

What would be the plausible/probable effects within NATO and for European security, if Germany were to leave nuclear sharing?

There would be a number of negative and worrying effects. This move would take place while Europe is weakened by the impacts of Covid-19 and the US is dragged into the 2020 presidential electoral campaign, thus creating further room for maneuver for opportunistic adversaries. Moreover, it would happen without any diplomatic bargain with Russia over pan-European security, by ignoring the strategic consequences of INF treaty demise and significant Russian nuclear rearmament. Finally, such a German withdrawal from nuclear sharing would increase the estrangement between the US and a key European ally at a time of strong calls for greater burden sharing by Europe – an estrangement not helpful considering ongoing transatlantic tensions. Overall, this German move would definitively weaken both NATO and European security.

LATVIA

Dr. Māris Andžāns, Senior Research Fellow, Latvian Institute of International Affairs

How does your government view the importance of nuclear deterrence and NATO's nuclear sharing agreement for its own security and European security?

Nuclear deterrence is not a constant issue in the public space, except news on such issues as the failing arms control regimes and North Korea.

The government has not been vocal in public on nuclear weapons and the nuclear umbrella of NATO/NATO allies. But it can be safely argued that in the context of Latvia's neighborhood, i.e. Russian nuclear capabilities and policies (like readiness to use it in case of a conventional confrontation), the nuclear deterrence of NATO/NATO allies is seen as of fundamental importance. The stronger the NATO/NATO allies' nuclear deterrent, the better.

In the view of your government: What difference does Germany's participation in nuclear sharing make? (Why) is Germany important in nuclear sharing?

In the aforementioned context, it can be assumed that Germany's role is seen as symbolic though important. Constraints of Germany's military power are well known. However, through its more active role, especially the leading of the battlegroup in Lithuania, Germany is seen as a more credible military power and European power at large. Participation in nuclear sharing is seen as a facilitator to its credibility.

Germany's participation also bears the symbolism of the transatlantic link. Its withdrawal from nuclear sharing would be perceived in the Baltics and, furthermore, to the east of the Baltics, as another demonstration of weakening transatlantic unity.

What would be the plausible/probable effects within NATO and for European security, if Germany were to leave nuclear sharing?

Probably no immediate effects would be visible. It would be perceived to the east of Germany that it has decreased its military and political deterrent power. New compensating mechanisms might be sought, e.g. Poland might wish to take the role of Germany in nuclear sharing.

Russia would be the main benefactor of the situation in terms of weakening the transatlantic link and making its nuclear posture slightly more favourable.

LITHUANIA

H.E. Darius Jonas Semaška, Lithuanian Ambassador to Germany

How does your government view the importance of nuclear deterrence and NATO's nuclear sharing agreement for its own security and European security?

Safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrence shall remain an integral part of NATO's defense and deterrence posture as long as nuclear weapons exist. NATO's nuclear sharing serves important political, military and strategic purposes and provides an avenue of sharing responsibilities between the United States and European Allies. It does not allow Russia to acquire strategic dominance and escalation control, bearing in mind the much bigger number and variety of Russia's non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe.

In the view of your government: What difference does Germany's participation in nuclear sharing make? (Why) is Germany important in nuclear sharing?

Germany has always been a very important and reliable NATO member at the center of the Alliance's well-prepared and balanced consensus policy. We believe this will not change despite different opinions and open discussion within Germany. Participation in nuclear sharing is not technical: it has political, military and strategic consequences and effects for European security.

What would be the plausible/probable effects within NATO and for European security, if Germany were to leave nuclear sharing?

If Germany decided to change its status in nuclear sharing this would inevitably accelerate discussion regarding alternative solutions. NATO needs to maintain an adequate response to the increasingly assertive Russia and its sophisticated nuclear weapons and new generation precision delivery systems.

THE NETHERLANDS

Sico van der Meer, Research Fellow, Clingendael Institute

How does your government view the importance of nuclear deterrence and NATO's nuclear sharing agreement for its own security and European security?

Although there are some different views on nuclear weapon policies among the political parties in the current government coalition, there is some general agreement that NATO, including its nuclear deterrence, is vital for European and Dutch security. Yet, there is also agreement that much effort is required to work toward global reduction and disarmament of nuclear weapons, which is well possible without immediately undermining the concept of nuclear deterrence.

In the view of your government: What difference does Germany's participation in nuclear sharing make? (Why) is Germany important in nuclear sharing?

The Dutch government traditionally closely observes German policies. With regard to nuclear sharing, the Dutch government sees it as a NATO task, which consequently cannot be a burden for one or very few

member states only; the burden should be shared. Any discussions on nuclear sharing should preferably be coordinated within NATO, to prevent any *alleingang* [go it alone] from any country (which may play into the hands of countries that try to undermine cohesion within NATO as well). In the past, there have been discussions between Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands to coordinate their positions towards nuclear sharing and this kind of policy coordination remains the preferred option to deal with the topic.

What would be the plausible/probable effects within NATO and for European security, if Germany were to leave nuclear sharing?

First of all, there are worries that other NATO members will request to host nuclear weapons, and that the current US government might accommodate such requests. Moving nuclear weapons eastwards may be seen as provocative and threatening by Russia and may cause extra tensions and escalation risks, which is contrary to European security. Moreover, Germany is an important voice within the Nuclear Planning Group of NATO, and it would be a loss if the German perspectives on nuclear weapons policies would have less impact if it would unilaterally end its nuclear sharing task. Last but not least, clear division lines and disagreements within NATO may be exploited by anti-NATO countries to increase doubts and discord in NATO in general, thus undermining the security alliance even more.

NORWAY

Dr. Paal Hilde, Associate Professor, Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies (IFS)

How does your government view the importance of nuclear deterrence and NATO's nuclear sharing agreement for its own security and European security?

Historically, Norway has had a somewhat complex view of nuclear weapons in NATO and thus national security. While Norway has never seriously challenged the role of nuclear weapons as NATO's, and thus Norway's, ultimate deterrence and defense instrument, from 1957 Norway has explicitly held that no nuclear weapons may be present in Norway in peacetime.

Today, Norway is a firm supporter of the NATO consensus line. Domestic political strife over the

nuclear ban treaty led to the 2018 publication of a government study that set out Norwegian policy⁴. It confirmed Norway's support for security through deterrence, including nuclear deterrence, balanced by a continued, active pursuit of nuclear disarmament with the ultimate aim of "a world without nuclear weapons."

In the view of your government: What difference does Germany's participation in nuclear sharing make? (Why) is Germany important in nuclear sharing?

To my knowledge, the Norwegian government has no publicly formulated view of these questions (or even explicit non-public ones). See next question for general reflections.

What would be the plausible/probable effects within NATO and for European security, if Germany were to leave nuclear sharing?

Norway has previously supported withdrawing the B61s from Europe, even as a unilateral move. Given the evolution of European security in the past decade, Norway now holds the NATO consensus view that such a withdrawal should come as a result of negotiations with – and lead to reciprocal action by – Russia; despite the prospect of this being dim.

A German decision to end its participation in technical nuclear sharing would not directly jeopardize allied security but would likely lead to a highly divisive debate. It could trigger a similar move by the Netherlands and potentially Belgium and Italy. This would leave no allied DCA in northern Europe and would likely increase the pressure from allies in the east to move the B61s, for example to Poland; a view that may gain traction in the United States, particularly if the present administration stays in office. (Norway would probably oppose moving the B61s to Poland, as presumably would Germany.) Given that the main significance of nuclear sharing is political rather than military, a unilateral German decision would thus weaken solidarity and political unity in NATO and therefore harm European security. I thus presume that Norway would prefer Germany not to rock the boat through unilateral decisions, but rather maintain a DCA capability until such time that negotiations with Russia are possible.

POLAND

**Justyna Gotkowska, Program Coordinator,
Regional Security Programme, Centre for Eastern
Studies (OSW)**

How does your government view the importance of nuclear deterrence and NATO's nuclear sharing agreement for its own security and European security?

Nuclear deterrence, together with conventional deterrence, is perceived by Poland as a key element of NATO's policy. This is valid especially after Russian annexation of Crimea and intervention in eastern Ukraine. But even before, Poland was aware of the importance of NATO's nuclear deterrence due to Russia signaling its readiness to use nuclear weapons in the Zapad military exercises (in 2009 against Poland and in 2013 against Sweden). The nuclear sharing program, together with the US conventional military presence in Europe, are seen as a key US commitment to European security, and constitute the foundation of Poland's security. Since 2014 Polish F-16s have escorted allied DCA in NATO's nuclear exercises.

Poland's National Security Strategy published in May 2020 points to "an increased likelihood of tactical nuclear weapons being used in a classical military operation." According to the Strategy Poland aims to "participate actively in shaping the policy of nuclear deterrence of NATO."

In the view of your government: What difference does Germany's participation in nuclear sharing make? (Why) is Germany important in nuclear sharing?

Germany is the largest European ally. Its participation in the nuclear sharing program backs the credibility of NATO's nuclear deterrence and shows the strength of the US-European military alliance. Berlin's withdrawal from the program, together with the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from Germany, would be perceived by Russia as a sign of a serious US-European disengagement, and would decrease the credibility of both nuclear and conventional deterrence in Europe, especially on NATO's eastern flank.

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway (2018), Review of the consequences for Norway of ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, retrieved on June 13, 2020 from https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/review_tpnw/id2614520/.

What would be the plausible/probable effects within NATO and for European security, if Germany were to leave nuclear sharing?

A German withdrawal from the nuclear sharing program would have a shock effect in NATO. On the one hand, it might lead to similar reactions from other allies participating in the arrangements, such as Belgium or the Netherlands. Under certain circumstances it might end the nuclear sharing program altogether, leading to a decreased level of deterrence in Europe.

On the other hand, it would open a discussion about a reform of nuclear sharing. This will put eastern-flank countries under pressure. Poland will see the need to preserve the arrangements by, for example, including new allies in the program and/or discussing the need to change NATO's nuclear posture in Europe in order to adjust it to the challenge of the dual-capable land-based missile system deployed by Russia, that was the reason for the termination of the INF Treaty. This might lead to deepening intra-European and US-European rifts, and decrease the cohesion of NATO. The eastern flank will feel an increased exposure to the possibility of Russia "testing" the weakened solidarity among the allies.

UNITED KINGDOM

Prof. Malcolm Chalmers, Deputy Director-General, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)

Tom Plant, Director of Proliferation and Nuclear Policy Programme, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)

How does your government view the importance of nuclear deterrence and NATO's nuclear sharing agreement for its own security and European security?

Nuclear deterrence is seen as being the cornerstone of UK and European security. The UK's own nuclear deterrent is central to this, dedicated to NATO but also the ultimate guarantor of national security. NATO's role as a nuclear alliance is central to its ability to deter nuclear-armed adversaries, most of all (at present) Russia. The government is comfortable with both of these, and would strongly oppose any suggestion that NATO should no longer be a nuclear alliance.

In the view of your government: What difference does Germany's participation in nuclear sharing make? (Why) is Germany important in nuclear sharing?

This is not a matter to which senior policy makers give much thought. Insofar as some thought is given, the DCA capability is seen to be a primarily symbolic one, reassuring the US that the DCA states are committed to nuclear deterrence. There are no doubt nuclear planners who worry about capability gaps in some scenarios where dual-key DCA no longer available in Germany. There is probably some interest at technical levels on whether new low-yield US SLBM (submarine-launched ballistic missile) warheads replace DCA B61 capabilities, and/or whether future air-based nuclear capabilities need to be missile-launched to be credible, given Russian air defenses. But the primary lens through which this is viewed is symbolic. The question is not about why Germany and DCA, therefore, but about why not. There is a bias in favor of the status quo.

What would be the plausible/probable effects within NATO and for European security, if Germany were to leave nuclear sharing?

The likely UK reaction would firstly be to try to understand why Germany wanted to do this, and in particular whether it was part of a wider rejection of nuclear deterrence. If it was, this would be very serious and would lead to escalation of the engagement to a very senior level. Assuming it was not, the UK would likely want to help to find ways that Germany could reassure its allies – especially the US but also the UK – that it was taking other steps to provide this reassurance, and in the meantime get reassurance that the process would take some time to carry out. These measures could include more US DCA deployments into Germany and/or more German conventional spending or commitments, and/or German commitment to supporting the DCA of other allies. Provided Germany made it clear that it wanted to reassure, the UK instinct would be to try to avoid this becoming a threat to Alliance cohesion, and try to kick the issue into the long grass in a NATO committee. It would not want to encourage the US to generate a big public row, although probably would not be able to do much to stop this under this administration.

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