



CENTRUM STOSUNKÓW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH  
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

# REPORTS AND ANALYSES

**Getting to Nuclear Zero:**

**Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe as Starting Point**

Jana Perná

Report prepared in cooperation with Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Poland



Konrad  
Adenauer  
Stiftung

## **Getting to Nuclear Zero: Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe as Starting Point**

Jana Perná<sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction**

The year 2010 brought many changes into international politics of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Joint American and Russian signatures on refreshed START treaty, successful consensus over final document of NPT review conference, and rising political support for ongoing reduction talks, all this and many others prepared unprecedented and excellent preconditions for further strengthening of international nuclear non-proliferation regime. Moreover, it was not only strategic talks, but also fate of non-strategic nuclear weapons, mostly of those which are deployed on European soil, what overwhelmed all following non-proliferation initiatives, politically as well as publicly.

Eventually, traditional problem of verification and transparency over numbers of tactical nuclear weapons has appeared in the direct vision of many political leaders. Firstly Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Norway announced that they will demand that the United States remove the weapons from Europe. Similarly, in early February, the Polish and Swedish foreign ministers urged both the United States and Russia to reduce the number of their non-strategic nuclear weapons allocated among their European allies or nearby European borders. Consequently, questions about strategic concept of nuclear deterrence as well as future of transatlantic nuclear sharing are emerging.

---

<sup>1</sup> Studied International Relations and Sociology at Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University. In 2010 she completed her Master's degree programme in International Relations, which finalised her long-term research on topic of nuclear arms control with special focus on international non-proliferation regimes. Among others she concentrates on issues of international security, conflict resolution and nuclear weapons. Her latest research work on transatlantic security and NATO's strategic concepts was proceeded in cooperation with Centre for International Relations, Warsaw

Anyway, this analysis aspires to set forth basic facts about US nuclear presence in Europe and their further bedding into the broader context of international nuclear non-proliferation trends. Its main purpose is to help the reader to understand that ongoing US nuclear presence in Europe is virtually obsolete, and that traditional nuclear sharing is nowadays more constraining than enabling. To ease reader's understanding of the problem, in the very first part of the text, paper will bring general lay out of the situation of non-strategic nuclear weapons, strategically as well as politically. Afterwards, main argument will follow, developed in chapters Two and Three. Finally, an example of Poland will be used to support all assumptions introduced before. In other words, this paper will try to show, that there is no more conceptual and strategic space for support of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and that the withdrawal is not only possible, but also politically even beneficial.

## **1. Broader Context of the Debate**

During the Cold War both United States and Soviet Union deployed estimable numbers and kinds of nuclear weapons to militarily back up their own policies on the field of mutual and international ideological clash. Within very first three decades of the open nuclear arms race they managed to cover all possible means of delivery – terrestrial, water, and aerial; they were able to aim their targets from any possible distances – no matter whether short, medium or long-range; and eventually they developed matching doctrines for the potential employment of their steady nuclear arsenals. Once they reached strategic parity, being a step closer to worldwide outburst of nuclear war, both parties, facing new unprecedented security and budgetary problems, decided rather to lock their nukes into save closet.

Several treaties concerning nuclear stockpiles were signed. However, negotiated limits were never applied to non-strategic part of States' nuclear arsenals, even though there were more than 10 000 of such arms deployed within the context of the

Cold War<sup>2</sup>. Despite the numbers, so called “tactical” (sometimes also “theatre”) nuclear weapons (TNWs) had traditionally enjoyed hardly any accentuated political attention. It was mostly because of their role, which „is not to cripple the economy, population and strategic nuclear capability of an opponent, but to thwart its large scale military operations.“ (Evans – Kawaguchi 2009: 18) This primary distinctive feature of TNWs<sup>3</sup> actually determines their use of conventional platforms, launchers and delivery vehicles (ibid.: 17), which makes them rather of „traditional“ military utility value. Thus, in contrast to strategic weaponry, they were not subdued to any arms control bargaining or negotiation. The only exception was US and Soviet/Russian unilateral initiative in early 1990s, when both state leaders committed themselves to pull all deployed tactical nuclear warheads back to home-based storages.

Unfortunately, announced withdrawals ultimately never fully met originally promised reality. Hence, it is estimated that at least 2 000 tactical kinds of weapons are still dislocated on the soils of two former rivals and their allies, and next thousands may be stored in “ready to be redeployed” state<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, given numbers may be factually too far to be final ones. Some sources eventually expect only Russian Federation herself to be handling from those 2 000 up to 6 000 TNWs in her own arsenal<sup>5</sup>. Due to generally recognized lack of any concrete agreement over credible systems of verification, now we can only speculate how many of tactical nuclear facilities the States have in their possession.

But it is not only numbers what stipulates the debate, question about factual utility of such weapons emerges, and so regionally as well as globally. Both possessors are enquired for their military systems, which they deployed, conditioned and legitimized

---

2 It is estimated that during the Cold War NATO deployed just about 7 000 TNWs, and Warsaw Pact approximately 10 000 TNWs. (Evans – Kawaguchi 2009: 18).

3 Though there is no single agreed and widely recognizable definition of non-strategic, tactical nuclear weapons, generally they are characterized by lower yield and shorter range of distance than strategic ones. Their commonly understood utility is then referred to a battlefield nuclear weapons.

4 For more see Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy's *'Tactical' Nuclear Weapons: A dangerous anachronism*.

5 As example that all numbers are very rough and differing estimates see (Millar 2002), or (Sokov 2002). The fact, that there is no evident link between year and estimated numbers compare (Woolf 2011: Summary).

by political settings of the Cold War. What is their very need for keeping old arrangements which seems to be completely misleading within contemporary rapidly changing security environment? Dealing with political and military situation in Europe, the question is even more appealing. The presence of US TNWs on European soil has always faced large-scale critique from many non-governmental, public opponents, however, previous year initiatives showed, that this is the very first time when public opinion has hit the ground of high security politics.

Ongoing reliance on non-strategic nuclear means serves no more credible purpose, since NATO's nuclear posture has changed, what is more, when original potential targets have vanished. „During the Cold War, the basing of US nuclear weapons in Europe – known as 'nuclear sharing' – symbolized the US strategic commitment to Europe and was considered essential to the West's deterrent posture. The continued presence of US nuclear weapons in Europe, now reduced to a rump – 200 or so 'dumb' US nuclear bombs stored in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Turkey – is of questionable value.“ (Cornish 2010: 228) Provision of confidential deterrent against USSR used to be one of the two main purposes for transatlantic nuclear sharing, but this cause is no more relevant for current security environment.

Furthermore, keeping Americans engaged in European security, the second cause, may prove itself to be rather nuisance since the Alliance constantly and in the long term pursues a strengthening of international non-proliferation regime. Controversy behind the nuclear sharing is as old as formation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and it is open truth that US nuclear presence on European soil is its clear violation. Signing parties to the Treaty has committed themselves „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.“ (NPT, Article I) Furthermore, „[e]ach 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.“ (NPT, Article II). Eventually, it also constrains broader

agreement with Russian Federation over the general security arrangement, and that not only in Europe.

Moreover, it is not only military, political or diplomatic dimensions of the analysis of US nuclear forces in Europe what we should pay attention to. Nuclear sharing has shown itself to be problematic even from the conceptional point of view. Every debate about nuclear arsenals is unavoidably also an issue of what is among politicians and scholars universally called as „nuclear taboo“, generally recognized and very often repeated issue of use or even threat to use nuclear arsenals as means of any kind of warfare. From this point of view, nuclear arms stored in European vaults are actually of no use, since majority of Europeans call for rapid reductions and see no will to engage nuclear warheads or bombs even when facing their security being jeopardized. European calls for reductions only encourage assumption that in Europe nuclear deterrence lost its momentum and is becoming less and less credible. It seems, that within the concept of extended deterrence, discussed category of weapons has lately served rather symbolic purposes than actual role of military threat. All this could eventually in principle explain all the positive commotion around President Barack Obama's commitment to “world free of nuclear weapons” and rapid start up of withdrawal debate.

## **2. Steady Decline and Future Definition of Nuclear Deterrence**

Allocation of TNWs among some European allies has been always justified by conditions of Cold War block confrontation, however, relatively quick change in security environment at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was followed by rather slow change in strategic thinking of military and political leaders on either sides. Moreover, despite the range of pacifist movements and universal commotion over US TNWs in Europe, NATO's strategic concept remained for long time rather consistent. US nuclear forces were traditionally considered to be essential political and military link between United States and her allies in Europe, and their maintenance was therefore never questioned. Thus, at the beginning of nineties, at the same time when US and

Russian/Soviet representatives were announcing their will to withdraw TNWs from their foreign locations (including European bases), signatories of transatlantic Treaty came with their own proclamation that “the presence of North American conventional and US nuclear forces in Europe remains vital to the security of Europe.” (NATO's Strategic Concept 1991) The very same was repeated by Europeans in 1999 and remained the core content of NATO's strategic conception and transatlantic cooperation up till now.

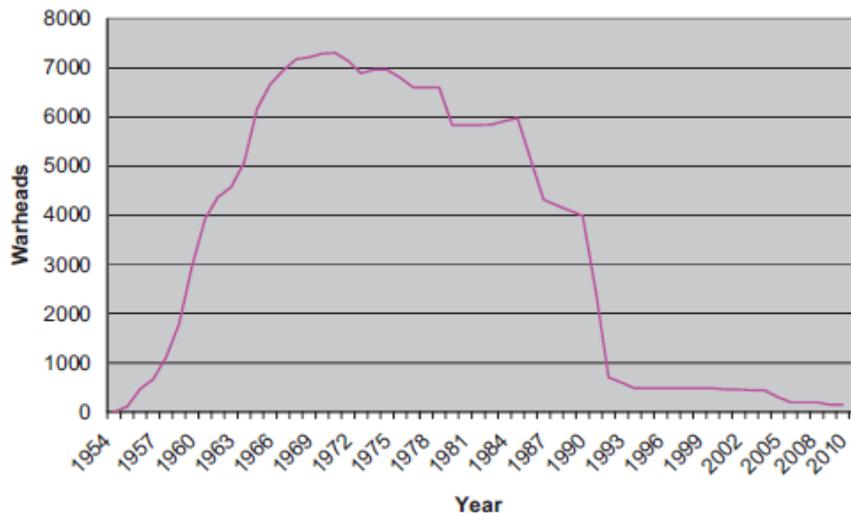
Recently, however, the Alliance itself has started to change its general approach, and it is not only transformation of the debate and its shift from non-governmental to governmental level. There are broadly recognizable two main tendencies, which were actually projected into corresponding official documents. First one reflects overall change in European deterrence policy. Second one applies to means of deterrence. In other words, based on numerical evidence we can assume that the military importance of nuclear weapons and their role in potentially fighting a military conflict has rapidly decreased, or let us say even vanished. That further reliance on non-strategic nuclear forces expressed in 1991 and 1999 NATO Strategic Concepts was more likely symbolic or political reflection than military one. And next, proved by language of official documents giving increasing prominence to political as well as symbolic roles of nuclear weapons, TNWs are slowly losing to another bonding means of transatlantic cooperation.

## 2.1. Change in Numbers

Generally said, in 1991 NATO's whole defence and deterrence was based on reduced nuclear forces, whereas in 1999 the same shared nuclear forces were supposed to be alone maintained at the minimum level, yet sufficient to preserve peace and stability. Furthermore, this latter mentioned approach was reaffirmed in 2010 summit and possibly went even further, when members came to conclusion that NATO should carry on its security all along at the lowest possible level of its forces. (NATO's Strategic Concept 2010) The Concept further develops what was said in the 1999 Concept on arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation, while taking into account the recent thrust from the US and elsewhere on reducing nuclear-weapons stockpiles.

Numbers are showing that except for the first two decades of the Cold War nuclear arms race, there was firstly gradual, and then steady decline. From the very first deployment of non-strategic nuclear means in Europe in 1954, when several gravity bombs arrived to bases in Great Britain, to further spread of US TNWs among other European allies, it was on its peak in as far as 1971. At that time there were altogether about 7 300 of such nuclear weapons located in Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Greece and Turkey. However, starting from policy of détente, Europe entered into rapid withdrawals. Such trend is very visible in the graphic representation summarized in Figure 1, when from thousands of warheads at the beginning of eighties and/or nineties estimated numbers fell rapidly down to hundreds in the middle of the same decade, keeping steady level throughout several years and then again falling down through years 2005 and 2008.

**Figure 1: US nuclear weapons in Europe** (source: Norris – Kristensen 2011: 65)

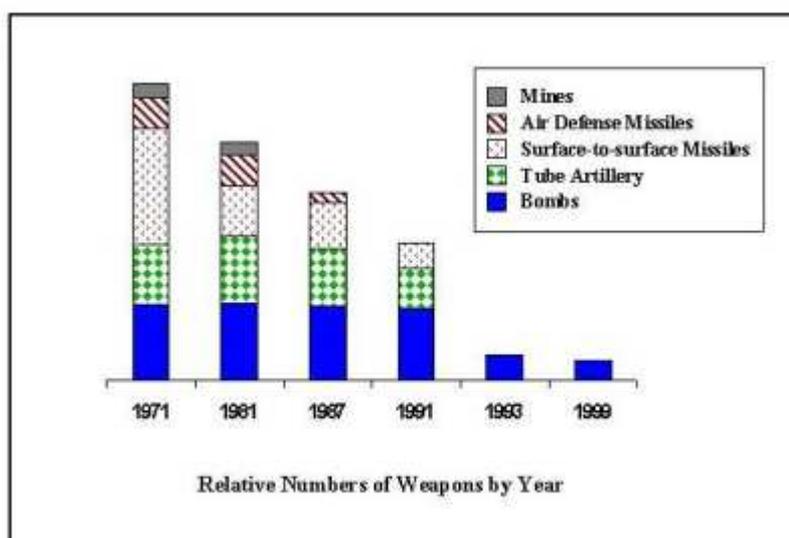


Beside the dynamics in US nuclear non-strategic weapons reductions in Europe, transformation of nuclear systems deployed in Europe may be also very interesting. In 1971 total of 11 nuclear systems were present in European vaults<sup>6</sup>. To the first reductions it came not earlier than throughout eighties, however, this was rather insignificant since there were steadily 9 different nuclear systems always deployed. As far as implementation of 1991 Presidential Nuclear Initiative by the end of 1993 resulted into really rapid transformation of US tactical nuclear forces in Europe. After the President George W. H. Bush's initiative from 27<sup>th</sup> September 1991 only 700 gravity bombs and aircraft were left dislocated in Europe, more precisely dual capable aircraft bombs. (see Figure 2) In 1994 it was cut one third and remained the same for the rest of the decade. In 2008 there were supposed to be between 150-240 tactical nuclear bombs as well as aircraft present in Europe and this seems to stay unchanged up till now<sup>7</sup>. Overall numerical status of TNWs in Europe overviews Table 1.

6 Namely nuclear mines, Nike Hercules SAM, Honest John SSM, Lance SSM, Sergeant SSM, Pershing IA, 155mm Howitzer, 8-inch Howitzer, Walleye ASM, ASW Depth Bombs and DCA Bombs. (MIPT 2004: 35).

7 More about numbers and history of TNWs in Europe see (Kristensen 2005: 24-36) or (Bulletin of Atomic Scientists May/June 2004).

**Figure 2: Reduction of NATO's nuclear stockpile** (source: MIPT 2004: 35)



**Table 1: Status of TNWs in Europe<sup>8</sup>**

	1975	1985	1992	1998	2005	2007	2008	2010	2011
Belgium	40	25	10	10	20	20	20	20	20
Germany	5116	3396	325	45	110	20	20	20	20
Italy	439	49	150	30	90	90	90	90	70
Netherlands	96	81	10	10	20	20	20	20	20
Turkey	467	489	150	15	90	90	90	50	70
UK	1018	1268	300	30	110	110	0	0	0
Greece	232	164	25	10	0	0	0	0	0
Spain	512	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7920</b>	<b>5472</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>

\*source: numbers from 1975 to 1998 see (Arkin – Norris – Handler 1998: 16).

\*\*source: (Kristensen 2005: 9).

\*\*\*source: (Kristensen 2007).

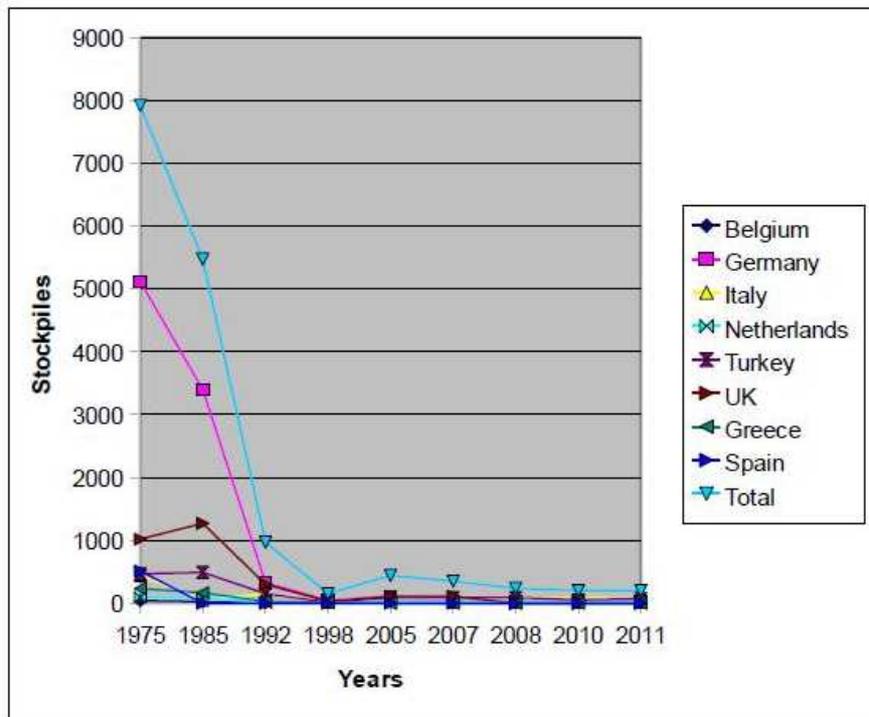
<sup>8</sup>source: (Kristensen 2008).

<sup>9</sup>source: (Kristensen 2010).

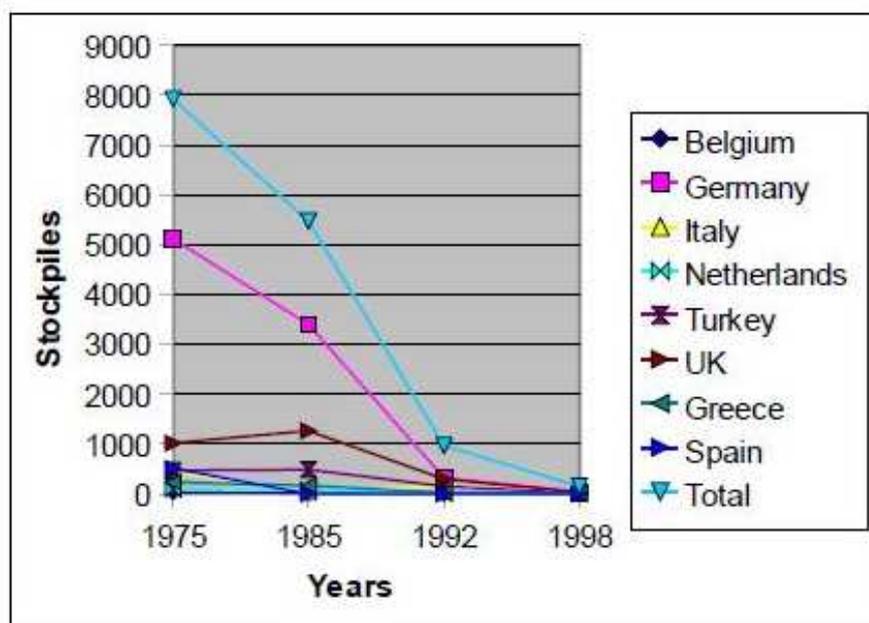
<sup>10</sup>source: (Norris – Kristensen 2011: 66-67).

8 Final numbers were taken from two different sources, thus between years 1998 and 2005 there may be some numerical discrepancies. For further comparison see graphic reflection in Figure 4 and Figure 5 which treat both sources separately.

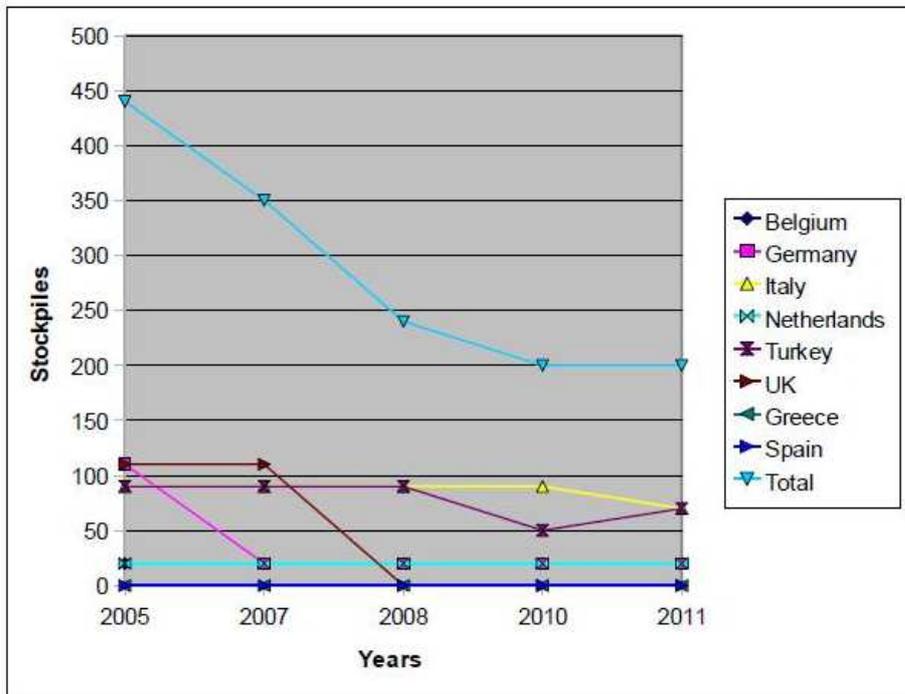
**Figure 3: Status of TNWs in Europe**



**Figure 4: Status of TNWs in Europe 1975-1998**



**Figure 5: Status of TNWs in Europe 2005-2011**



As we can see, although NATO's strategic concepts introduced in nineties expected strong reliance on nuclear arsenal, this had no influence on given amount of stockpiles deployed in Europe. Despite the rhetoric of the Alliance, submitted numbers tell us rather opposite, that actual reliance on TNWs corresponds more with stable trend of numeric decline. Moreover, adding political statements of 2009 and 2010 both in the United States and Europe, as well as slight linguistic shift from "minimal" to "lowest possible", this may be understood as promising political basis for next withdrawals.

Anyway, as a matter of fact, provable rapid decline is not only outfall of changing relationship between the United States and Soviet Union/Russian Federation and political climate of détente. And it is not primarily American initiative and her decision to decrease numbers of her nuclear forces, foremost those kinds of forces which have seemingly easy solution and which appear to have emptied their utility. Actually, we are talking here about change in NATO's policy. To be more specific, decline in

numbers is not just cause of strategic settings, but it goes much deeper, and so into level of thinking about nuclear weapons as such, defined in Nuclear Posture documents. Because Washington has committed itself to discuss American nuclear policy with European allies<sup>9</sup>, it is not exclusive right of the United States to deal with her TNWs based in Europe. Moreover, all decisions on the Alliance's nuclear policy are taken on the ground of the Nuclear Planning Group, which keeps them under constant review, modifies them and/or adapts them in accordance with all new developments. Hence, constant decline of US non-strategic nuclear forces relocated in Europe cannot be ever studied without taking into account also concrete context of NATO's strategic thinking.

## 2.2. Change in Nuclear Posture

Last NATO's summit has shown that its deterrence capability is no more necessarily linked and defined by presence of US nuclear forces on European soil. Though security of Europe is still seen as inseparable from that of North America, change in European thinking is undeniable. First, in accordance with newly appeared initiatives, spoken by Ruud Lubbers, Max van der Stoep, Hans van Mierlo, and Frits Korthals Altes, „a nuclear arsenal to restrain superpowers is no longer needed. In combating terrorism, deterrence with weapons of mass destruction has no purpose. Let us be clear: not only did nuclear weapons give shape to the Cold War, the Cold War also shaped the control of nuclear weapons; and that security has definitely come to an end. This is the main reason why the existence of nuclear weapons has become 'much more dangerous than before.'" (The Dutch Group of Four, in 212 DSCFC 10 E rev 1) This and other similar statements of newly formed movement within the Alliance<sup>10</sup> question the whole strategic legacy standing behind the nuclear sharing and signalize, that the military role of nuclear weapons has generally scaled down.

---

9 See US Nuclear Posture Reviews.

10 So called „Gangs of Four“, firstly initiated by US group of four prominent politicians, by former US Secretaries of State George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, former Defence Secretary William Perry and former Senator Sam Nunn, and followed by rise of groupings of similarly distinguished former officials in the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and Poland.

Deployment of nuclear weapons among European allies is seen as relic of the Cold War. Not only that they have proved to be useless during the fight against terrorism and as deterrent of non-conventional threats, but also the rationale behind their deployment as such has already expired. „Today, the Euro-Atlantic area is at peace and the threat of a [massive] conventional attack against NATO territory is low.“ (NATO's Strategic Concept 2010) Therefore, it is high time to either redefine role of such forces, or simply pull them out of European continent. Under the current state, when „physical location of the weapons has no impact on their credibility as a deterrent and that a unilateral withdrawal would have 'no military downside“ (EUCOM, in: 212 DSCFC 10 E rev 1) all their technical maintenance seems to be just a waste of personal and monetary resources. Not even saying, that a 2008 high-level US Air Force panel determined that most sites used for deploying nuclear weapons in Europe did not meet the Department of Defense's security requirements<sup>11</sup>. The Panel's final report mentions for example inadequate fencing and security systems, staffing shortages, and inadequately trained security personnel. The situation is even more alarming since critique has traditionally targeted potential misuse of smaller and less secured tactical nuclear means by unauthorized persons or terrorist groups, though the security systems used to be in better shape.

To sum up, „[s]trategically, the weapons have little real value in the post-Cold War climate. They are vulnerable to a rogue or terrorist attack, too small or risky for independent military use, and unpopular with military forces and most political audiences.“ (Kelleher – Warren 2009) Consequently, hesitation to withdraw TNWs arises more likely from a political debate than from strategic reasons, since considered dual-capable nuclear bombs have no more original military value and brings range of technical and security complications.

Second, for the upcoming future, reliance on strategic nuclear forces is preferred to non-strategic ones. In accordance with official NATO documents, “the supreme

---

11 For more see *Report of the Secretary of Defense Task Force on DoD Nuclear Weapons Management*.

guarantee of the security of the Allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States; the independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France, which have a deterrent role of their own, contribute to the overall deterrence and security of the Allies.” (NATO's Strategic Concept 2010) It is not a promise of heading towards global nuclear zero, since „deterrence, based on an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities, remains a core element of overall strategy” (ibid.), it is rather a signal, that member states are turning away from traditional European reliance on US nuclear presence in Europe to other means of nuclear deterrence which do not necessarily have to be located on European soil.

Third, very expected US 2010 Nuclear Posture Review could be seen as another advanced signal of future decline in reliance on tactical nuclear systems. Not even that the United States would like to add TNWs on the list of contents of any future reduction arrangement with Russia (US 2010 NPR: 24), but into the future a regional security architecture should be based increasingly on non-nuclear elements, including a forward US conventional presence and effective theatre ballistic missile defences. (ibid.: 19) Submitted plan to completely retire nuclear-equipped sea-launched cruise missile (TLAM-N) (ibid.: 28) and to reduce American nuclear forces in Europe with leaving based only F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, capable to deliver both conventional and nuclear weapons, is one of the first steps towards new regional security arrangements, when nuclear deterrence will be slowly substituted by non-nuclear one.

Furthermore, NATO has recently bind itself to ensure possessing of full range of capabilities necessary to deter and defend against threats, thus beside an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional forces very range of non-nuclear alternatives is accentuated. Among others it is the system of early interceptions and warning; the development and maintenance of robust, mobile and deployable conventional forces; the collective burden sharing; necessary trainings, exercises, planning and information exchange; and the development of credible missile shield.

Eventually, capability to defend populations and territories against ballistic missile attack is considered to be core element of the Alliance's collective defence<sup>12</sup>.

### **3. Extended Deterrence: Political Anachronism or Necessity?**

Here, it is necessary to take into account fact, that any American nuclear presence in Europe has been always understood as political one, and the same goes for actual fundamental purpose of the nuclear forces of the Alliance. Although NATO's latest strategic concept does not stress that fact as strongly as previous ones<sup>13</sup>, still, bonds between Europe and North America are seen as core principles of the Alliance, accenting their historical background. Long-run research on transatlantic trends shows that support for NATO in the United States as well as in Europe remains high for more than decade and the situation did not rapidly change either during the complicated political situation around war in Iraq and/or US campaign against terrorism. (See Figure 6 and Figure 7)

In the long term steady majority of respondents from both sides of the Atlantic sees NATO as essential for their country's security. Consequently „the key question facing the United States and Europe for many observers is not whether transatlantic relations are warm but whether the United States and Europe can constructively face global problems together.“ (Transatlantic Trends 2005: 16) But even finding a way to mutual ability to cooperate does not seem to be problem for either Europeans or Americans. Figure 6 further supports the very idea that transatlantic ties are very strong, no matter whether there is difference in political views or not. After all, these bonds “have been forged in NATO since the Alliance was founded in 1949; the transatlantic link remains as strong, and as important to the preservation of Euro-Atlantic peace and security, as ever. The security of NATO members on both sides of

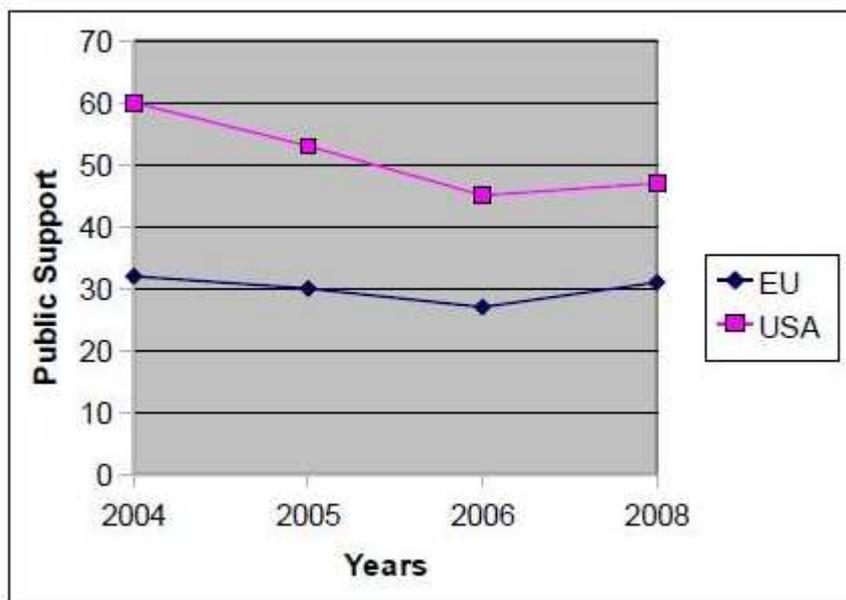
---

12 More about new methods of deterrence see (NATO's Strategic Concept 2010).

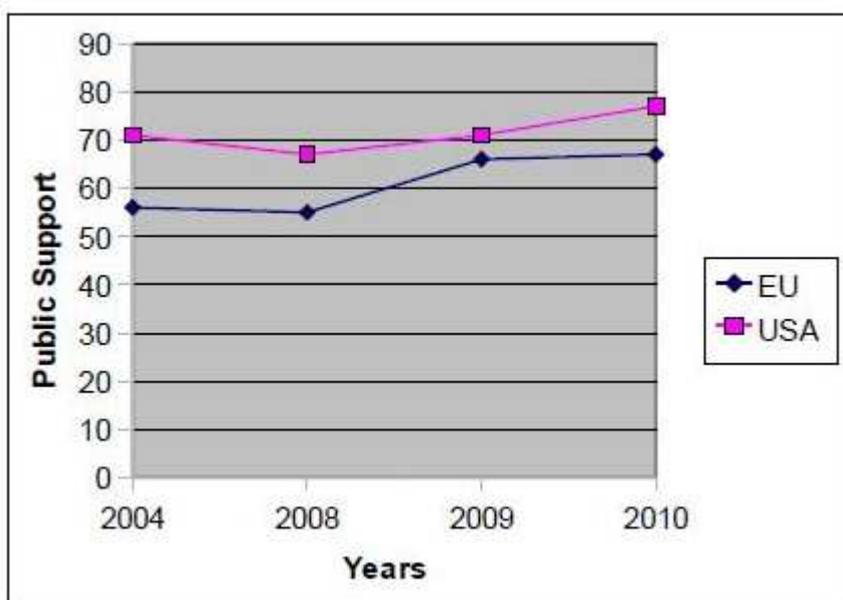
13 Explicitly expressed in 1991 and 1999 Strategic Concepts as “Nuclear forces based in Europe and committed to NATO provide an essential political and military link between the European and the North American members of the Alliance. The Alliance will therefore maintain adequate nuclear forces in Europe.”

the Atlantic is indivisible.” (NATO’s Strategic Concept 2010: Core Tasks and Principles, Article 3) Eventually, it is not presence of US nuclear arms in European vaults what makes essence of transatlantic bonds.

**Figure 6: Closer transatlantic ties** (source: Transatlantic trends 2008: 15)



**Figure 7: Ability to cooperate** (source: Transatlantic trends 2010: 35)



Anyway, because American nuclear presence in Europe was universally regarded as main bonding compound of transatlantic military and political cooperation, and that not only by allies themselves, questions about any de facto withdrawals of TNWs from European continent invoked doubts about future character of that cooperation. Latest Alliance's official strategic document does not present any kind of evidence about such cause of crisis among allies, however, some space for speculations is actually left. Especially if it is open truth that some members joined transatlantic system of collective defence primarily because of promised American nuclear shield, not because of fulfilment of the Treaty's values and political virtues. Some claims, that anxieties of those member states are eroding the Alliance's political cohesion and its solidarity, especially in that time, when some are consequently seeking bilateral security assurances from Washington in the form of US bases on their territory<sup>14</sup>. On the other hand, as it was already mentioned, any TNWs reduction talks are sensitive rather politically than militarily, moreover, transatlantic ties are not primarily based on nuclear sharing.

In this place, from the military point of view, we should put the question whether it is the guarantee of US TNWs or rather US staffed bases what binds the United States to engagement with European security. Would Washington come up to war because of several destroyed machines or rather because of harm to American citizen? In addition, expressed worries about European security go further behind the problem of nuclear sharing. Actually „[m]any in the region are looking with hope to the Obama Administration to restore the Atlantic relationship as a moral compass for their domestic as well as foreign policies“ (An Open Letter to the Obama Administration from Central and Eastern Europe) and they are expecting reconfirmation and revitalization of the Alliance's core function – collective defence expressed in Article 5 – rather than further nuclearization. „NATO needs to make the Alliance's commitments credible and provide strategic reassurance to all members“ (ibid.), but not necessarily by strengthening of its nuclear capabilities. Once again, we can see,

---

<sup>14</sup> This is mostly the case of the youngest members and those located in central and eastern Europe, however, some signals of discontent are coming also from Turkey. For more see (Valasek 2010).

that extended deterrence based on tactical nuclear bombs is not inevitable, only politically useful, or more precisely, matter of history and/or tradition.

#### **4. Joint Polish and Swedish Foreign Ministers' Initiative**

An Open Letter to the Obama Administration from Central and Eastern Europe was signed by many CEE intellectuals and former policymakers, though there was no explicit mentioning of nuclear weapons, still, internationally it is regarded as representative voice of those who „seek strategic reassurance from the weapons' physical presence in Europe.” (212 DSCFC 10 E rev 1) However, joint initiative of Polish and Swedish Foreign Ministers in early February 2010 makes the agenda of US nuclear umbrella bit more complicated, at least while speaking about Poland.

Among other Eastern members, Poland has been traditionally one of the strongest supporters of a nuclear status of the Alliance, nevertheless, it was head of Polish foreign service who designated nuclear weapons generally and TNWs specially as a dangerous remnants of a dangerous past, and so as a clear threat to the states like Poland. Together with Carl Bildt, Radek Sikorski expressed worries of his country about future direction of European as well as transatlantic nuclear policy in the New York Times' article titled *Next, the Tactical Nukes*. In accordance with many others, he concluded that „[i]t makes no sense for either country to spend billions on nuclear systems of such radically diminishing strategic utility“ (Bildt – Sikorski 2010) and urged both Washington and Kremlin to reduce the number of tactical weapons in Europe as a precondition for lessening of mutual tension between the United States and Russian Federation. Here we should mention, that the whole initiative was not about specific interest of specific countries, but foremost about the region in which Poland is situated.

„Most of the active sub-strategic nuclear weapons in the world today seem to be deployed in Europe in theoretical preparation for conflict in our part of the world,“ say Sikorski and Bildt. Their allocation does not actually serve to greater safety of any

state but as a reminder of a situation of mutual confrontation and distrust. „The need for deterrence against rogue nations could amply be fulfilled with existing U.S. and Russian strategic assets“ (ibid.), tactical means were designed for different type of conflict, targets and area. Simply said, non-strategic forces are no more relevant for current state of affairs, they poison mutual relations of cooperation and confidence, and run for those whom they should have originally protected a bigger security risk.

Anyway, if we look at the issue of Polish and Swedish initiative from the broader point of view, we can actually see what has been already mentioned about NATO's nuclear posture. Both Foreign Ministers, while openly claiming own opinions and position of their countries, summarized the whole shift within transatlantic security thinking. TNWs are described as means with expired military value, as means which bring more complications than positives, and as means which should be substituted and/or alternated potentially by strategic nuclear forces. To sum up, arose question marks about anxieties of some member states and menace of pursuance of own nuclear arsenal does not appeal directly to the problem of extended deterrence, but it has much more common with the inefficient fulfilment of the Article 5. Poland may serve as the best example of this ambiguity. Her voice sounds on both sides of the debate, while having representatives among those who signed Open Letter to the Obama Administration she has also own exponents among those who ask for rapid reductions.

## Conclusion

The years 2009 and 2010 appeared to be one of the most important turning point within the debate about sub-strategic nuclear forces ever. It was the very first time since the end of the Cold War when the issue of publicly unpopular tactical nuclear arsenals got into the broader political awareness. Though there are as many proponents of denuclearization as its opponents, still from the strategic and political point of view it seems that current settings play rather up to the first ones.

It is hard to say when exactly the situation has changed, but from the estimated numbers we can assume that the question of NATO's nuclear sharing is just a matter of policy and tradition, not inevitably security necessity. Moreover, traditional argument about TNWs as fundamental to the Alliance's solidarity proved to be misleading too since the people from the both sides of the Atlantic see the essence of transatlantic cooperation rather in a different fields. Also the argument about anxiety of Eastern member states showed to be misguided, since worries coming from the Central Eastern European countries were usually understood as a lack of nuclear guarantees. However, initiative from the mid of 2009 and later open claims from Polish and Swedish Foreign Ministers may serve as evidence of such misinterpretation.

Anyway, from the strategic point of view a rationale behind US nuclear presence in Europe actually expired, hence, based on analysis of NATO's and US strategic documents as well as general conditions of current state of affairs, the only constrain to broader reduction talks is generally said lack of political will. Conceptual climate, public opinion and current security environment provide the best momentum for strengthening of international non-proliferation regime, thus it is only up to political leaders whether they will positively exploit this momentum or whether they will let it slip away.

## References

- 212 DSCFC 10 E rev 1 – U.S. Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe: A Fundamental NATO Debate, on-line text: (<http://www.nato-pa.int/Default.asp?CAT2=0&CAT1=0&CAT0=576&SHORTCUT=2083&SEARCHWORDS=tactical,nuclear,weapons,2002,,>).
- Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy (2010): 'Tactical' Nuclear Weapons: A dangerous anachronism, on-line text: (<http://www.acronym.org.uk/npt/npt2010%20B5%20-%20Tactical%20NWs.pdf>).
- An Open Letter to the Obama Administration from Central and Eastern Europe, on-line text: ([http://zpravy.idnes.cz/dokument-otevreny-dopis-vychodoevropskych-politiku-baracku-obamovi-1kg-/zahranicni.asp?c=A090716\\_214930\\_zahranicni\\_dp](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/dokument-otevreny-dopis-vychodoevropskych-politiku-baracku-obamovi-1kg-/zahranicni.asp?c=A090716_214930_zahranicni_dp)).
- Arkin, M. - Norris, R. S. - Handler, J. (1998): *Taking Stock. Worldwide Nuclear Deployments 1998*, on-line text: (<http://www.nrdc.org/nuclear/tkstock/p1-52.pdf>).
- Bildt, C. - Sikorski, R. (2010): Next, the Tactical Nukes, *The New York Times*, on-line text: (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/02/opinion/02iht-edbildt.html>).
- Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (May/June 2004): U.S. Nuclear weapons in Europe, 1954-2004, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol.60, No. 3, pp. 68-70.
- Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (MIPT) (2004): *Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons: Problems of Control and Reduction*, on-line text: ([http://www.armscontrol.ru/pubs/en/NSNW\\_en\\_v1b.pdf](http://www.armscontrol.ru/pubs/en/NSNW_en_v1b.pdf)).
- Cornish, P. (2010): Arms control tomorrow: the challenge of nuclear weapons in the twenty-first century, in: Niblett, R. (2010): *America and a Changed World: A Question of Leadership*, Wiley-Blackwell/Chatham House, pp. 223-237.
- Evans, G. - Kawaguchi, Y. (eds., 2009): *Eliminating Nuclear Threats: A Practical Agenda For Global Policymakers*, Canberra: International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament.

- Kelleher, C. M. - Warren, S. L. (2009): *Getting to Zero Starts Here: Tactical Nuclear Weapons*, on-line text: (<http://www.armscontrol.org/print/3882>).
- Kristensen, H. M. (2005): *U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Europe*, presentation to members of the German Bundestag, February 25, on-line text: (<http://www.nukestrat.com/pubs/Eurobrief1.pdf>).
- Kristensen, H. M. (2007): *U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Europe After the Cold War*, presentation to Nuclear Proliferation: History and Current Problems, Florence, Italy, October 4-5, on-line text: ([http://www.nukestrat.com/pubs/Brief\\_Italy2007.pdf](http://www.nukestrat.com/pubs/Brief_Italy2007.pdf)).
- Kristensen, H. M. (2008): *U.S. Nuclear Weapons Withdrawn From the United Kingdom*, FAS Strategic Security Blog, on-line text: (<http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2008/06/us-nuclear-weapons-withdrawn-from-the-united-kingdom.php>).
- Kristensen, H. M. (2010): *Status of U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Europe 2010*, FAS, on-line text: (<http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/images/euronukes2010.pdf>).
- Millar, A. (2002): *The Pressing Need for Tactical Nuclear Weapons Control*, on-line text: ([http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002\\_05/millarmay02](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002_05/millarmay02)).
- *NATO Strategic Concept 1991*, on-line text: ([http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_23847.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_23847.htm)).
- *NATO Strategic Concept 1999*, on-line text: ([http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_27433.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm)).
- *NATO Strategic Concept 2010*, on-line text: (<http://www.nato.int/lisbon2010/strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf>).
- Norris, R. S. - Kristensen, H. M. (2011): US tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, 2011, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Nuclear Notebook, Vol. 67, No. 1, pp. 64-73.
- *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty*, on-line text: (<http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Magazines/Bulletin/Bull104/10403501117.pdf>).

- *Report of the Secretary of Defense Task Force on DoD Nuclear Weapons Management. Phase II: Review of the DoD Nuclear Mission*, December 2008, on-line text: (<http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/PhaseIIReportFinal.pdf>).
- *Transatlantic Trends, Key Findings 2005*, on-line text: (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/37566817/Transatlantic-Trends-2005>).
- *Transatlantic Trends, Key Findings 2008*, on-line text: ([http://www.gmfus.org/trends/doc/2008\\_english\\_top.pdf](http://www.gmfus.org/trends/doc/2008_english_top.pdf)).
- *Transatlantic Trends, Key Findings 2010*, on-line text: ([http://www.gmfus.org/trends/doc/2010\\_English\\_Top.pdf](http://www.gmfus.org/trends/doc/2010_English_Top.pdf)).
- Sokov, N. (2002): *Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNW)*, on-line text: ([http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/e3\\_10a.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/e3_10a.html)).
- *US Nuclear Posture Review Report*, April 2010, on-line text: (<http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/2010%20nuclear%20posture%20review%20report.pdf>).
- Valasek, T. (2010): *What should NATO's new strategic concept say about Russia?*, on-line text: (<http://centreforeuropeanreform.blogspot.com/2010/03/what-should-natos-new-strategic-concept.html>).
- Woolf, A. F. (2011): *Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons*, on-line text: (<http://www.fas.org/sqp/crs/nuke/RL32572.pdf>).

### **Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation**

The Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation is a political foundation related to the Christian Democratic Party. Having emerged from the 'Society for Christian Democratic Education Work' founded in 1956, it was named after the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic in 1964. Inspired by Adenauer's work and his principles, our main aim is to promote, at home and abroad, civil educational programs in favour of freedom, liberty and peace. We focus on consolidating democracy, on the unification of Europe and the strengthening of transatlantic relations, as well as on development cooperation. The Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation is working all over the world: Our offices abroad are in charge of more than 200 projects in more than 120 countries.

In Poland, the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation was established on November 10th 1989 as the first political foundation two months after forming of Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government as an expression of approval of the Polish liberation movement. The work of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation in Poland focuses on the development of good relationships between Poland and Germany, the encouragement of a civil society and on the formation of a workable social and economic order.



ul. J. Dąbrowskiego 56  
02-561 Warszawa  
tel. +48 22 845-9330  
fax. +48 22 848-5437  
e-mail: [kas@kas.pl](mailto:kas@kas.pl)  
[www.kas.pl](http://www.kas.pl)

### Center for International Relations

The CIR is an independent, non-governmental think-tank, dedicated to the study of international relations and those foreign policy issues, which are of crucial importance to Poland, Europe and transatlantic relations. CIR carries out its own research projects, prepares reports and analyses and participates in international projects in cooperation with similar institutions in several countries. The center's activities are analytical and educational in character. Since it was founded in 1996, the CIR has become an influential forum for foreign policy analysis and debate, involving leading politicians, diplomats, civil servants, local government officials, businessmen, journalists, students and representatives of other NGOs.

Our goals are:

- to strengthen Polish foreign policy and to deepen the knowledge of international relations in Polish society,
- to deepen the understanding of the aims of Polish foreign policy among the political, diplomatic and journalist elites in other countries as well as to make Polish leaders aware of the foreign policy objectives of other countries.
- to influence the most important elements of the foreign policy debate in Poland and abroad

CIR's President and Founder is Ambassador Janusz Reiter.



CENTRUM STOSUNKÓW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH  
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ul. Emilii Plater 25  
00-688 WARSZAWA  
tel: (+48 22) 646 52 67, 646 52 68  
fax: (+48 22) 646 52 58  
e-mail: [info@csm.org.pl](mailto:info@csm.org.pl)  
[www.csm.org.pl](http://www.csm.org.pl)