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# CHINA'S UNDERWHELMING EFFORT TO UNDERMINE NATO'S NUCLEAR DETERRENT

BY  
WILLIAM ALBERQUE





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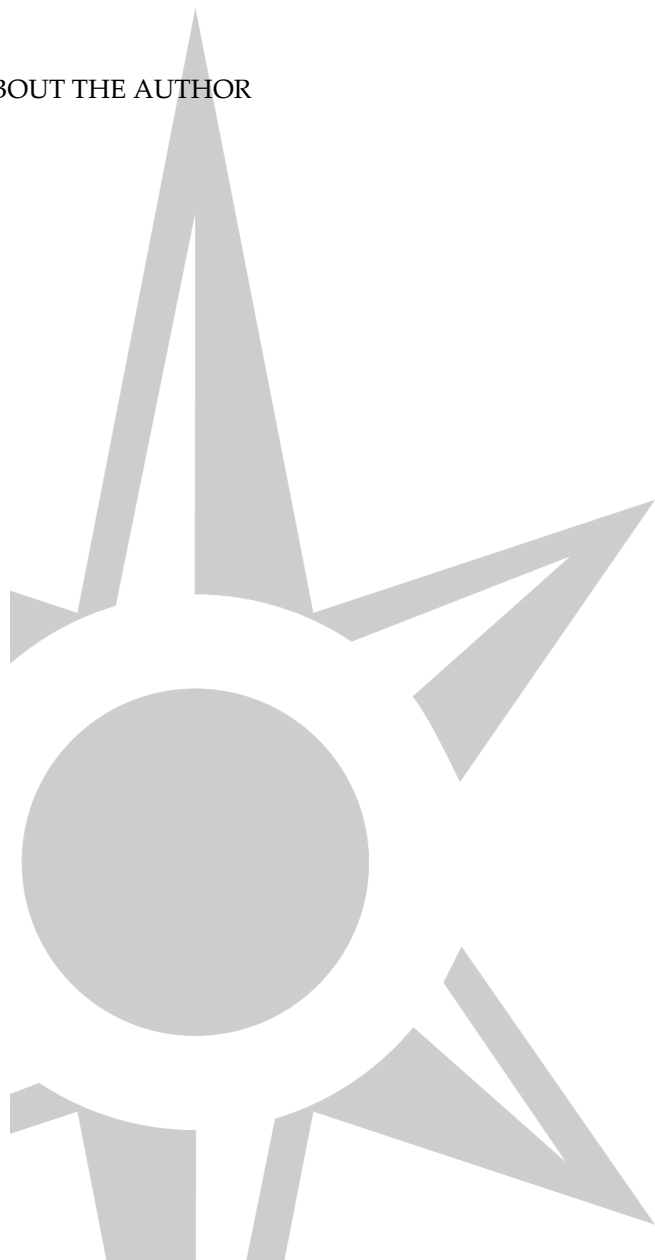
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# Executive Summary

China relies on selective narratives and arguments that have long been debunked to attack the legality of NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements in the context of the NPT. The evidence shows that NATO's arrangements were well known and extensively debated in the public sphere throughout the negotiations of the NPT—in fact, the treaty itself was worded specifically to allow these arrangements to exist. The arrangements continue to this day and continue to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and support the NPT.

China has increased its efforts to undermine NATO's nuclear deterrent as part of a broader campaign to undermine US security guarantees in the context of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) review process. China's efforts include publicizing a report titled, "Analysis of the Incompatibility of NATO's Nuclear Sharing Arrangements with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" in July 2024, accusing the United States and NATO of violating the NPT.<sup>1</sup> The China Institute of Nuclear Industry Strategy published the report on its website in July 2024<sup>2</sup> alongside an abridged version of the larger report for a Chinese journal in November 2024.<sup>3</sup>

Russia initiated its own campaign to denounce NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements in the NPT review process in 2015, breaking with its longstanding policy to refrain from such criticisms.<sup>4</sup> However, Russia abandoned this campaign after re-establishing<sup>5</sup> its own nuclear sharing arrangements in 2023 with Belarus.<sup>6</sup>

The principal problem with these attacks is that they are based on incorrect information and assumptions to deny the fact that NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements are compliant with the NPT. In 2017, the French Institute of International Relations published a report, "The NPT and the Origins of NATO's Nuclear Sharing Arrangements," that shows that NATO's arrangements were not prohibited by the Treaty based on extensive documentation from United Nations transcripts of the negotiations, national and NATO archival records, and contemporaneous press reporting.<sup>7</sup> The Chinese report, however, repeats debunked arguments from a 2000 anti-nuclear report by the Project on European Nuclear Non-Proliferation (PENN), "Questions of Command and Control: NATO, Nuclear Sharing, and the NPT," as well as its fears of US intentions to replicate these arrangements in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on July 26, 2024," Website of the General Counsel of China in Munich, July 26, 2024, [http://munich.china-consulate.gov.cn/ger/fyrth/202407/t20240726\\_11461357.htm](http://munich.china-consulate.gov.cn/ger/fyrth/202407/t20240726_11461357.htm)

<sup>2</sup> "Analysis of the Incompatibility of NATO's Nuclear Sharing Arrangements with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," China Arms Control and Disarmament Association and the China Institute of Nuclear Industry Strategy, July 2024, <https://www.cinis.com.cn/zhzhghyzy/yjbg/1446912/2024072914514738359.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> "NATO nuclear sharing challenges the authority of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," World Knowledge (in Chinese), Issue 21, Nov. 18, 2024, <https://www.cinis.com.cn/zhzhghyzy/yjbg/1619935/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> Statement by M. Uliyanov, Acting Head of the Delegation of the Russian Federation, at the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (General Debate), Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations in New York, NY, April 27, 2015, [https://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2015/statements/pdf/RU\\_ru.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2015/statements/pdf/RU_ru.pdf) See also Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XI, Arms Control and Disarmament, eds. Evans Gerakas, David S. Patterson, and Carolyn B. Yee (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1997), Document 152, "Memorandum of Conversation, New York, Sept. 22, 1966, 8:15–1130 PM," <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v11/d152>

<sup>5</sup> For details on Soviet nuclear sharing see, for instance, Jaroslaw Palka, "The Vistula Programme, Nuclear Weapons for the Polish People's Army in Case of War," Kwartalnik Historyczny, Vol. CXXV, 2018, [http://kh-ihpan.edu.pl/images/KH2018EngLangEdNo2/05\\_KH-2018\\_Eng.-Lang.Ed.\\_Palka.pdf](http://kh-ihpan.edu.pl/images/KH2018EngLangEdNo2/05_KH-2018_Eng.-Lang.Ed._Palka.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> "Events: Plenary session of the St Petersburg International Economic Forum," Transcript, Website of the President of Russia, June 16, 2023, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71445>

<sup>7</sup> William Alberque, "The NPT and the Origins of NATO's Nuclear Sharing Arrangements," IFRI, Paris, 2017, [https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/migrated\\_files/documents/atoms/files/alberque\\_npt\\_origins\\_nato\\_nuclear\\_2017.pdf](https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/migrated_files/documents/atoms/files/alberque_npt_origins_nato_nuclear_2017.pdf). See also: "Negotiations of Articles I and II of the NPT, Selected Documents, Volume 1 (1961–1966), NATO Archives, Document 1860–18, NATO Graphics & Printing, Brussels, Oct. 19, 2018, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/3/pdf/200305-NPT\\_Book\\_VOL1.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/3/pdf/200305-NPT_Book_VOL1.pdf) and Negotiations of Articles I and II of the NPT, Selected Documents, Volume 2 (1966–1968), NATO Archives, Document 1860–18, NATO Graphics & Printing, Brussels, Oct. 19, 2018 [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/3/pdf/200305-NPT\\_Book\\_VOL2.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/3/pdf/200305-NPT_Book_VOL2.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Otfried Nassauer, et al, "Questions of Command and Control: NATO, Nuclear Sharing, and the NPT," Project on European Nuclear Non-Proliferation, British-American Security Information Council (BASIS) and Berlin Information-Centre for Transatlantic Security (BITS), PENN Research Report 2000.1, March 2001, <https://www.bits.de/public/pdf/00-1command.pdf>

This paper addresses the specific claims made in the Chinese report and argues in favor of the ongoing value in US extended deterrence guarantees as a strategy to prevent further nuclear proliferation.



## The Chinese report

On Friday, July 26, 2024, the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association and China Institute of Nuclear Industry Strategy convened a side meeting in Geneva during the NPT Preparatory Committee (PrepCom), with the Chinese Delegation to the PrepCom in attendance, to present a report: “Analysis of the Incompatibility of NATO’s Nuclear Sharing Arrangements with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.”<sup>9</sup>

The Chinese report sets out arguments to delegitimize NATO nuclear sharing arrangements by making inaccurate and previously debunked arguments, especially regarding the history of the negotiation and interpretation of the NPT. The Chinese report misinterprets the purpose and enduring value of NATO’s nuclear arrangements, while raising concern about its effects on the Treaty and security in East Asia.

The Chinese report is divided into seven sections, describing the history of NATO’s nuclear sharing arrangements in Section I, before attempting to make its case against the legality of these arrangements in Sections II-V, criticizing Japan and South Korea in Section VI before concluding with recommendations in Section VII.

### The arguments

The Chinese report sets out five arguments against NATO nuclear sharing arrangements:

1. NATO nuclear sharing arrangements are a “special form” of nuclear proliferation that violate Articles I and II of the NPT (pages 8-10).
2. The “non-retroactivity of treaties” principle does not apply in this case, and thus NATO nuclear sharing arrangements violate the NPT (pages 14-16).
3. Many countries (including some NATO member states) were unaware of nuclear sharing arrangements during the NPT negotiations, and few knew that the United States would assert that they were consistent with the Treaty (pages 16-18).
4. The NPT remains binding in wartime, and thus the handling of nuclear weapons by US

allies in wartime would violate the NPT (pages 26-28).

5. NATO nuclear sharing arrangements are out of date and undermine the viability of the NPT.

The report further claims that Japan and South Korea are seeking nuclear sharing arrangements like NATO, which it claims would violate the NPT. It also mischaracterizes the arguments in favor of NATO nuclear sharing and relies upon a selective reading of history and recent developments to make its points.

#### Argument 1

*NATO’s nuclear sharing arrangements—including the deployment of nuclear weapons to the territory of non-nuclear states, and provision of assistance to those countries in peacetime to prepare them to deliver such weapons – are a “special form” of nuclear proliferation that violate Articles I and II of the NPT.*



The first part of this argument—that deployment of nuclear weapons beyond a nuclear weapon states borders is a form of proliferation—is on its face false. Nuclear deployments such as those undertaken by the United States to NATO territory is consistent with Articles I and II. As the Chinese report points out, it has been the policy and law of the United States since first acquiring nuclear weapons that each nuclear warhead remains under the control of United States forces and cannot be used without the prior authorization of the President of the United States.

The practice of temporary and permanent basing of nuclear weapons by nuclear weapon states on the territory of other states is a practice that dates to 1954,

<sup>9</sup> See footnotes 1, 2, and 3.



with US deploying atomic weapons to the United Kingdom and West Germany, and later, permanently or temporarily to a dozen nations. Many of these deployments were widely reported at the time, with the arrival of US atomic artillery and subsequent NATO nuclear exercises advertised by the US Department of Defence and reported widely in world media.<sup>10</sup> The Soviet Union followed the US example with nuclear weapon deployments to East Germany starting in 1958, and later to Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, including with nuclear sharing arrangements similar to the NATO sharing arrangements.<sup>11</sup>



After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the return of thousands of its nuclear warheads from the territories of the former Warsaw Pact states and the newly independent states to Russia was not completed until Nov. 23, 1996. The United Kingdom stationed its own nuclear weapons in West Germany during the Cold War, while Belgium, Canada, France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom also prepared to use US nuclear weapons in West Germany.<sup>12</sup> All nuclear weapons were removed by the United States and the Soviet Union from East and West Germany with reunification. Meanwhile, since 2023, Russia and Belarus have declared that Russian nuclear weapons have been deployed in Belarus.<sup>13</sup>

None of the host countries, in any of these cases, were able to acquire or use the nuclear weapons that were

deployed on their territory at any point. Of course, the deployment of nuclear weapons outside state borders by nuclear weapon states is an activity practiced by almost all the nuclear weapon possessor states, onboard submarines.

None of the above-described temporary or permanent deployments of nuclear weapons beyond the borders of a nuclear weapons state can be described as “nuclear proliferation” by any reasonable definition—namely allowing the acquisition of nuclear weapons, handing over rational control including the power to fire nuclear weapons, or information on how to build them.



The second part of this argument—that US peacetime assistance to NATO’s non-nuclear members to develop and acquire the ability to take over control of nuclear weapons is proliferation—is also false. Teaching pilots how to mount a nuclear bomb on an aircraft, fly to a target, release the bomb, and return to base can in no way be seen as a “special form of nuclear proliferation.” If this is the case, then Russia, too, is in violation of the NPT according to the Chinese argument, as Russia and Belarus have declared that Russia trained Belarusian Su-25 pilots<sup>14</sup> and Iskander missile crews<sup>15</sup> on how to mount and fire nuclear weapons, and has exercised this capability.<sup>16</sup> Regardless of Chinese claims, none of the training or exercises conducted to date in this regard has contributed to nuclear proliferation, and, as will be discussed later, US extended deterrence

<sup>10</sup> For instance, see Benjamin Welles, “US to Send NATO New Atomic Guns: First Artillery Units Armed with 85-Ton 280mm. Cannon to Be Shipped this Winter,” *New York Times*, May 29, 1953, or Associated Press, “NATO Forces to Get New Atomic Rockets,” *New York Times*, Oct. 29, 1954, all available at <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/>

<sup>11</sup> Wolfgang Bayer, “Geheimoperation (Secret Operation) Fürstenberg,” *Der Spiegel*, Jan. 16, 2000, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/geheimoperation-fuerstenberg-a-20666ac2-0002-0001-0000-00001543373>. See, for instance, Laszlo Becz, et al, *Oksnar—Fully Assembled State: Soviet nuclear weapons in Hungary 1961-1991*, Vezprém, 2019, <https://sites.google.com/view/nuclear-weapons-in-hungary/home>

<sup>12</sup> Robert Norris and Hans Kristensen, “The British Nuclear Stockpile 1953-2013,” *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, 2013, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0096340213493260>

<sup>13</sup> Vladimir Putin, “Speech at the Plenary session of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum,” Kremlin website, June 16, 2023, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71445>

<sup>14</sup> Associated Press, “Russia trains Belarusian pilots in nuclear weapons use,” *Defense News*, April 14, 2023, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2023/04/14/russia-trains-belarusian-pilots-in-nuclear-weapons-use/>

<sup>15</sup> “Belarus units complete training on Russian tactical nuclear missile systems,” *Reuters*, April 22, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/belarus-units-complete-training-russian-tactical-nuclear-missile-systems-2023-04-22/>

<sup>16</sup> Statement by the Chief of the 12<sup>th</sup> Main Directorate of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, Ministry of Defense of Russia, June 13, 2024, [https://mil.ru/special\\_operation/video/watch.htm?id=24974@morfVideoAudioFile](https://mil.ru/special_operation/video/watch.htm?id=24974@morfVideoAudioFile)



guarantees have curbed proliferation incentives for 70 years.

### Argument 2

*The “non-retroactivity of treaties” principle does not apply to NATO’s nuclear sharing arrangements, which thus are prohibited by the NPT.*

In the second argument, China is seeking to refute a claim that NATO nuclear sharing arrangements are not subject to the NPT because these arrangements pre-date the Treaty. This argument, however, shows a misunderstanding of US statements defending itself against claims of violating the NPT.

There is a principle in law and treaties called non-retroactivity – that is, laws and treaties do not apply retroactively.<sup>17</sup> China takes the position that while the NPT cannot outlaw actions that occurred before the Treaty’s existence, it does apply to ongoing activities. The United States, however, does not make any claim to non-retroactivity. Here, it appears that China has confused cause-and-effect.

NATO nuclear sharing does pre-date the NPT—established in 1954, while the Treaty was signed in 1968 and entered into force in 1970. But the mere fact that the arrangements pre-date the Treaty is not the basis for the assertion that they are consistent with the NPT, but simply a statement of fact. Rather, the substance of the US position is that the arrangements “have always been fully consistent” with the Treaty, and the NPT “was negotiated with the NPT in mind” (as quoted from a US statement on page 12 of the Chinese report).

The point being made by US and other NATO officials is entirely unrelated to non-retroactivity, but rather is much simpler: the United States and the Soviet Union were the co-chairs of the effort to draft the NPT in the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Commission (ENDC) in Geneva, Switzerland.<sup>18</sup> It would have been odd for the co-chairs to choose language that could be construed as outlawing a practice that both agreed would curb nuclear proliferation.

The United States and the Soviet Union negotiated bilaterally to agree on text for Articles I and II throughout the NPT negotiations from 1961-1966 and then worked intensively in September and October 1966 to parse a precise wording that would prohibit proliferation but not NATO nuclear sharing. After further tinkering, the two sides circulated identical text for Articles I and II to the ENDC on April 25, 1967, and a full Treaty text in Geneva and New York on Aug. 23, 1967. On that day in August 1967, the Soviet delegate to the ENDC declared that he was entirely satisfied that the NPT allowed no loopholes – that according to him, the Treaty would prevent proliferation, with the clear implication that NATO’s nuclear sharing arrangements were not a form of proliferation, as none of the NATO allies would possess or control nuclear weapons in peacetime. On that basis, the Soviet representative urged the ENDC to agree to the joint text.<sup>19</sup> The ENDC agreed to a final text on March 19, 1968, with the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) assenting on June 12, 1968, and opened the Treaty for signature on July 1, 1968. The United States and the Soviet Union, the ENDC, and UNGA were satisfied that NATO nuclear sharing arrangements were consistent with the NPT.



### Argument 3

*Many countries (including some NATO member states) were unaware of the nuclear sharing arrangements during the NPT negotiations, and few knew that the US would assert that they were consistent with the Treaty.*

This argument is perhaps the most surprising, as it requires one to believe that from 1949 to 1970:

1. The United States and NATO Allies were not privately and publicly discussing nuclear

<sup>17</sup> João Grandino Rodas, “The Doctrine of Non-Retroactivity of International Treaties,” *Revista da Faculdade de Direito Universidade de São Paulo*, 68(2), 341-360, January 1973, <https://www.revistas.usp.br/rfdusp/article/view/66677>

<sup>18</sup> The ENDC was established in December 1961 by UN General Assembly First Committee Resolution 1722 (XVI), with the two co-chairs and Brazil, Bulgaria, Burma, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, France, India, Italy,

Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, Romania, Sweden, the United Arab Republic, and the UK as members (France did not attend), ensuring a wide geographic representation.

<sup>19</sup> “Report of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament,” Documents DC/230 and Add.1, Jan. 17 and March 14, 1968, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n68/063/92/pdf/n6806392.pdf>

- sharing concepts in capitals, at NATO, and with their Parliaments and publics;
2. Global press and media, publics, academics, and think tanks were not debating the strengths, weaknesses, and future of NATO nuclear sharing arrangements throughout this time period; and
3. NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements were not being intensively discussed and analyzed in the United Nations in New York and Geneva, including in the NPT negotiations conducted within the ENDC.

The Chinese report's claim that "some NATO members did not have the full knowledge" (page 16-17) is without merit. NATO's press service consistently advertised the changes in NATO nuclear sharing arrangements in dozens of ministerial and heads-of-state summit declarations on NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements from 1949-1970. Allies had to negotiate and agree upon the text of each of these communiqués and declarations, including the 1957 Paris Summit Declaration establishing NATO stocks of nuclear weapons, 1962 Athens Ministerial Declaration on political consultation on nuclear use, the 1966 establishment of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) and a Nuclear Defence Affairs Committee in 1966, and regular communiqués by the NPG from its first meeting in April 1967. Significantly, the April 1967 NPG, attended by heads of state and government, included extensive press and media outreach by NATO and participating Allied nations, explaining the role of the NPG, as well as allies decision-making, in the use of tactical nuclear weapons.<sup>20</sup>

The records of the ENDC from 1961-1970 contain extensive debates about NATO's nuclear sharing and proliferation, as does the records of the UN General Assembly First Committee from 1954-1970.<sup>21</sup>

Declassified NATO records show that all allies were intensively engaged by the United States in the minutiae of detail on nuclear sharing and on the NPT negotiations, bilaterally and in the ENDC. The other NATO Allies in the ENDC – Canada, Italy, and the United Kingdom—also briefed allies after each meeting of the ENDC, and bilateral talks among allies and between the allies and the Soviets ensured that no member would have anything other than full knowledge of the nuclear sharing arrangements and the status of negotiations. The records of the ENDC themselves were transcribed and published, accessible to all members of the United Nations in Geneva, and the press and public, who subsequently analyzed the negotiations in great details.<sup>22</sup>

These press releases, combined with press releases by allied governments throughout this period on the same topic, were then reflected in the global media. A search of open-source literature, including news, academia, and research papers from 1949-1970 yields tens of thousands of articles about NATO nuclear sharing arrangements. A simple search of one newspaper's archives, *The New York Times*, from April 1949 (the establishment of NATO) to July 1968 (the opening of the NPT for signature) brings up several thousand articles about NATO and US nuclear weapons, with dozens of articles in 1954 alone – the year the United States began stationing its nuclear weapons on European soil.

Articles with titles such as "NATO Forces to Get New Atomic Rockets" (October 1954),<sup>23</sup> "Atomic Arms for NATO" (July 1959),<sup>24</sup> "US Plan to Provide Allies Atomic Arms Reported" (February 1960),<sup>25</sup> "NATO Seen Deciding on Atomic Arms' Use" (August 1962),<sup>26</sup> "Greater Voice on Nuclear Arms Urged for NATO" (November 1965),<sup>27</sup> "NATO Unit Agrees to Consultation on Nuclear Arms" (April 1966),<sup>28</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, "NATO Nuclear Planning Group," Press Release (67)4, Washington, April 7, 1967, "Partial Briefing of the Press by the President on the NATO Defense Ministers' Meeting," Office of the White House Press Secretary, Washington, April 7, 1967, and "NATO Nuclear Planning Group Holds First Ministers Meeting," Department of State Bulletin, May 1, 1967, in [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/3/pdf/200305-50Years\\_NPG.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/3/pdf/200305-50Years_NPG.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> The verbatim records of all ENDC meetings are available online at the University of Michigan Library Digital Collections website: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=endc>

<sup>22</sup> UK Parliament, Commons Hansard for May 16, 1966, Volume 728, No. 54, "Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee," <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1966-05-16/debates/3edc8328-fa11-49ab-9fa0-abbd0fc518b6/Eighteen-NationDisarmamentCommittee>

<sup>23</sup> "NATO Forces to Get New Atomic Rockets," *New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1954, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1954/10/30/85673165.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> "Atomic Arms for NATO," *New York Times*, 17 July 1959, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1959/07/17/80538232.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> John W. Finney, "US Plan to Provide Allies Atomic Arms Is Reported," *New York Times*, Feb. 3, 1960, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1960/02/03/119094684.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> NATO Seen Deciding on Atomic Arms Use," *New York Times*, Aug. 19 1962, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1962/08/19/90572975.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> John W. Finney, "Greater Voice on Nuclear Arms Urged for NATO," *New York Times*, Nov. 16, 1965, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1965/11/16/96721853.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Dana Adams Schmidt, "NATO Unit Agrees to Consultation on Nuclear Arms," *New York Times*, April 30, 1966,

"Greece Asks NATO for Atomic Mines" (April 1968),<sup>29</sup> and of course, the classic, "We Are Already Sharing the Bomb" (November 1965).<sup>30</sup> Another stunningly detailed summary comes in Der Spiegel, "Bedingt abwehrbereit" or "(Conditionally) Ready for Defence" on Oct. 9, 1962,<sup>31</sup> describing in exquisite detail exactly how NATO nuclear sharing arrangements would work in case of total war with the Soviet Union, including a comprehensive list of available NATO nuclear weapons, their ranges, and their warhead yields.



A QUESTION OF CREDIT: Distribution of NATO nuclear weapons has been a controversial issue since the mid-1950s. Here is a B-57C Canberra assigned to NATO's Air Force showing national identification.

## We Are Already Sharing the Bomb

By JOHN W. FINNEY

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The United States is already sharing its atomic weapons with NATO, according to a report in the New York Times. The report, which was based on a confidential source, says that the United States is already sharing its atomic weapons with NATO, and that the United States is already sharing its atomic weapons with NATO.

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already publicly debated the stationing of US nuclear weapons on Canadian soil as part of North American air defenses,<sup>34</sup> but the detailed US-Canadian negotiations on their bilateral arrangements were at a sensitive point in August 1963 and including Bonn would introduce an unnecessary complication to these talks.

These US-Canadian negotiations took place during US-Soviet NPT negotiations, wherein the Soviets were especially sensitive to West Germany's stated desire for greater access to nuclear weapons; the sensitive handling of these bilateral negotiations should be seen in that context. Further undermining the Chinese argument, on Jan. 30, 1963, the US State Department issued a press release about the US-Canadian negotiations, their scope, background, and rationale.<sup>35</sup> Such an action is hardly consistent with a US effort to prevent Canadian debate: it further illustrates how widely and extensively the United States shared information about nuclear sharing.

The Chinese report also claims that Sweden thought allies had "given up" nuclear sharing arrangements before 1968 (page 17), citing the 2000 PENN report. The 2000 report makes the claim, referencing a conversation between the authors and Jan Prawitz, a former Swedish official. However, Prawitz has published several articles over the decades in which he argued that part of the reason Sweden gave up its nuclear weapons program in 1968 was that it believed it fell under US and NATO nuclear guarantees,<sup>36</sup> a fact borne out by subsequent research,<sup>37</sup> undermining the claim in the 2000 report and calling the Chinese report's methodology into question (including borrowing citations of questionable value from earlier reports).

## The Katzenbach-Clifford letter of April 10, 1968

<https://www.nytimes.com/1966/04/30/archives/nato-unit-agrees-to-consultation-on-nuclear-arms-5-defense-chiefs-a.html>.

<sup>29</sup> William Beecher, "Greece Asks for Atomic Mines," *New York Times*, 28 April 1968,

<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1968/04/28/91227455.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> John W. Finney, "We Are Already Sharing the Bomb," *New York Times*, Nov. 28, 1965, <https://www.nytimes.com/1965/11/28/archives/we-are-already-sharing-the-bomb.html>

<sup>31</sup> "Bedingt Abwehrbereit," Oct. 9, 1962, *Der Spiegel*, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/bedingt-abwehrbereit-a-e79111b5-0002-0001-0000-000025673830>

<sup>32</sup> John Clearwater, *Canadian Nuclear Weapons: The Untold Story of Canada's Cold War Arsenal*, Dundurn Press, Toronto, 1988, <https://www.ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/13089/1/109.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Clearwater, *ibid*, page 44.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, the transcript of the debate in the Canadian Parliament, as broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation on 4 June 1963, beginning on page 12: <https://www.lipad.ca/full/1963/06/04/12/>

<sup>35</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XIII, Western Europe and Canada, eds. Charles Sampson and James Miller (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1994), Document 444, "United States and Canadian Negotiations Regarding Nuclear Weapons, Department of State Press Release No. 59, Jan. 30 1963,"

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v13/d444>

<sup>36</sup> Jan Prawitz, "From Nuclear Option to Non-Nuclear Promotion: The Sweden Case," The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Research Report No. 20, 1995, [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-12797-7\\_6](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-12797-7_6)

<sup>37</sup> See the extensive writing on this topic by Thomas Jonter (The Key to Restraint: The Swedish Plans to Acquire Nuclear Weapons during the Cold War, <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/978-1-137-58113-6>), as well as work by Lars van Dassen (e.g., Sweden and the Making of Nuclear Non-Proliferation, <https://inis.iaea.org/records/dcpfb-dx628/files/29032967.pdf>



In the final part of China's third argument, China states that few countries knew that the United States would assert that the NATO nuclear sharing arrangements were not a violation of the NPT. This is false, as the United States, NATO, and the allies had all been clear about what the nuclear sharing arrangements were—that allies would employ US nuclear warheads in the event of general war once the President of the United States had made such a decision. As shown previously, these arrangements were well known and debated extensively in public and private around the world from the mid-1950s on, including with detailed descriptions of NATO wargames, planning, and contingencies debate in the press and parliaments. The report specifically cites a letter from the US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach to Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford on April 10, 1968, with a fact sheet titled, the "Questions on the Draft Non-Proliferation Treaty Asked by US Allies together with Answers Given by the United States," asserting that its distribution strategy is some evidence of a last-minute surprise sprung from Washington to confuse or obfuscate.

The United States generated this Q&A factsheet from a list of 12 questions about the US-Soviet NPT negotiations about what was allowed and not allowed under the Treaty raised by a delegation of West German diplomats in consultations in Washington in 1967.<sup>38</sup> The United States revised the Q&A factsheet down from twelve to the six most critical questions and answers and circulated them to Allies on April 7, 1967, debating their meaning to clarify them to allies before revising them down further to a final four and sharing them with the Soviets and other ENDC members starting in April 1967. When these Q&A were shared with the Soviets, there were no arguments against them raised, as the Soviets were at that time focused on three issues: 1) thwarting the desire expressed by several European countries to have their civilian nuclear power subject to safeguards conducted by the European Atomic Energy Community, and not the International Atomic Energy Agency, 2) the Indian assertion of the right to so-called "peaceful" nuclear explosions, and 3) the overarching objective of convincing West

Germany to sign the final Treaty—all three of which found the United States and the Soviet Union in alignment.

Once the United States and the Soviet Union shared their joint draft Treaty in August 1967, Washington clarified their interpretations included in the Q&A with the other ENDC members—which included Brazil, Bulgaria, Burma, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, Romania, Sweden, and the United Arab Republic—and minor changes to the US-Soviet draft wording were proposed and agreed. These countries, too, were seized with the problems of safeguards application and peaceful nuclear explosions, as well as a desire for clear security guarantees to be given in the NPT context.

On this last matter, the United States circulated a draft suggestion for security guarantees separately after the conclusion of the Treaty, but the fundamental issues as expressed in the Q&A factsheet were not a matter of debate with the Soviets, in the ENDC, or elsewhere at the time. Legendary Egyptian diplomat Mohamed Shaker's monumental history of the negotiation of the NPT uncritically highlights the consensus around the US-Soviet interpretation of the Treaty in 1967, quoting from the Q&A factsheet specifically on point that the NPT would no longer hold in time of general war.<sup>39</sup> Shaker posits that the Treaty would no longer hold in time of nuclear war between Treaty parties, as any such use would constitute material breach, rendering the Treaty void.

The idea that these and other United Nations diplomats would not be aware of the substance of the US position when the Treaty opened for signature on July 1, 1968, is an insult to the professionalism and intelligence of those diplomats in Geneva and New York. The substance of the Treaty had been debated thoroughly in the previous years, and the US interpretations were made available in a public speech by the secretary of state, in the letter of transmittal to the US Senate, and in press releases related within days of the NPT signing ceremony.<sup>40</sup> No ENDC members raised any objections in agreeing

<sup>38</sup> US Telegram: "Non-Proliferation Treaty," Department of State Telegram 121338, Washington, DC, US Department of State, Jan. 18, 1967, available in [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/3/pdf/200305-NPT\\_Book\\_VOL2.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/3/pdf/200305-NPT_Book_VOL2.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> Mohamed I. Shaker, *The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, Origin and Implementation 1959-1979*, Volume II, Oceana Publications, London, 1980, pages 497, 864, and 865, <https://nonproliferation.org/the-nuclear-non-proliferation-treaty-origins-and-implementation-1959-1979/>

<sup>40</sup> "Text of Secretary Rusk's Letter Submitting the NPT to the President for Transmittal to the Senate," US Department of State, Washington, DC, July 2, 1968, "Text of President Johnson's Letter of Transmittal Forwarding the NPT to the Senate," The White House, Washington, DC, July 9, 1968, "Text-Rusk Statement on NPT-Senate Foreign Relations Committee," US Information Service, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, July 10, 1968, available in [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/3/pdf/200305-NPT\\_Book\\_VOL2.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/3/pdf/200305-NPT_Book_VOL2.pdf)

to the final text, and, after the US published the Q&A factsheet on July 9, none of the 56 initial signatories threatened to withdraw their signatures, or raised the substance of the US interpretations for debate in any United Nations forum. Surely, if Ireland, as a leader of the nuclear disarmament movement, were surprised by and objected to any part of the US declaration, such an objection would have been made public at that time, with withdrawal of signature an entirely understandable response. Rather, it would have been far more confusing if the United States suddenly announced after submitting the Treaty for ratification that it was revising its nuclear sharing arrangements.

The 2000 PENN report relied heavily on the Katzenbach-Clifford letter to draw broader (and unfounded) conclusions that the Soviets themselves had been tricked by the United States into agreeing to the NPT. However, the 2000 report relied again on one Swedish diplomat—who did not attend the NPT talks—to assert that Sweden itself only obtained access to the Q&A factsheet from its attendance at the 1968 and 1969 US Senate NPT Hearings. Yet Sweden as a member of the ENDC had already been given a copy, and the Q&A factsheet itself was distributed by the US Information Agency to all media outlets upon submission of the Treaty to the Senate.<sup>41</sup> So, the Chinese report's claim that the Q&A factsheet was generated at the last minute and hidden in the Senate hearing's transcripts (page 17-18) to limit access are also false.

The 2000 report suffers from its lack of access to key documents that were readily available at the time, such as the Shaker report, the full index of ENDC verbatim records, and subsequent declassified documents, in making its arguments. The Chinese report thus also ignores this literature and leads it to make false claims.

The further assertion in the Chinese report that other countries remain unable to judge the validity of the US interpretation of the NPT because NATO sharing arrangements are “deliberately concealed” by the United States (pages 18-19) is demonstrably false. As explained above, all countries have a wealth of unclassified, public information about NATO nuclear

sharing arrangements and the US interpretations. While it is true that NATO did not seek a debate on NATO nuclear sharing arrangements in the UNGA, US diplomats consulted regularly with other countries, especially the Treaty holdouts, from 1968.

While China did not join the NPT until March 9, 1992, their diplomats had ample opportunity to discuss NATO nuclear sharing arrangements bilaterally with the United States and to raise any reservations upon signing or subsequently. Significantly, prior to the 2024 PrepCom, China's statements on the nuclear sharing arrangements were limited to the suggestion that they could be cancelled as a contribution to further disarmament, not that they were in any way a violation of the Treaty. It appears that China called on all states with nuclear weapons outside their borders to return them as early as 2003 as a measure to support disarmament, and in 2005 it added the suggestion that states that engaged in nuclear sharing could end those arrangements as well, but it made no accusations that these arrangements were a violation of the NPT in the Review process until 2024.<sup>42</sup>

#### Argument 4

*The NPT remains binding in wartime, and thus the handling of nuclear weapons by US Allies in wartime would violate the NPT.*

The Chinese report argues that NATO nuclear sharing arrangements violate the NPT by allowing the transfer of the control of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapon states in wartime.

However, the NPT was intended to prevent nuclear war, as stated in the first and second paragraphs of the Treaty's preamble, and thus the start of a large-scale nuclear war among the Treaty participants would be regarded as a failure in the central purpose of the Treaty. The United States argued that international treaties such as the NPT would “be terminated or suspended” in case of a global nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union, signaling the intention that the United States and its allies likely would announce suspension or invoke the withdrawal clauses of the NPT, citing Article X of the Treaty.<sup>43</sup> The legality of suspension of a treaty

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> See “Working paper on nuclear disarmament and reducing the danger of nuclear war, submitted by China,” Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” Second session, Geneva, April 28-May 9, 2003, NPT/CONF.2005/PC.II/WP.3, April 28, 2003 for the first mention of the topic,

[https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/503687/files/NPT\\_CONF.2005\\_PC.II\\_WP.3-EN.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/503687/files/NPT_CONF.2005_PC.II_WP.3-EN.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> United States Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Nonproliferation Treaty: Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations*, Part 2, Ninety-First Congress, First Session, Feb. 18 and 20, 1969, Washington: US G.P.O., 1969, p. 424, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d02094647n&seq=132>

without such provisions has been disputed, for instance, in response to Russia's unilaterally suspension of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty in 2007.<sup>44</sup> In its bilateral negotiations with the United States on the NPT, the Soviets agreed that the NPT did not hold "in the event that war occurs," as at that point, "all bets are off."<sup>45</sup>

Shaker's report, as mentioned above, deals with this issue at length. The Soviet position a few years before during the Partial Test Ban treaty negotiations was that withdrawal clauses are unnecessary because "any country can disregard a treaty if it was contrary to its supreme national interests."<sup>46</sup> In the NPT context, these concepts and circumstances were debated heavily throughout 1967 and 1968, with general acceptance that if the United States and the Soviet Union entered into global thermonuclear war, arguments on the legality of treaty suspension or NATO sharing arrangements would be of lower priority than other, more obviously pressing concerns.<sup>47</sup>

NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements were created to prevent a US-Soviet nuclear war, so their use would be seen as a failure of the NPT, deterrence in general, and the arrangements in particular (and as stated above, Shaker concluded that a US-Soviet nuclear war would constitute a material breach of the Treaty). In the end, NPT negotiations specifically included language on withdrawal that any country could invoke should it feel necessary, dissolving the obligations therein. More recent analysis also supports this claim, drawing on the negotiating history and international law.<sup>48</sup>

### Echoes of past arguments

As stated above, the Chinese report relies heavily on the arguments contained in the 2000 PENN report, "Questions of Command and Control: NATO,

Nuclear Sharing, and the NPT." Yet in repeating the arguments herein, the Chinese report's authors went so far as to copy the references—in some cases changing them slightly—while still retaining the formatting and typos of the original. The clearest example is in the citation in the Chinese report of the Katzenbach-Clifford letter:

Evans Gerakas, David S. Patterson, and Carolyn B. Yee (eds.) "Arms Control and Disarmament," Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968. Volume X. United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1997, p.574.

The citation in the Chinese report is consistent with a pre-internet reliance on the physical volumes of the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), which were published in the 1990s, prior to the systematic digitization and publication of these records on the internet later in the 2000s. After digitization, the State Department's guidance on citing FRUS directed researchers to no longer cite page numbers, but instead the numbered document being cited.<sup>49</sup> Further, the citation itself includes a significant typo. Volume X is National Security Policy, while Volume XI is Arms Control and Disarmament, and page 574 of Volume X is a wholly unrelated document.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the correct citation should read:

Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XI, Arms Control and Disarmament, eds. Evans Gerakas, David S. Patterson, and Carolyn B. Yee (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 232.<sup>51</sup>

The 2000 report cites the Katzenbach argument as (footnote 40):

Evans Gerakas, David S. Patterson, and Carolyn B. Yee (eds.) "Arms Control and Disarmament," Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968. Volume X.

<sup>44</sup> Duncan B. Hollis, "Russia Suspends CFE Treaty Participation," Insights 11(19), American Society of International Law, July 23, 2007, <https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/11/issue/19/russia-suspends-cfe-treaty-participation>

<sup>45</sup> United States Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Nonproliferation Treaty: Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations*, Part 2, Ninety-First Congress, First Session, Feb. 18 and 20, 1969. Washington: US G.P.O., 1969, p.364, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951d02094647n&seq=72>

<sup>46</sup> See Shaker, Volume II, pages 885-899 for an extensive history of the negotiations on suspension or withdrawal from the NPT.

<sup>47</sup> See the ENDC verbatim records ENDC/PV.287-375, or the Shaker Volume II summary.

<sup>48</sup> Mika Hayashi, "NATO Nuclear Sharing Arrangements Revisited in Light of the NPT and the TPNW," *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*, 26(3): 471-491, Sept. 25, 2021, <https://academic.oup.com/jcsl/article-abstract/26/3/471/6375169>

<sup>49</sup> "Citing the Foreign Relations Series," Office of the Historian, US State Department, Washington, DC, 2014, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/citing-frus>

<sup>50</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume X, National Security Policy, ed. David S. Patterson (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2001), Document 188, "Paper Prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff," <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v10/d188>. Page 574 of Volume X can be viewed here: [https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v10/pg\\_574](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v10/pg_574)

<sup>51</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XI, Arms Control and Disarmament, eds. Evans Gerakas, David S. Patterson, and Carolyn B. Yee (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 232, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v11/d232>. Page 574 of Volume XI can be viewed here: [https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v11/pg\\_574](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v11/pg_574)



United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1997, p.573.

And later, in citing the material used in the Chinese report specifically, (footnote 49):

Evans Gerakas, et.al *op. cit.*, p.574.

Note that in both the 2000 report and the Chinese report, there is a missing comma after “(eds.)” and both incorrectly identify Volume X instead of Volume XI, indicating that the author copied footnote 40 and updated the page number from footnote 49 without correcting the obvious errors in both. Bizarrely, the Chinese report publishes screen-grabs of Document 232 in the report on page 11, but gives an entirely different citation:

“Questions on the Draft NPT Asked by US Allies with Answers Given by the United States” (Left) and the Documents Contained Therein (Right). Source: The Office of the Historian.”

Further citations in the Chinese paper also appear to be copied from the 2000 report, retaining the errors from the original. Footnote 28 in the Chinese report copies footnote 52 in the 2000 report, using a dash between US and Congress, and a short, identical, and incorrect citation format:

US-Congress, Joint Committee on Atomic Energy: Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Washington 1966, p.77.

The correct citation—again, given on the website later in the 2010s, and thus unavailable to the authors of the 2000 report, is as follows:

United States Congress, Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons: Hearings Before the United States Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, Eighty-Ninth Congress, Second Session, Feb. 23, March 1, 7, 1966. Washington: US G.P.O., 1966.

The Chinese report also cites (footnote 29):

Non-Proliferation Treaty, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, Executive H, 90-2, 18 and 20 February 1969, p.364.

Note that this is a copy of footnote 50 from the 2000 report, including the typo of an added hyphen in nonproliferation, but updating the page number:

*Non-Proliferation Treaty, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, Executive H, 90-2, 18 and 20 February 1969, p.340.*

This update is from footnote 51 of the 2000 report:

*Ibid*, p.364.

The correct citation would be:

United States Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Nonproliferation Treaty: Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, Part 2, Ninety-First Congress, First Session, Feb. 18 and 20, 1969 Washington: US G.P.O., 1969, p.364.

Footnote 18 in the Chinese report also copies footnote 34 of the 2000 report, both of which happen to incorrectly list this as the report of the second, and not the first, session of the 91<sup>st</sup> Congress.<sup>52</sup> It is notable that in each case the 2024 report authors did not use citations from documents that are available online, but instead copied and combined the footnotes from the 2000 report, while still retaining the original formatting, errors, and typos, raising questions about whether the authors read the originals, rather than assuming the content based on the 2000 report. Finally, the Chinese report cites the 2000 report incorrectly, stating that it was published in February 1999, and not March 2000.

## **On the ongoing contributions of NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements to global security**

### **Argument 5**

*NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements are out of date and undermine the viability of the NPT.*

NATO nuclear sharing arrangements have not undermined the NPT's near-universality or viability. The NPT has been a great success in limiting the spread of nuclear weapons, far beyond the hopes of the original negotiators. The Treaty's original limited duration was a reflection of some states' belief that

<sup>52</sup> United States Congress, Senate Committee on Armed Services, Military Implications of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: Hearings, Ninety-First Congress, First Session, Feb. 27 and 28, 1969.

Washington, US G.P.O., 1969,  
[https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b643960](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b643960)

they might need to seek nuclear weapons at some point (e.g., Italy), but the parties agreed to indefinite extension in 1995, despite several states questioning the compatibility of the NPT with NATO nuclear sharing arrangements.<sup>53</sup> Accusations of violation have been rare—notably coming from Iran in 2010, which can be linked to accusations that Iran was violating the NPT by pursuing nuclear weapons, from Russian in 2015, which is linked to their violation of the INF Treaty.<sup>54</sup>

Most arguments previously focused on transfer in time of war, which has been discussed above as a matter already debated and closed decades hence. These accusations are demonstrably false and often are levied by countries themselves accused of violating arms control agreements, which itself undermines the NPT. The debate now – encouraged by China—can be seen as undermining the Treaty, with more countries repeating previously debunked arguments in the 2025 Review process.<sup>55</sup>

To date, no non-parties to the NPT have argued that NATO nuclear sharing arrangements have prevented them from joining the Treaty, and no state has left the Treaty for any reason related to these arrangements.<sup>56</sup> While more than 40 states have temporarily or permanently hosted nuclear weapons on their territory during the Cold War, today fewer than 15 states currently have nuclear weapons within their borders. While these sharing arrangements endure, they have vastly shrunk in scope and scale, even though there may be short-term adjustments to the worsening security environment in the years ahead. They may even have shrunk too far.

Regardless of whether one likes or dislikes NATO or the nuclear sharing arrangements, it is incontrovertible that since they were first enacted, only one ally pursued nuclear weapons: France. In

France's case, and significantly, Paris pursued an independent nuclear weapon capability because it felt the nuclear sharing arrangements did not go far enough in providing France independent control of nuclear weapons, rather than because they undermined the ideals of nonproliferation.<sup>57</sup> West Germany, Italy, Sweden, Taiwan, and South Korea all pursued nuclear weapons and were persuaded either through NATO nuclear sharing arrangements or increased US security guarantees to end their nuclear programs. In each case, the US priority was preventing the spread of nuclear weapons among its friends and allies, and it was successful in preventing proliferation through increasing, not decreasing, the strength of its security guarantees.

Any threat to the strength and credibility of US extended deterrence guarantees has increased the pressure for nuclear proliferation. When Presidents Nixon and Trump opened debates on the future of US guarantees, conversations immediately began in many capitals across different regions on potential proliferation. Current debates in South Korea and Japan (further discussed below) reflect the fear of the withdrawal of US assurances. The perceived threat to NATO nuclear sharing resulted immediately in debates in Poland<sup>58</sup> and Germany<sup>59</sup> on the merits of acquiring nuclear weapons, and Saudi Arabia's intention to enrich uranium is in part a hedge against potential US abandonment.<sup>60</sup>

### Another shift in the Chinese perspective?

China seems to have recalibrated its position towards nuclear weapons states deploying nuclear weapons outside their borders. As mentioned above, China previously proposed returning all nuclear weapons to national borders as a contribution to disarmament, starting in 2003. China increased and combined this call with Russia, culminating in a Bilateral Joint

<sup>53</sup> Mohamed I. Shaker, *The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, Origin and Implementation 1959-1979*, Volume II, Oceana Publications, London, 1980, pages 856-866.

<sup>54</sup> While the Chinese report cites a summary report that mentions Iran's objection, the full statement by Iran is available here: "Statement by the Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran Before the First Session of the NPT Preparatory Committee," Cluster Debate on Nuclear Non-Proliferation, Preparatory Committee for the Eleventh Review Conference of the NPT, First Session, Vienna, Aug. 7, 2023, [https://docs-library.unoda.org/Treaty\\_on\\_the\\_Non-Proliferation\\_of\\_Nuclear\\_Weapons\\_-\\_Preparatory\\_Committee\\_for\\_the\\_Eleventh\\_Review\\_ConferenceFirst\\_session\\_\(2023\)/Iran\\_Statement\\_Cluster\\_2\\_0.pdf](https://docs-library.unoda.org/Treaty_on_the_Non-Proliferation_of_Nuclear_Weapons_-_Preparatory_Committee_for_the_Eleventh_Review_ConferenceFirst_session_(2023)/Iran_Statement_Cluster_2_0.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> <https://meetings.unoda.org/meeting/67442/statements>

<sup>56</sup> "North Korea Announces Withdrawal from NPT, Jan. 10: Statement and Reaction," The Acronym Institute, 2002, <https://www.acronym.org.uk/old/archive/docs/0301/doc02.htm>

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, "Memorandum of Conversation, 'Nuclear Sharing,'" Aug. 24, 1960. Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Archives, Record

Group 59, Records of the Department of State, Records of Policy Planning Staff, 1957-1961, box 116, Atomic Energy—Armaments 1960, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/20480-national-security-archive-doc-28-memorandum>

<sup>58</sup> Jacek Lepiarz, "Politolog: Europa powinna mieć własną bombę atomową," Deutsche Welle, Jan. 2, 2024, <https://www.dw.com/pl/niemiecki-politolog-europa-powinna-miec-wlasna-bomba-atomowa/a-67872014>

<sup>59</sup> Graham Allison with Gregor Schmitz and Steffen Gassel, "Atomwaffen-Experte: Deutschland könnte die Bombe schnell bauen," Die Stern, Feb. 19, 2024, <https://www.stern.de/politik/atomwaffen-experte---deutschland-koennte-die-bombe-schnell-bauen--34471988.html>

<sup>60</sup> William Alberque and Amnah Ibraheem, "Saudi Arabia's partner in pursuing civilian nuclear power: China or the US?," Online Analysis, International Institute for Security Studies, Nov. 17, 2023, <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2023/11/saudi-arabias-partner-in-pursuing-civilian-nuclear-power-china-or-the-us/>

Statement on “deepening the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination in the new era” on [Feb.] 4, 2022, declaring that they “...believe that all nuclear-weapons States should...withdraw nuclear weapons deployed abroad.”<sup>61</sup> Presidents Putin and Xi strengthened this call in the March 21, 2023 update of the Joint Statement: “All nuclear-weapon States should refrain from deploying nuclear weapons outside their territories and should withdraw their nuclear weapons deployed outside their territories.”<sup>62</sup> However, four days later, President Putin announced that Russia would soon station Russian nuclear warheads on Belarusian territory.<sup>63</sup>

The 2024 update of the Russia-China Joint Statement avoids similar language, and instead condemns the United States for strengthening its nuclear sharing arrangements with NATO, and calls on nuclear weapon states should refrain from “pre-deploying nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles.”<sup>64</sup> This last clause is confusing, as the US B61s assigned to NATO are not mated to their delivery vehicles (dual-capable aircraft) in peacetime, and both Russia and China field submarines carrying nuclear-armed ballistic missiles and silo-based intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Regardless, China’s willingness to drop its call for nuclear weapons to be returned from foreign deployments in deference to Russia’s nuclear sharing arrangements with Belarus demonstrates an unexpected degree of flexibility. It will be interesting to read how China treats the matter of nuclear sharing in the next Chinese Working Paper on Disarmament at the upcoming NPT PrepCom.

## Conclusion

China’s concerns about the risk of the United States offering “nuclear sharing arrangements in the Asia-Pacific” (page 29-31) is misplaced and deliberately exaggerated for effect.

The Chinese report accuses Japan of contemplating nuclear sharing, but its sources include retired diplomats and internal political party discussions, which do not reflect the position of the Japanese government. The accusations against South Korea merely refer to the strengthening of the already-existing extended deterrence dialogue between the US and South Korean governments. Nuclear consultations between the United States and South Korea were formalized in 1968 and have been updated regularly with new bodies and renamed old bodies to try to improve coordination on deterrence and defence. While US strategic nuclear presence in the region has increased in the past few years compared to the early 2000s, it still does not come close to the peak of approximately 3,200 US nuclear weapons stored in South Korea, the Philippines, Japan, Guam, and Taiwan in 1967.<sup>65</sup>

If China is concerned about the evolving US extended deterrence posture in the Indo-Pacific, there are steps Beijing can take.

First, Beijing can stop shielding North Korea from stronger sanctions for its continued development of its illegal nuclear weapons program, which it built in violation of the NPT. Second, Beijing can stop its increasingly aggressive military posture and rhetoric towards Taiwan and its other neighbors across the region. Third, it can provide some—any—transparency over its massive nuclear buildup. China is the only member of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council that has yet to offer any limits on its production of fissile material, and to never have shared any information about the number of warheads or strategic delivery systems that it has and intends to build over the next decade.

If China took such steps, the demand for more US nuclear presence in the region would reduce and the supply signal from the United States would likely attenuate. Instead, a Chinese-led effort to denuclearize Pyongyang, reduce their own threatening behavior, and increase transparency of their nuclear stockpile—all would strengthen the

<sup>61</sup> “Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development,” Website of the Kremlin, Feb. 4, 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770> (and in Chinese: [https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-02/04/content\\_5672025.htm](https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-02/04/content_5672025.htm)).

<sup>62</sup> Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development,” Website of China, March 22, 2023, [https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2023-03/22/content\\_5747726.htm](https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2023-03/22/content_5747726.htm) (and in Russian: <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/5920>).

<sup>63</sup> Vladimir Putin’s Interview with Pavel Zarubin, Russia 24, Moscow, March 25, 2023, <https://rutube.ru/video/a0f5bf62ccb84c5048b6686693daffe5/>

<sup>64</sup> Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on Deepening Comprehensive Partnership and Strategic Interaction Relations Entering a New Era in the Context of the 75th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Two Countries, May 16, 2024, <http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/6132> (and in Chinese: [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/zyxw/202405/t20240516\\_11305860.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/zyxw/202405/t20240516_11305860.shtml)).

<sup>65</sup> Robert S. Norris, William M. Arkin, William Burr, “Where They Were,” The Bulletin of American Scientists, Volume 55, Issue 6, November 1999, 26-35, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.2968/055006011>

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NPT and reduce the threats of future nuclear proliferation immeasurably. Increasing complaints about NATO and the US extended security guarantees can only accomplish the opposite.

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