

6th International Congress against Military Bases and War

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A quick over-arching point before I go to the detail. We missed a big opportunity to put peace in Europe on a stable footing at the end of the Cold War. When the Warsaw Pact was wound up in 1991, there were hopes that NATO would be dissolved too and international relations would be founded on a new basis, putting the principles of the UN Charter into force. It was also hoped there would be a peace dividend, with vast sums going from military into social spending.

This did not happen. Instead, the US devised a new strategy – the Wolfowitz Doctrine of 1992. This stated that the US was the world's only remaining superpower and proclaimed its main objective was to retain that status. That approach has determined US actions ever since – and NATO, which was then redundant in terms of its initial mission statement as a cold war alliance, was repurposed to support the US in that objective, expanding its remit and its territory. Europe has been caught up in that process ever since. But that US goal ignores how the world has changed: that we now live in a multi-polar world, and trying to force it to remain uni-polar will just lead to more wars. We should not be the US's ally in that goal any longer – to remain so makes Europe a likely battleground and one – as the war in Ukraine makes very clear – that is increasingly likely to be a nuclear war. I will briefly explore some of the legal issues around current nuclear developments in the context of the Ukraine war.

Significant concern has been expressed about the increased risk of nuclear war and although a no-fly zone has been avoided – which would be a fast track to WW3 – there have been some incremental developments going in a bad direction. And governments are exacerbating the situation especially my own.

- Talk of 'tactical' or 'battlefield' nuclear weapons as if they can be contained. This normalizes the idea of nuclear use. The fact is use of nuclear weapons would be illegal under international law for many reasons, not least because they are indiscriminate. And not to mention the environmental impact which is also covered by international law.
- Putin rhetoric about nuclear use, NATO reiterating first use policy.
- Russia is bringing nuclear weapons to Belarus, likening it to so-called 'nuclear-sharing' by NATO. This refers to US tactical nuclear weapons in a number of countries across Europe. Adding Britain to the list, to Lakenheath airbase. Also in process of bringing new upgraded B62-12 warheads to these countries. These new bombs can either function as gravity bombs or as guided drop bombs. This means they can be targeted with GPS and satellite, can be accurately steered and can be used as attack weapons.
- The deployment of the B61-12s is being accelerated to bases across Europe. At the same time, new US-built F35a fighter jets are coming to Europe. Taking the jets and the

bombs together, this represents a significant enhancement of US nuclear capability in Europe. But the key point here is that neither US nor Russian nukes in Europe are legal.

- Having US nuclear bombs in Europe conflicts with the legal obligations of the signatories to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Article I of the NPT forbids the transfer of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapon states and Article II imposes a complementary requirement on non-nuclear weapons states not to 'receive the transfer' of nuclear weapons.
- NATO nuclear sharing breaches these obligations as it is intended to allow the transfer of US nuclear weapons to non-nuclear allies to deliver in time of war. NATO asserts that NATO's nuclear sharing agreement predates the NPT and claims that it doesn't involve the transfer of nuclear weapons or control over them unless NATO has gone to war, in which case the treaty would no longer apply.

But in 1985, the NPT Review Conference agreed that the Treaty remains in force 'under any circumstances', thus negating the argument that war would invalidate Articles I and II. Since then, a growing number of NPT signatories, including more than 100 states in the Non-Aligned Movement, have called on NATO members to bring their policies into line with their NPT obligations.

The truth is that these weapons put us all on the front line and we must get rid of them. The same goes for foreign military bases and foreign troops present in Europe – there are over 63,000 US troops stationed here, over half of those in Germany, for many decades.

I would like to conclude with a brief mention of the climate impact of the Ukraine war and militarisation more widely.

War is a big polluter and the war in Ukraine is no exception – military emissions are sky-high.

According to calculations by the Dutch climate researcher Lennard de Klerk, the war in Ukraine caused 120 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions in its first year, which is equivalent to the annual emissions of a country the size of Belgium¹.

But it's an ongoing problem. NATO organises regular massive exercises over and across Europe which contribute to this footprint. The recent Air Defender 23 which finished today, is the largest deployment exercise of air forces in NATO's history. It involved 10,000 participants from 25 countries with 250 aircraft – 100 from the US - undertaking training operations in European airspace under the command of the German air force.

The CO₂ emissions of this large-scale manoeuvre amount to 220,000 tonnes, which is equivalent to the annual emissions of a city of 30,000 inhabitants.

Geneva Convention of 1977: "It is prohibited to employ methods or means of warfare which are intended, or may be expected, to cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment."

So how is the use of DU legal? Or any war, come to that?

¹ zdf: Klimaforscher berechnen Emissionen Diese Folgen hat der Krieg (7.6.2023)
<https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/panorama/klima-fussabdruck-ukraine-krieg-russland-100.html>

Now more than ever we need to adopt a broad concept of security, which addresses the two existential threats that we face – climate change and nuclear war. And we need policies and actions which will reduce and eventually remove those threats. Our concept of security is of common security, of genuine human security, not of killing and increased militarisation, or the further expansion of military blocs, but of compliance with international law, human rights, respect and dignity for all, and the meeting of people's needs.