

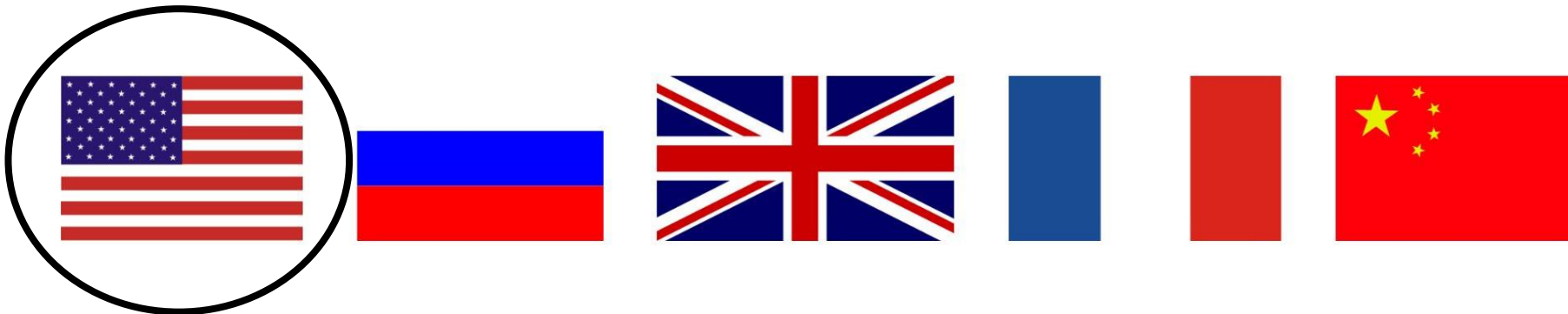
# Nuclear sharing: the U.S. nuclear arsenal in Europe



# What is the nuclear sharing system?

Nuclear sharing is a **political concept** developed within the NATO nuclear deterrence framework involving nuclear and non-nuclear member states of the Atlantic Alliance

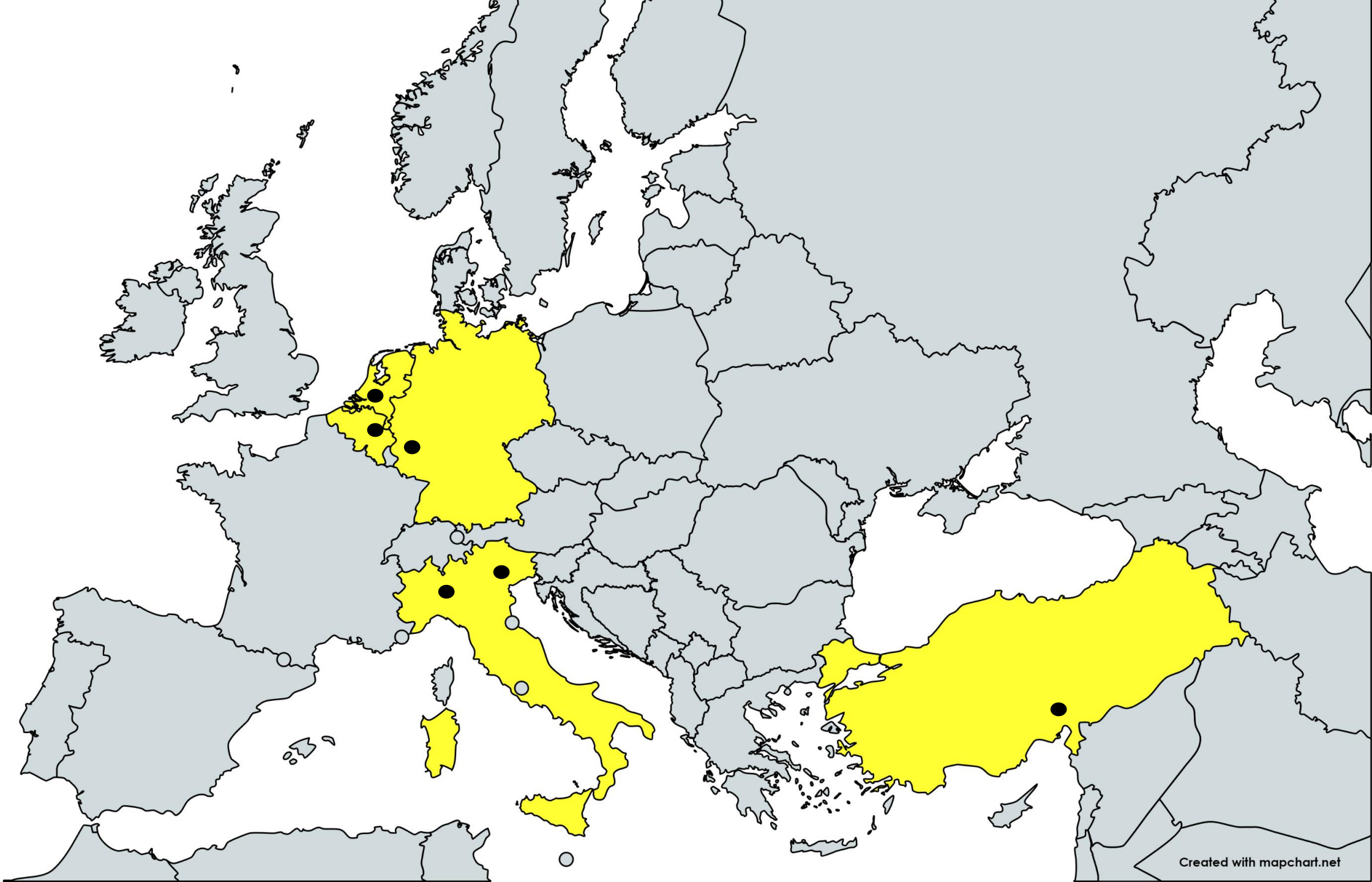
The U.S. tactical weapons are officially deployed with **defensive** purposes and allow European states to benefit from the protection of the U.S. nuclear umbrella



- 1) It helps maintain strategic stability by limiting the number of nuclear arsenals on Europe: the idea is that states that have U.S. warheads do not develop their own nuclear programmes
- 2) Nuclear sharing ensures that the benefits, responsibilities, and risks of the nuclear structure are shared among the allies. This allows non-nuclear NATO states to have a voice in Alliance nuclear decisions
- 3) The strategic effectiveness of deterrence is enhanced by having a broad and credible range of military options available. This is referred to as *military flexibility*

The secrecy of the bilateral agreements between the United States and each host country makes it impossible to obtain reliable data on the actual operation, precise location, and quantity of bombs, as well as the cost of the system

	Air Base	US B61 - 2019	US B61 - 2021	Aircraft
Germany	Buechel	20	15	Tornado
Turkey	Incirlik	50	20	None
Italy	Aviano	20	20	F-16
	Gheddi	20	15	Tornado
Netherlands	Volkel	20	15	F-16
Belgium	Kleine Brogel	20	15	F-16
<b>Total</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	



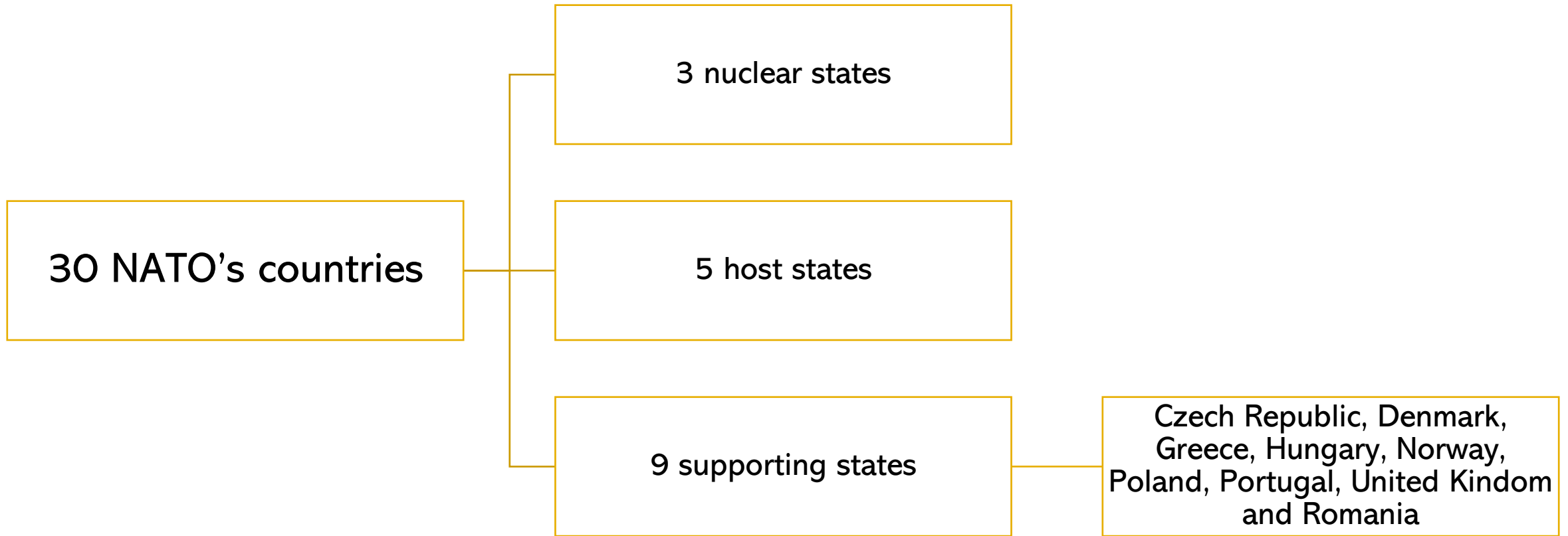
# How would this system work in the event of activation?

→ The system could only be activated in the event of a **nuclear war**

Under the protocols, U.S. warheads remain under control of the U.S. Air Forces in peacetime, as only the U.S. knows the launch codes, while in wartime the U.S. President can authorise the transfer of control of the warheads to non-nuclear European countries. From then on, the allies have full control of the weapon and the responsibility to hit the target

**“The non-nuclear NATO-partners in effect become nuclear powers in time of war”**

(declassified U.S. National Security Council memorandum, 1964)



Denmark, Norway, Spain prohibit to deploy nuclear weapons on thier territory in peacetime  
and Iceland and Lithuania also in wartime

# Which is the cost of nuclear sharing system?

U.S. Annual cost to maintain nuclear weapons in Europe (2018)	\$106.7 milion/year*
NATO cost to maintain nuclear sharing system in 2014	\$300 milion <sup>o</sup>
Host country cost to maintain nuclear sharing system (2018)	Unknown

Estimated cost of an F-35A (2018)	\$94.6 million*
Total estimated cost of a B61-12 (2018)	\$10 billion*

<sup>o</sup>Basso Sofia, «Il prezzo dell'atomica sotto casa». GreenPeace, novembre 2020. [https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-italy-stateless/7949b3cb-20201130\\_report-nuclear-sharing\\_final.docx.pdf](https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-italy-stateless/7949b3cb-20201130_report-nuclear-sharing_final.docx.pdf).

\*Andreasen Steve et al., «Building a Safe, Secure, and Credible NATO Nuclear Posture», nuclear threat initiative, January 2018, [https://media.nti.org/documents/NTI\\_NATO\\_RPT\\_Web.pdf](https://media.nti.org/documents/NTI_NATO_RPT_Web.pdf).



# Why the U.S. decided to deploy nuclear weapons in Europe?

- To defend the allies and repel a possible soviet attack
- To avoid the risks of horizontal nuclear proliferation
- By creating a nuclear umbrella, the U.S. could avoid the formation of a group of countries in Europe that did not belong to NATO

# Why does the U.S. keep its nuclear weapons in Europe?

- Russia still has a lot of non-strategic nuclear weapons
- They are the symbol of the Atlantic Alliance bond
- Other countries out of the NATO's border are developing weapons of mass destruction

**1950s**

European States asked US to sharing information on nuclear programmes

**1957**

Lauch of Sputnik worried NATO's states → the research of a deterrent system started

**1960s**

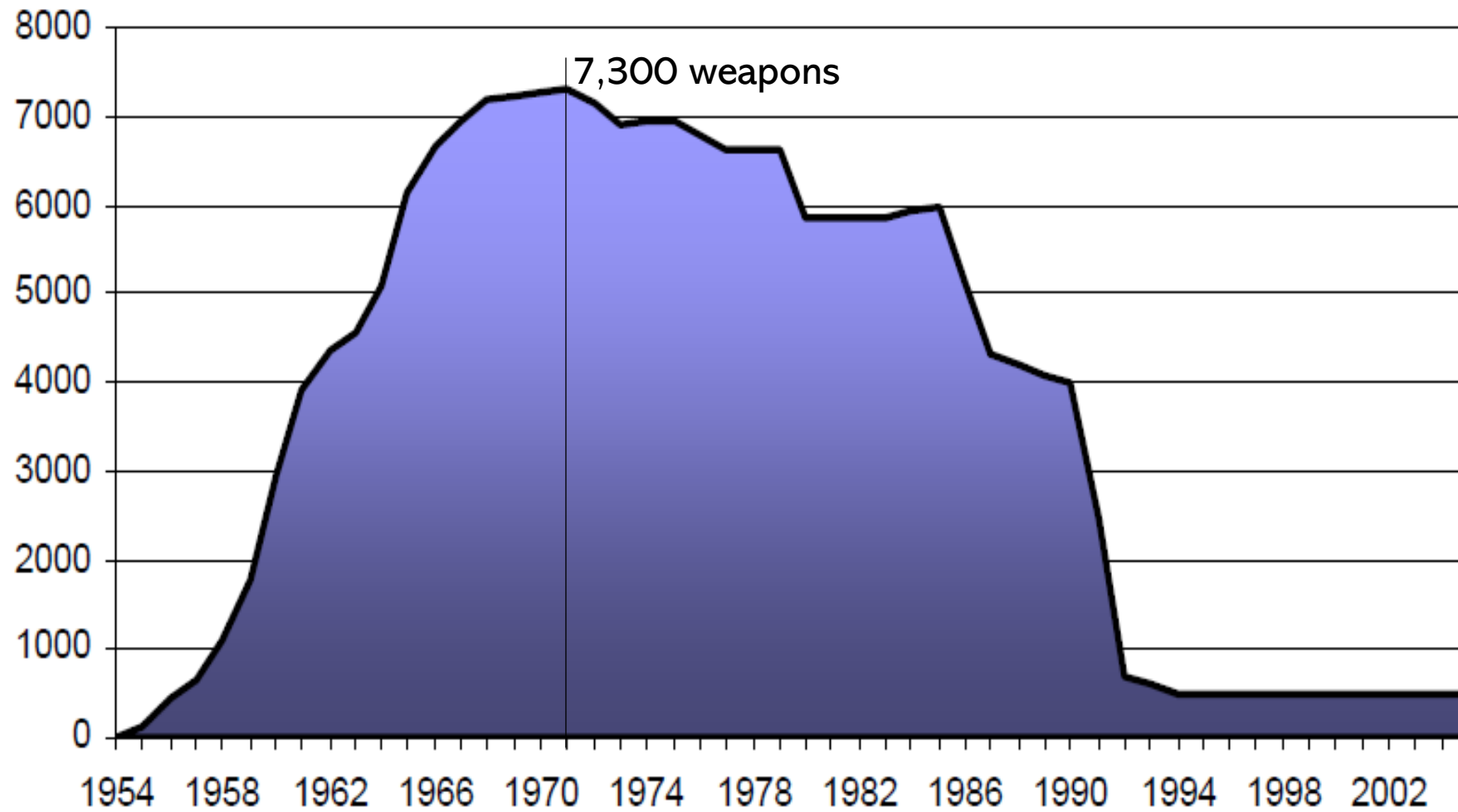
Bilateral secret agreements beetween the US and host countries

**1965**

Nuclear Planning Working Group, Nuclear Defence Affaire Committee and Nuclear Planning Group

**1971**

Record of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe



Hans M Kristensen, «US nuclear weapons in Europe», Federation of American Scientists, November 2019, p.24

[https://fas.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Brief2019\\_EuroNukes\\_CACNP\\_.pdf](https://fas.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Brief2019_EuroNukes_CACNP_.pdf).

## Article I of Non-Proliferation Treaty:

Each nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly; and not in any way to assist, encourage, or induce any non-nuclear-weapon State to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or control over such weapons or explosive devices.

# United States interpretation of NPT

NPT did not specify exactly what is permitted and what is prohibited,  
so **anything not specifically prohibited is permitted**

- The purpose of the treaty is to avoid nuclear war → If it starts, the treaty is no longer binding
- Consultations on nuclear issues are not prohibited → the Nuclear Planning Group can work
- The treaty does not prohibit the deployment of nuclear weapons on the soil of non-nuclear weapons states → it is legal
- Thanks to the personal U.S. interpretation of the word "control," the U.S. believes that the nuclear sharing system is legal because control of the weapons rests with the U.S. president and not with the host countries

The existence of long-range intercontinental ballistic missiles has made the presence of nuclear weapons in Europe obsolete

B61 bombs are obsolete

Host nation aircrafts have a limited range and would not be able to transport the warheads beyond European borders without refuelling

The readiness of the system is measured in weeks

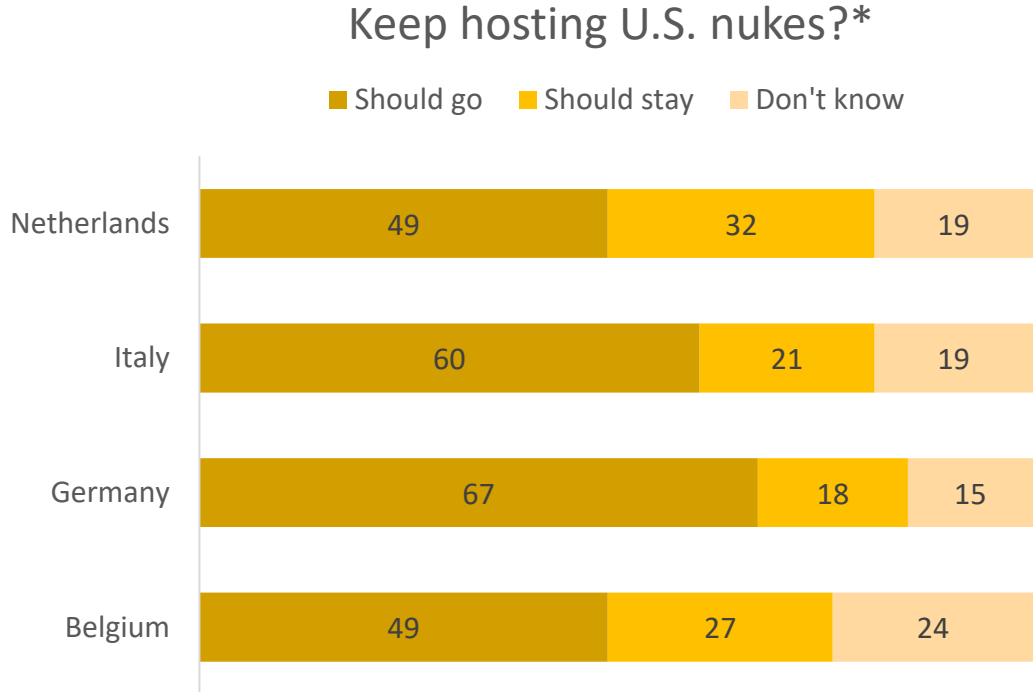
Very high maintenance costs

Missions involving US ordnance but are conducted by host nations are referred to as the "seven consecutive miracles"

Maintaining arsenals in Europe poses numerous risks, foremost among them the risk of terrorism

Storage sites of U.S. nuclear weapons are the first target that could be hit in a hypothetical nuclear war

The nuclear sharing system today hasn't a defensive or military role but a political and symbolic one:  
**U.S. Nuclear weapons are the symbol of the link that existed between the U.S. and European countries during the cold war**



\*[https://www.icanw.org/polls\\_public\\_opinion\\_in\\_eu\\_host\\_states\\_firmly\\_opposes\\_nuclear\\_weapons](https://www.icanw.org/polls_public_opinion_in_eu_host_states_firmly_opposes_nuclear_weapons)

Putin ordered to put the nuclear arsenal on high alert and threatened to use it

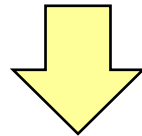
The risk of escalation in Ukraine is high

The NPT Review Conference in August was a failure

Russia planned to move its nuclear weapons to Belarus

Poland is open to the possibility of hosting U.S. nuclear weapons

Japan and South Korea are thinking about the possibility of hosting U.S. nuclear weapons



**High risk of proliferation**

U.S. and Russia could decide to deploy their weapons into others allies' territory, such as Poland or Japan for US and Belarus for Russia



# NATO's Strategic Concept

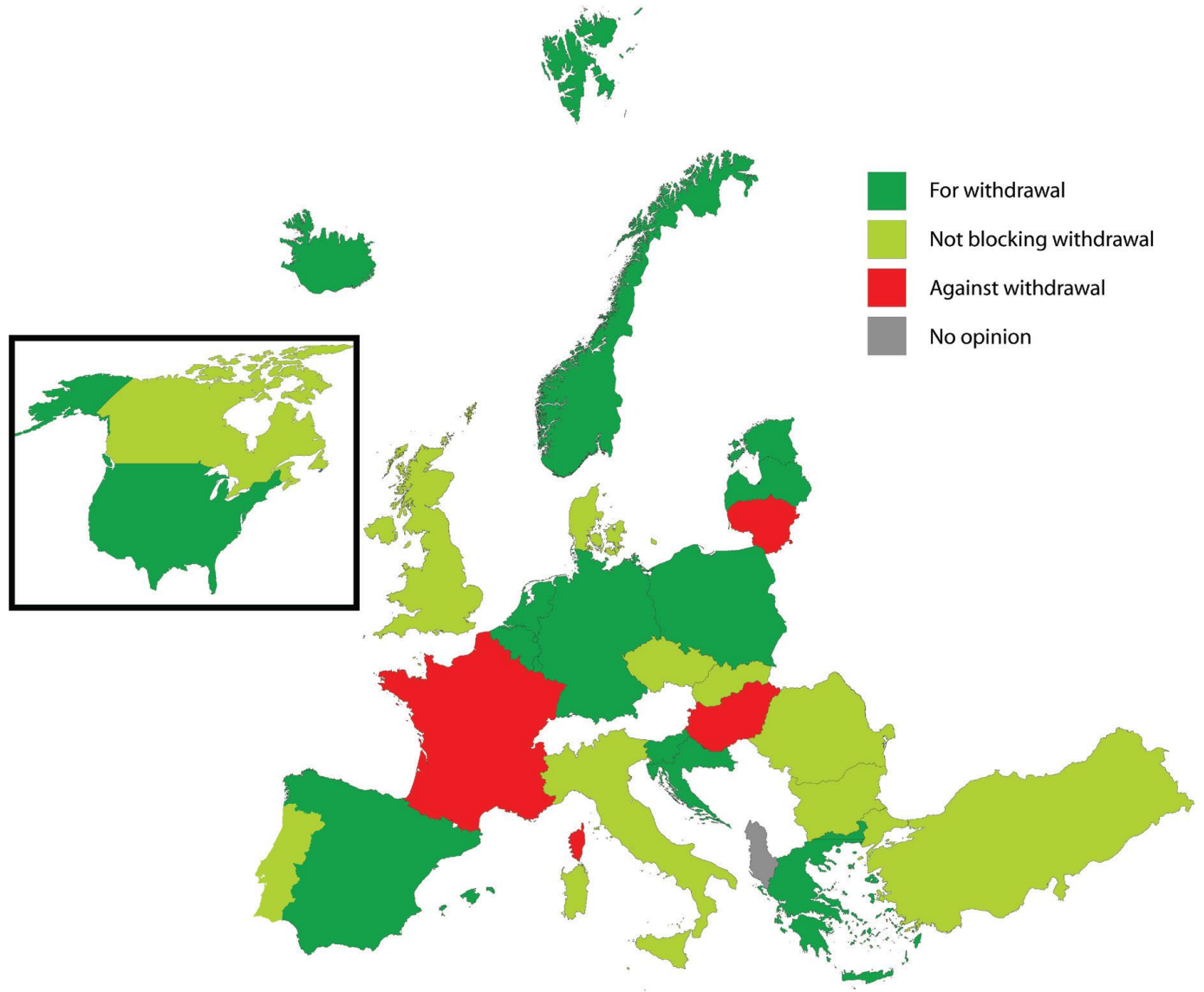
The Strategic Concepts of 1991 and 1999 stated «the presence of United States conventional and nuclear forces in Europe remains **vital** to the security of Europe, which is inseparably linked to North America»

**No reference to nuclear sharing system in the Strategic Concept of 2010**

The Strategic Concept of 2022: «The fundamental purpose of NATO's nuclear capability is to preserve peace, prevent coercion and deter aggression. (...) NATO's nuclear deterrence posture also relies on the United States' nuclear weapons forward-deployed in Europe and the contributions of Allies concerned. National contributions of dual-capable aircraft to NATO's nuclear deterrence mission remain central to this effort»

# Pax Christi's survey 2011

<b>In favour</b>
United States, Spain, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Greece, Estonia, Latvia, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia, Croatia
<b>Not Opposed</b>
Canada, Portugal, United Kingdom, Italy, Turkey, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Denmark
<b>Opposed</b>
France, Hungary, Lithuania



\*Albania did not respond, and Montenegro and Macedonia were not members of NATO

**Thank you very much for your attention**

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