

Germany Split on Banning US Nuclear Weapons on Its Territory

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NATO has a “sharing” treaty with Berlin where it delivers to Germany dozens of nuclear warheads, which are deposited in Buchel, at Ramstein Air Force Base.

The presence of these weapons in German territory has been controversial for a long time. In addition to violating the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the presence of American warheads on German soil constitutes an attack on NATO’s basic principles, being a case of true legal and political aberration on the international stage. However, the state of collective dissatisfaction with such passive subordination has been growing gradually in recent years. In this sense, the debate about the maintenance of such weapons is becoming increasingly fierce, with great opinions against these nukes taking hold among Germans and Europeans in general.

“I defend a clear position against parking, making available and, of course, using nuclear weapons,” said Norbert Walter-Borjans, president of the Social Democratic Party, in an interview published in the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” newspaper.

In the same vein, Rolf Mützenich, President of the Social Democratic Parliamentary Parliament, said that

“nuclear weapons on German soil do not strengthen our security, on the contrary. (...) The time has come for Germany to exclude nuclear parking”.

The moderate German left is beginning to take part in the cause of the country’s liberation from foreign occupation, shifting the anti-NATO discourse from the sphere of “political extremism” (both left and right) to a spectrum of greater acceptability in European public opinion.

The challenges, however, are many. The most conservative wings in the country stand up fiercely against any speech in favor of banning arms. Annegret Kramp Karrenbauer, German Defense Minister, made a statement on the topic, arguing that the “needs” of these weapons are due to geopolitical political tensions:

“As long as there are states with nuclear weapons that do not want to be part of our community of values, we need a strong negotiating position. (...) The capacity to deter nuclear sharing provision serves this purpose. Those who want to abandon it are weakening our security”.

In the same vein, conservative Patrick Sensburg, in an interview with the Handelsblatt newspaper, stated that “nuclear weapons are first to protect Germans”.

Outside Germany, at NATO, any discourse critical of the American occupation is met with disgust and reactions are immediate and aggressive. The secretary general of the Western military alliance, Jens Stoltenberg, spoke as follows:

“NATO’s nuclear sharing is a device (...) that guarantees benefits, responsibilities, and the risks of nuclear deterrence are shared among allies. (...) Politically, this is significant (...) Participating allies, such as Germany, make joint decisions on nuclear policy and planning, as well as maintain appropriate equipment. (...) All allies agreed that, as long as there are nuclear weapons, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance”.

The debate raises major controversies and is far from over. However, here we contemplate yet another example of the great problem of post-1945 international law: war is prohibited, except when the West determines it. Likewise, military occupation and weapons of mass destruction are illegal internationally, but they are easily used, without any punishment at the UN, when the West so desires, in its goal to exercise a global police function. NATO exists solely for this purpose: to act as a global police, overseeing the correct functioning of the hegemonic power structure of the West.

The argument that nuclear bombs provide a country greater sovereignty and can assist in international negotiations is valid. Indeed, countries with nuclear arsenals have greater power in the negotiations. However, these weapons on German soil do not belong to Germany and Germany itself does not have the power to use them according to its unilateral sovereign will. These weapons belong to the US and their use is the prerogative of Washington, which means that their presence in Germany decreases, does not increase, the country’s sovereignty and makes it more, not less, fragile in international negotiations.

For a country embedded in the secular and legal culture of Western Europe, strongly committed to the world’s pacification, the banning of arms is a fair and acceptable route and it is up to NATO and the US just to respect the sovereign decision of the German National State, abandoning the warlike mentality of the last century and the vision of Germany as a “dangerous nation”.

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