

How Nuclear Housecleaning in Europe Could End the War in Ukraine

Earlier this year, Vladimir Putin dialed up the pressure on Ukraine by placing nuclear capable Iskander missiles in Belarus, while he, Sergei Lavrov, and Dmitri Peskov warned about the possibility of using nuclear weapons there. Then something happened which points in the opposite direction.

On July 22, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres engineered an agreement between Russia and Ukraine to resume grain exports from Ukraine. Though it has been precarious, grain shipments have begun that will relieve Ukraine's ailing economy and the food crisis in the developing world.

And on July 19, 1987 Nobel Peace laureate Oscar Arias and 2014 Nobel Peace Prize nominee Jonathan Granoff placed an article in The Hill which proposes a way out of the Ukraine war.

Their proposal has three main elements:

NATO, whose nuclear deterrent did nothing to prevent war in Ukraine and increased tension in Europe, would plan and prepare to remove US nuclear weapons from Europe and Turkey.

Meanwhile, the US, France, Britain, and Russia would retain their nuclear arsenals pending further negotiations among them for nuclear disarmament, as described in Article 6 of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Actual removal of US nuclear weapons from Europe and Turkey would follow when Russia and the Ukraine agree on peace terms.

It might work, and here's why. The number of US nuclear weapons in Europe and Turkey has already dwindled to about 150 from a peak 7300 in the 1960s because NATO's conventional military strength has increased dramatically over the past half century. By itself, the trend is evidence that nuclear arms reduction can work. Each side in the ongoing nuclear standoff would still be able to wipe out the other several times over, so the nuclear balance of terror and deterrence which nuclear weapons states continue to believe in would be unaffected. Provided Russia and Ukraine arrive at mutually acceptable peace terms, Russia would have the reward of seeing nuclear weapons removed from close to its borders. Both president Biden and president Zelensky have admitted that no matter how long the fighting continues, peace in Ukraine will come only from a negotiated agreement.

All this is quite provisional, but the Arias-Granoff proposal could lead to reduced global tensions and provide a platform for the long-evaded and serious nuclear disarmament negotiations which Article 6 of the Non-Proliferation Treaty requires. So it's a start. It's worth a try, don't you think?

If you agree, please contact the members of our Congressional delegation.

Reference: Oscar Arias and Jonathan Granoff, "Nuclear Strategy and Ending the War in Ukraine." The Hill, July 19, 2022