



Assessing the Role of Middle-Level
Nuclear Powers in
Nuclear Nonproliferation and
Disarmament: As Seen from Russia
(on the Example of France)

Alexandra Zubenko, Junior Research Fellow, PIR Center

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Plan

- 1. French Nuclear Disarmament Profile**
- 2. French Nuclear Disarmament Agenda**
- 3. Role of France in Solving Nonproliferation Problems**
- 4. French Stance Weaknesses**
- 5. Conclusions**

French Nuclear Disarmament Profile

- Eliminated land-based ICBMs (1996 -2008)
- Reduced its nuclear arsenal by half since its Cold War peak and voluntarily dismantled missile launching submarines by third
- Decommissioned uranium enrichment facility in Pierrelatte and reprocessing facility in Marcoule
- Principle of strict sufficiency and high level of transparency: 290 warheads
- Stopped plutonium production in 1992, and of highly enriched uranium for nuclear weapons in 1996



**290
warheads**



**4
SSBNs**



**50
aircrafts**

French Nuclear Disarmament Agenda

- Entry into force of CTBT
- Negotiation of FMCT
- Measures to improve strategic context which would favor nuclear disarmament
- Risk reduction and enhancement of verification measures (P5 and Franco-German Working Papers for X NPT RevCon)



*Franco-German Nuclear Disarmament Verification Exercise
Germany, 2019*

Role of France in Solving Nonproliferation Problems



Iran's and DPRK's nonproliferation programs

- Initially, France played a significant role and insisted on a diplomatic settlement of the Iranian and DPRK's nuclear nonproliferation crises
- However, after returning to NATO military organization France became more prone to sanctions-based approach
- Currently, France tries to take the lead in representing European interests in JCPOA talks, which arguably makes her positions weaker as at the moment the EU considers European interests identical to those of the NATO

IAEA Safeguards

- Strengthening the system of IAEA safeguards and developing state-level approach

French Stance Weaknesses

- Shift of focus to verification and risk reduction measures instead of to disarmament itself
- Lack of bilateral dialogue and understanding with Russia and China
- Lack of independent position towards nonproliferation problems

Conclusions

- Amid the ongoing tensions, middle-level nuclear powers could have played a more significant role in solving nonproliferation crises and advancing forward to complying with article VI of the NPT
- However, the widening divisions between the US and Russia, *atlantization* of NATO and the overall deterioration of the international context deepened the split inside the P5 (P2+P3).
As a result, France is viewed only as a NATO *protégé* and not an important player
- Verification and risk reduction should become a supplement and not the main focus of the French disarmament policy. Paris should think more on how to launch and realize multilateral disarmament talks.
- Regarding nonproliferation, the current policy of uniting in different camps inside the P5, conversely, makes the NWS more feeble and incapable to stand up to nonproliferation challenges. Middle-rank nuclear powers should become rather efficient intermediaries and try to paper over differences inside the P5.
- The *European slant* of the current French leadership practically leaves no hope that the French position will become more unbiased and independent in the following years
- At the same time, thanks to a good nonproliferation and disarmament profile and ambitions to play a more significant role in nonproliferation and disarmament there is still a chance that once a more balanced and long-standing approach will take over

Thank you