

Defence Committee

Oral evidence: Consequences for UK Defence of INF Withdrawal, HC 1734

Tuesday 20 November 2018

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Members present: Dr Julian Lewis (Chair); Graham P. Jones; Gavin Robinson; Ruth Smeeth; John Spellar; Phil Wilson.

Questions 1-62

Witnesses

[I](#): Douglas Barrie, Senior Fellow for Military Aerospace, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Dr Jeremy Stocker, Associate Fellow, Royal United Services Institute, and Dr Heather Williams, Lecturer in Defence Studies, King's College London.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Douglas Barrie, Dr Jeremy Stocker and Dr Heather Williams.

- Q1 **Chair:** Good morning and welcome to this session of the Defence Committee on a topical subject other than Brexit—the question of how to prevent nuclear war, which is a welcome relief for most of us. The subject of the inquiry is the consequences for UK defence of INF treaty withdrawal by America. It is a great pleasure to have three very specialised witnesses before us today. I would like to begin by asking each of you to introduce yourselves briefly for the record.

Douglas Barrie: Douglas Barrie. I am senior fellow for military aerospace at the IISS.

Dr Williams: I am Heather Williams. I am a lecturer in defence studies at King's College London.

Dr Stocker: Jeremy Stocker. I am an associate fellow at RUSI. I am also a specialist adviser to this Committee on a different inquiry, but I have been asked to point out that I am here as a witness rather than as an adviser.

- Q2 **Chair:** Righto. While we are declaring interests, I suppose I ought to declare an historical one, in that in the 1980s I worked professionally in support of the campaign for the zero option deal, which was incorporated in the INF treaty in 1987.

We would like to set the scene a bit by asking people to explain the background to the INF treaty—the deployment of the Soviet SS-20s, the dual-track offer, the zero option offer two years later, the breakdown in the talks and then the final deal in 1987. We do not need you to do so at great length, but just so somebody who is not as old as me would be able to understand the context. Who would like to do that?

Dr Stocker: It looks like I have been voted in. The INF treaty, which was signed in 1987 and came into force the following year, was the culmination of a process of negotiation that had been going on for the best part of a decade. The issue started to arise in the late 1970s, when the then German Chancellor drew NATO's attention to the fact that the Soviets were deploying a new category of intermediate-range missiles in Europe—the SS-20s. These were a good deal more capable than the much earlier SS-4 and SS-5, which had been deployed since the 1960s.

The concern was not just that that was a new capability the Soviets had that the West had no direct equivalent of; it was more about the implications of that—that the Soviet Union felt that by posing a unique nuclear ballistic threat to Western Europe, it could go some way towards decoupling the Atlantic alliance. It was the latest iteration of the perennial problem, "Would an American President risk Washington for the sake of

Paris, London or Bonn?" The new SS-20 capability gave added impetus to that long-standing concern.

Thereafter, the Americans followed what was broadly described as the dual-track or twin-track approach. On the one hand, they planned to deploy broadly equivalent systems in the West—a mixture of the Pershing II ballistic missile and the ground-launched cruise missile. It was the latter that was eventually deployed to Greenham common and Molesworth. The other half of that twin-track approach was, in the meantime, to engage the Soviets in conversations to say, "We won't go ahead with this deployment if you withdraw your equivalent systems—the SS-20 and the earlier systems—in the meantime."

The talks went through a number of ups and downs but did not really get anywhere until the mid-'80s, by which time two important changes had occurred. The first was that President Reagan had won a second term and, with it, American policy in respect of the Cold War was becoming a good deal more self-confident. It was increasingly clear to the Americans that they were putting sufficient pressure on the Soviets that they were, in simple terms, winning the Cold War. That helps to explain why the second Reagan Administration was a good deal more conciliatory towards the Soviet Union than the very hard-line first Administration had been. On the other hand, of course, a series of frankly geriatric Soviet leaders had been replaced by the reformer Mikhail Gorbachev, who also, together with his advisers, understood that the Soviet Union was losing the Cold War and they needed to do something different.

The controversy over the strategic defence initiative—the so-called Star Wars programme—was very much part of that mutual understanding between Washington and Moscow that things were going in Washington's direction and that, technologically, the Soviet Union could not keep up. Actually, we now know that the Soviets came to that conclusion before the Americans and the rest of NATO. That meant that those discussions—those stuttering negotiations—over intermediate forces, which in terms of range are in the middling category, so longer-range than the tactical stuff but not as long-range as the intercontinental stuff, were able to proceed as one of the first manifestations of the new atmosphere of strategic co-operation between the superpowers.

Q3 Chair: You said there were a number of factors, but of course one key factor was that, despite huge anti-nuclear campaigns in the five NATO countries that were to take the missiles, the deployment actually went ahead from November 1983 onwards in this country. At that point, of course, the Russians walked away from the talks.

Would any of you say that, in the end, the final deal that was reached at the end of 1987 had any significant difference from the zero option that had been offered explicitly in 1981 and implicitly from the dual-track decision in 1979? There were other shorter missile systems that were included as well. Basically, would it be fair to say that there would have been no prospect of reaching agreement on that treaty if the missiles had



HOUSE OF COMMONS

not actually been deployed in the first place, because the Soviet Union would have had no incentive to get rid of the SS-20s, the SS-4s and the SS-5s if the West had not deployed some missiles that it could give up in return?

Dr Stocker: Yes, I think that is absolutely the case.

Douglas Barrie: I would differ slightly, in that it is a bit crystal ball gazing. There may have been other options that could have been pursued that were not.

Q4 **Chair:** Such as?

Douglas Barrie: There are lots of ways to try to incentivise somebody's behaviour. You do not necessarily have to do it with missiles all the time.

Q5 **Chair:** Right. There is one point from Jeremy's extremely full presentation that I would like to press you on a bit. You mentioned the decoupling aspect—the fact that these were missiles that could threaten Western countries but manifestly could not threaten the continental United States. There was another factor as well, however, because Western countries' cities could already be threatened by the relatively inaccurate SS-4s and SS-5s, but the SS-20s were much more accurate. I remember an argument that seemed to be central to the debate from the NATO side, which was that the SS-20s could attack NATO's military infrastructure without causing mass casualties because of their higher accuracy, and that the West would then be faced with the prospect of having to retaliate by escalating to all-out conflict, rather than specific, more limited nuclear strikes. That was felt to be one of the particular dangers of the SS-20.

Douglas Barrie: It was certainly a far more capable system, as I think Jeremy has mentioned, and considerably more accurate. In that sense, yes, it speaks to what you are addressing, which is that it was a much more capable, and therefore much more threatening system, with a very short flight time to specific targets.

Dr Stocker: You are right, Mr Chairman, that that point was made at the time, but realistically I think we would now say, and many people said at the time, that frankly, if there was any large-scale use of nuclear weapons in Europe, all bets were off anyway. The finely tuned theology of this weapon used in that way against that kind of target very quickly becomes overtaken by events.

Q6 **Chair:** I am quite sure that is what would have happened in reality. The question is whether the Soviet Union might have been tempted to think that it could get away with a stratagem of that sort, given their doctrine of using nuclear weapons at the time.

The reason I labour this point a little is because we have now moved to a situation, have we not, of much, much greater accuracy in weapons, even at long ranges. So our later questioning will bring out the issue—precisely, Douglas, as you say—of whether there are means of countering new

Russian missiles without necessarily having to deploy them on the ground in Western Europe.

Douglas Barrie: Can I briefly address your point? There was a kind of theological debate in the Soviet Union in the 1980s. We saw General Ogarkov come out and say very much that—that once you start a nuclear exchange, escalation control is extraordinarily difficult. That debate went on inside the Russian military and probably cost Ogarkov his position.

Q7 **Chair:** That is very interesting. I didn't know that fact. We will now move it up to date with the current situation. Thank you for that background. Heather, is there anything you want to add on any of what you have heard?

Dr Williams: Further to Jeremy's comments, three things jumped out at me that might help transition to the contemporary discussions—three things that seem important parallels. The first is that, while we have spent a bit of time talking about the SS-20s and the importance of the deployment—perhaps that is the stick side of the carrot and stick equation—it is important to remember that it was a dual-track approach. Emphasising Ronald Reagan and Gorbachev, that is an important one. As we think about going forward, trying to resolve the current INF issue, it is worth remembering carrots and sticks together.

The other thing that jumped out at me is that, in particular with the current situation, it is not just that these new weapons are more accurate; they are also dual-capable in an increasingly volatile region. For example, if one of them were ever used, we cannot be sure if this is a nuclear weapon or a conventional weapon coming at us. So it is not just the risk of arms racing going on here; there is also an important escalatory element, which adds to that dynamic.

Lastly, something that I hope we get a chance to discuss is that Russia is again, not necessarily trying to achieve decoupling now, but one of its objectives with this new missile is to divide NATO—to separate the allies from each other in their interpretation of this threat and in considering how to respond.

Taking those three themes and seeing how they are playing out in the contemporary environment might lead us forward.

Chair: Marvellous. Thank you; a perfect segue.

Q8 **John Spellar:** Bringing us right up to date, do you share the US assessment that Russia has been violating the INF treaty?

Douglas Barrie: I will start. I am sure my colleagues can finish on this one. There is no smoking gun. What there seems to me to be is a considerable amount of circumstantial material that points towards the American allegations being correct. One of the things that I found very interesting, which seems to have been leaked into the US press in a very particular fashion and which I think supports the US case, is that the way in which the intelligence community goes about naming these systems is

pretty specific and has its own pace and timing, and the names in themselves mark changes in what the intelligence community thinks is happening.

In the case of the alleged GLCM, that all started out with a Kapustin Yar designation, almost certainly, so a KY followed by a number, which is probably the first place that the intelligence community will have seen it. That is normally—or certainly traditionally—where the Soviets and the Russians can test ground-launched cruise missiles.

We then saw in the US press the SSC-X-8 designation, the Screwdriver. That marks a change again from a very early experimental project to something which is now considered to be a developmental programme heading towards a usable system. I think probably in 2016 or 2017 the X disappears, which basically signifies that this system, if not in service, certainly has completed development and the anticipation is that it will go into service.

That preamble is basically to say that I cannot remember ever seeing that whole system followed in open source where the system did not exist. I have seen elements where the system never makes it into service. You can find some X designations where you can see what the missile or platform was that never actually made it into the Soviet or Russia inventory, but to have a whole system that actually does not exist but goes through that whole process I would find very unusual.

Q9 John Spellar: The Americans are saying that they are more than just conceptual weapons. They are saying, “Look—we’ve been raising this very heavily since about 2014, and indeed have been raising this in NATO circles and with Russia since about 10 years ago.”

Douglas Barrie: I think the Americans probably started in about 2011 or 2010 with concerns—possibly even earlier. We can perhaps explore where those American concerns have come from and why, at least up until recently, it has been difficult certainly for some NATO allies to fully accept what the US has been saying.

Q10 John Spellar: Hasn’t NATO itself said that this analysis has been shared with them, and they agree with that analysis?

Douglas Barrie: Yes, up to a point. I think the language has been slightly more nuanced. Do you want to say anything on that, Heather?

Dr Williams: I was going to jump in just to say that at this summer’s NATO summit, in the Brussels communiqué, all allies signed up to this and said that the United States is in full compliance. They are pursuing dialogue with Russia and the allies have identified the Russian missile system. It is not even the SSC-8 now; they have named it as the 9M729. The language in that NATO communiqué says that that raises serious concerns and Russia’s denials and obfuscation require clarification with regard to whether or not this is a violation.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

To go to your original question about whether Russia is in non-compliance, I would go a bit further and say, "Yes, Russia is in non-compliance." The United States first publicly raised that issue in a US State Department compliance report in 2014. However, the State Department just last week provided a timeline of their engagement with Russia on this issue. They first raised it in bilaterals with Russia in early 2013. They have raised it in every state compliance report since 2014. It is in the national security strategy, the nuclear posture review, and consistently in NATO documents. NATO allies have raised this in bilateral discussions with Russia. Therefore I think to name the system itself, and for the United States and its allies to pursue this so vigorously, the evidence must be quite compelling.

The United States has also identified the trajectory of concerns of non-compliance. I will skip some of the more nuanced details, but the initial concern was about the testing of the system. The INF treaty is very clear on the limitations of how these ground-launched cruise missiles are tested. It was initially a test that raised the concerns, at which point the United States discussed this with Russia. Russia could have stopped deployment but has since pursued it. I think the evidence is quite compelling that Russia is in non-compliance.

Dr Stocker: I would just add that clearly a lot of the evidence is in the realm of highly classified intelligence, but I think we can reasonably assume that the Americans would not have so consistently made this allegation over this period of time if they were not very sure of their ground.

Q11 **John Spellar:** If we accept that—and I know the difficulties of Kremlinology—what is your evaluation of why the Russians have gone down this particular route?

Dr Stocker: I think there are two possibilities. One, as Heather said, is that it is a bit of mischief-making in Europe—another way of trying to tease out differences of approach between the United States and Europe.

Probably the bigger motivation is that the INF treaty is bilateral. It forbids the Russians and the Americans from developing and deploying this huge category of missiles, but it in no way constrains anybody else. I have seen various reports that suggest that between 50% and 90% of the Chinese ballistic missile inventory falls precisely into this category. You also have other countries such as India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and North Korea, just to mention the most obvious ones, which all have operational missiles in this category. That is a list of countries all around the borders of Russia and its near abroad. From Moscow's perspective, therefore, it can seem as if they and the Americans—whom they are not that concerned about—are constrained, whereas a lot of other potentially threatening countries much closer to home are completely unconstrained. I suspect that that might be their principal concern.

Dr Williams: May I add two other possible reasons for Russia's actions? One is that this might have been an accident. This is an argument that I have heard quite a few Russians make—because of the nature of the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Russian military-industrial complex and their relationship with the Government, they sometimes develop things without realising the political consequences. So one hypothesis I have heard from the Russian side is that they started development of this system, they tested it without realising that it violated the INF and, when this was raised, they still chose to go forward with it—either way it is a violation.

- Q12 **Chair:** May I interrupt your flow for a second to ask a technical—or perhaps a technical legal—question? If the Russians developed a system of this sort that violates the INF treaty if deployed in the European theatre, would they be prevented by the treaty from preparing and deploying such a system outside the European theatre?

Dr Williams: Yes.

Douglas Barrie: Yes.

Dr Stocker: Yes.

- Q13 **Chair:** Right. That's the problem—there is no geographical limit on where they can deploy it. Arguably, they could be getting into an argument with the West over deploying a missile that they actually want to deploy in theatres other than the NATO area.

Dr Williams: Correct.

- Q14 **Chair:** Please carry on. I apologise for interrupting.

Dr Williams: The second option connects to this point. The second possible reason for Russia to be violating the treaty is that it thinks that the US is non-compliant. There are three major Russian allegations of US non-compliance so potentially, from the Russian perspective, if the US is cheating, they think, "We're the ones with China on our border—why should we continue to constrain ourselves?"

Chair: May I ask you to hold the thought about the Russians believing that the Americans are not compliant, because we have a later question specifically about that? Did you want to add any more, Heather?

Dr Williams: No.

Chair: May I bring in Phil at this point, before I ask for any further comments?

- Q15 **Phil Wilson:** You mentioned these other countries—China, Pakistan and so on—and that the Russians could be in breach because of the fear that there could be a threat from those countries. Have the Russians made any overtures to the Americans or the UN about making the INF treaty not just bilateral but multilateral?

Dr Stocker: Yes. During the George W. Bush Administration, Putin suggested—and the Bush Administration I recall agreed—that it would be a good idea to make it multilateral. So far as I am aware, neither Government was particularly energetic in taking that forward, and it was



HOUSE OF COMMONS

probably unrealistic because, from a Chinese perspective, what's in it for them? The Americans are already constrained and they are not, so what possible motivation could they have for joining in?

Douglas Barrie: There is a point that the Chair has already made about the geography. One of the issues with the INF is obviously the range cap from 500 km to 5,500 km. For India and Pakistan, a strategic weapon does not have to go that far—it does not actually have to go 500 km to be considered a strategic weapon—so how you would extend the INF and turn it into a multilateral treaty is extraordinarily difficult.

- Q16 **Chair:** It has been pointed out to me that Russia actually proposed in 2007 to the UN that the INF treaty should be made into a multilateral treaty. The US issued a joint statement with Russia in support of that, but the proposal got nowhere. On the question of geography, then, rather than go down the multilateral treaty route, if it could perhaps be agreed to amend the INF treaty such that it only applied to missiles deployed in the European theatre, that presumably would put Russia to the test as to the purpose for which these weapons were being developed, wouldn't it?

Douglas Barrie: It might do. The challenge with that is one of verification—how do you go about doing it? One of the things that struck me about the original INF treaty in '87 and '88—you can go and find this—is that one of the US concerns at that point was that it is very difficult to identify the vehicles and the cruise missiles. You can drive a ground-launched cruise missile on a vehicle all over the place.

- Q17 **Chair:** I accept that it is mobile. On the other hand, the advantage of it being completely banned is you only have to spot one of them to know that there has been a violation.

Douglas Barrie: True, but by that point it might be too late, depending on what is going to happen.

Dr Stocker: The other difficulty, of course, is if you were able to negotiate such an amendment to the treaty, Russia would effectively be saying, "This is not about Europe; this is about Asia." That is probably a message the Russians would not want to send to the Chinese.

Dr Williams: I would add to that: if you limit the treaty to Europe, are you just giving permission for an arms race in Asia?

Chair: We would say, presumably, that we are concerned about our own security, and that is a problem others have to sort out by trying to arrange their own treaties with one another.

- Q18 **Gavin Robinson:** Dr Williams, you mentioned the Russian proposition that the development of a system may have happened by accident and they may not have realised it would be in breach of INF. I would be interested in your view, and those of your colleagues, as to how reasonable a position that is to adopt and, more importantly, if it is a reasonable position to adopt in some strange stratosphere, how their development plans were not altered following its being raised in bilaterals

from 2013 and publicly in 2014.

Douglas Barrie: Perhaps I will start on that and my colleagues can finish. Accidental development and deployment of a ground-launched cruise missile to me seems unlikely, to be polite.

Gavin Robinson: Yes, I didn't want to leave it there—I thought we should explore it a little.

Douglas Barrie: Just think of the steps you have to take to get to this point, if you agree with the American assessment that they are in material breach. You don't do this by accident. There may be an element of industrial rivalry inside Russia as to who develops these systems. The system we think the US is concerned about is designed by a company called Novator, who make submarine and ship-launched cruise missiles, which may be the basis for the missile at the heart of the issue with the INF. The other company that does it is Raduga. It partly may just be industrial rivalry—"They built one; we'd like to build one as well." Maybe the army wants into this game as well. But the idea that this is accidental stretches credulity.

Q19 **Gavin Robinson:** And furthermore, having become aware of a potential breach, would you not cease to develop it?

Douglas Barrie: You would think you would stop, yes.

Q20 **Gavin Robinson:** Yes, and that clearly has not happened. Would you concur, Dr Stocker?

Dr Stocker: I would. I would just add a slight cautionary note that it seems incredible to us that these things could happen by accident, but there is some track record of this from the Soviet Union days. What we loosely called the military-industrial complex in the Soviet Union was certainly capable of generating military equipment capabilities for which there was no stated strategy or requirement. In other words, that military-industrial complex did have something of a momentum of its own, and often the policies for the employment of those systems would catch up with what had already been delivered by the Soviet defence industry. To that extent there is some continuity in how the Russians do their business, but I would not put it any more strongly than saying we should not assume that the very rigorous policy-to-capability process that goes on in the MoD in this country and elsewhere in the West is necessarily mirrored as rigorously in a country like Russia, where governance structures are that much more opaque, as are the personal relationships involved.

Dr Williams: The possibility that was suggested is that one of Russia's new air-launched cruise missiles—I believe it was the Kalibr—was tested from a fixed ground location. Even though it is intended as an air-launched cruise missile, testing it on the ground, if you do not meet certain specifications, qualifies as a violation of INF. That is one of the suggestions that has been made for how this could have been accidental. None the less, whether or not it was accidental testing or an accidental development due to internal bureaucratic politics, at some point it was raised that this is

in violation of INF and Russia chose to continue with the development and deployment of that system and was cognisant that it was a material breach.

Douglas Barrie: Can I just offer a clarification there? Kalibr is actually a submarine and ship-launched system. It is not currently air-launched. If you explore the accidental route, the off-ramp for the Russians on the range would have been that they could have tested Kalibr from Kapustin Yar. They probably did. They probably tested it in a configuration that is suitable for submarine or ship launch. At that point, there is ambiguity as to the nature of the weapon. When you then fire it from something that starts to resemble a road mobile transporter erector launcher—a TEL—that looks nothing like how you would launch the weapon off a ship or a submarine, at that point you have a problem.

- Q21 **Chair:** You hear quite a lot said about the new weapons systems, but rather less said about what is believed about where they have been deployed. Previously, there had been quite a lot of talk about Kaliningrad and whether systems had been deployed in Kaliningrad. Can you clear up the point about what is known about the deployment of short to intermediate-range nuclear weapons by the Russians?

Douglas Barrie: You've got to be careful. There is an area of potential confusion here between the short-range system, which is part of the Iskander-M, and the much longer-range system, partly because it is conceivable that the two launch vehicles are not hugely dissimilar. That again causes some kind of problems.

We have seen suggestions in the US press that there have been at least two battalion sets equipped with the treaty-breach weapon. Possibly one remains on the range at Kapustin Yar for training purposes. The second one may have gone to the, I think, 119th Missile Brigade, which went to Yelanskiy, which is near Sverdlovsk. It was on the range in Kapustin Yar at the end of 2016, probably re-equipped at that point and then deployed sometime in early 2017, which is kind of coincidental with reports in the US press that the system had gone from being on the range to having actually been deployed. Again, there is no smoking gun. There is no evidence in a public source that absolutely confirms that, but there is a lot of circumstantial material that surrounds it.

Dr Stocker: On the Kaliningrad one, the Russians already have a very substantial short-range, treaty-compliant missile inventory in Kaliningrad, which can reach a very large part of Western Europe. If they are concerned about trying to intimidate, for example, the Germans, they don't need to put this longer-range missile in Kaliningrad. The only reason that they might put it in Kaliningrad might be if they wanted to threaten somewhere like the UK, because the short-range missiles in Kaliningrad can't reach the UK and the reported range of this SSC-8 missile is such that it couldn't reach the UK if it was based in western Russia. But we are at a very early stage at the moment and it is something of a speculative leap to say that they might do that.



- Q22 **Chair:** Can I just check a point on accuracy? With a missile of this sort that could threaten the UK from Kaliningrad if it were deployed there, the ability of the British strategic nuclear deterrent to respond to any form of attack by such a missile would be capable of exactly the same degree of accuracy in retaliation as could be shown in the offensive initiative in the first place?

Dr Stocker: Yes, without knowing the precise details of this new Russian missile. Of course, the precise accuracies and so on of Trident are not available in open sources. But in terms of a nuclear attack on the UK, far-fetched though that seems, the logic of deterrence pretty much applies irrespective of what kind of missile has been used to deliver the nuclear weapon. In that sense, I don't think it fundamentally changes anything.

- Q23 **Chair:** So there is no question of, for example, the warheads on British nuclear weapons being any less accurate than any missile that could be used to threaten the United Kingdom.

Dr Stocker: Not that we would be aware of and not that is likely to be of particular significance.

Douglas Barrie: Given the payloads, any kind of discrepancy in internal accuracy is academic at this point.

- Q24 **Ruth Smeeth:** Good afternoon. You talked about bilateral conversations between our NATO allies and Russia. Do you think there has been a sufficiently robust response from European NATO allies to the alleged Russian violation?

Dr Williams: I'm happy to start with that one. I think that NATO has done very well to maintain unity in its response to the allegations of Russia's violation. The Brussels communiqué, as I said before, was some of the strongest language we've ever seen about the violation, and it came from all 29 members and was signed off by all 29. To my knowledge, some of the allies have raised the violation in bilaterals. The ones that I'm aware of are the UK, France and Germany ones. The United States has raised it consistently in bilaterals since 2013. There have been five expert meetings and two Special Verification Commission meetings as well. There have been some criticisms, however, that I have heard coming from Washington saying that NATO allies have not done enough to lean on Russia and to pressure Russia to try to return to compliance. One NATO ally in particular, who has economic ties with Russia, has received a bit of criticism. However, as I said at the outset, what I see as one of Russia's objectives with this violation is to try to divide NATO. With 29 members, trying to get all 29 to agree on anything must be a real challenge. That NATO has maintained unity up to this point really should be commended and should be the emphasis going forward.

Douglas Barrie: I would simply add that initially among some of the member states there was some hesitancy over the US allegations. I think you've seen, as the years have gone by, the position has solidified as the US appears to have shared at least a little bit more of its intelligence with

some of its closest allies. That seems to have moved NATO collectively more towards a consensus that the Russians are in material breach.

Dr Stocker: I have nothing to add.

Q25 **Gavin Robinson:** We had a chance to explore some of the Russian defence positions that they put forward about their breach. What validity do you think there is to their claim that the US themselves are in violation of INF?

Dr Williams: I'll have the first go at that one. Just as a quick background, Russia has made three claims of US non-compliance. The first has to do with missile defence interceptors. Russia sees the SM-3 interceptor based in Europe as potentially being a violation, with the idea that you could put a nuclear-capable cruise missile into the interceptor to turn it into a ground-launched cruise missile. The second common allegation by the Russians is that unmanned aerial vehicles could constitute a ground-launched cruise missile and are within the range of 500 km to 5,500 km. The third allegation that they often make is that the testing of missile boost systems could be considered a test of a cruise missile capability as well. The unmanned aerial vehicle claim has been raised by the Russians for the past 15 years.

The US has consistently addressed these in expert and technical level meetings and demonstrated that none of these can constitute a violation of the treaty. As for the SM-3 interceptor, these were specifically designed to intercept objects that are not on the earth's surface. They therefore cannot be constituted as a GLCM. The notion of putting a nuclear-capable cruise missile into those interceptors is also technically pretty inconceivable.

On the issue with the drones, the United States' argument for why unmanned aerial vehicles do not count as a GLCM is that they define a missile as something that travels only one way, and unmanned aerial vehicles hopefully travel back. The booster systems are explicitly allowed under the INF in the testing of systems. They have different phases and it is for research and development only. I really do not see any validity, technically, to the Russian allegations.

However, if we try to put ourselves in the position of people in Moscow, again, the argument that I hear from them somewhat regularly, particularly with regards to the SM-3 interceptor, is that, "You can show us all the technical information you want saying that you could not put a nuclear-capable cruise missile in there, but in the event of a crisis, how do we know that you really can't and won't do that?". To my mind, that is a manifestation of the deep distrust between the two sides.

This might not be a problem with a technical solution, because of the Russian deep fear of what the United States might do in the event of a crisis. That is why I am sure we will also have a discussion about the risk of crisis escalation and instability in the region. Specifically to your



question about the Russian allegations, technically, no—all NATO allies verified that the United States is in full compliance with its INF obligations.

Douglas Barrie: On the launch cells that are currently used to house the SM-3s, the Russian concern is that they could be used to house Tomahawk, which is correct, notionally at least, but it does not make a great deal of sense to do that, not least because the Russians know exactly where they are. The real advantage of a GLCM is that it is a road-mobile system—you want to be able to drive it around. If things ever did get really sticky, they know exactly where they would want to strike first. In that sense, I find that probably the weakest of the Russian arguments. The other two are not that much stronger either.

Q26 **Gavin Robinson:** So you concur that there is no validity to it, and you are the same, Dr Stocker?

Dr Stocker: The tricky bit about this, from the Russian perspective, is that the missile defence system that is now deployed in Romania and is being deployed in Poland, which is called Aegis Ashore, is a naval air defence and missile defence system that has effectively been containerised and put ashore in Europe. That uses a thing called the mark 41 vertical launching system, which is what American cruisers and destroyers carry, which is a multi-purpose missile launch system. You can put the SM-3 missile defence interceptor in it. You can put a conventional air defence missile in it. You can put a Tomahawk land-attack missile in it. You can put anti-ship missiles in it. You can put anti-submarine missiles in it. It is multi-purpose.

That has gone ashore, because it is part of the package, so the Russian argument is, “Well, you can put a cruise missile in it when it’s at sea, so why can’t you put it in it when it’s on land?”. But Douglas is right: why would you want to, because you cannot move it. Also the Americans do not need to, because they have land-attack cruise missiles in lots of ships that can be deployed within reach of any targets within—I nearly said the Soviet Union—Russia that they might want to. From a strategic point of view, it would make absolutely no sense.

Plus, of course, the Americans would have to get the prior approval of the Romanian and Polish Governments to deploy a non-treaty compliant missile on their territory, and that is not something that you can do in secret. From both a strategic and a technical viewpoint, it really does not make sense. Frankly, the Russians are clutching at straws.

Q27 **Gavin Robinson:** That is incredibly helpful and great detail. Dr Williams, you opened up the spectre of there being no validity to the argument in technical and legal terms, and the issue around the court of public opinion in Russia. Are there steps that the US and the European allies could take to alleviate those concerns within the general populace or those who are attuned to these arguments, at the very least? Or is there no point in trying?



Dr Williams: I think there is a point in trying still. Going back to how Dr Lewis opened the discussion, thinking about history, we can return to thinking about the dual-track approach and what that might look like today, if we want to move the conversation towards that side.

On the carrot side, one idea that has been suggested is reciprocal inspections of the potentially treaty-violating items, whereby you could have a US or European team go and inspect the Russian missile that has raised all these concerns. I have been told by technical experts that apparently you can inspect the fuel tank to see whether its range violates the INF. In exchange a group of Russian or other international inspectors can go and inspect the missile defence sites, to confirm that the missile defence interceptors cannot be converted into a GLCM. This idea has been put forward a couple of times, I believe. I do not know how much success it is having. In terms of what the UK can do, it can explore these specific solutions and opportunities, and get behind them, to the extent that it is in the interest of NATO and the UK. I am sure that there are other potential solutions out there. I argue that Russia needs arms control a lot more than the United States does. It is really a matter of finding what it is that can be bargained. What is it that Russia really wants and is it worth anything that we would give up? That is on the carrot side.

On the stick side, I think the United States has started pursuing some more aggressive measures, to try to demonstrate to Russia that it is not going to sit idly by while Russia starts and tries to win an arms race. We saw this in the recent nuclear posture review with discussion of supplemental nuclear capabilities. It was also in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, which I believe called for \$65 million in research and development for a new cruise missile. It is also in hypersonic glide vehicles. Russia has claimed that it will deploy hypersonic capability by 2020. To some extent, it is pursuing those military development opportunities along with continuing to pursue diplomacy. But from my read, America's patience on this will not last in perpetuity.

Dr Stocker: The difficulty with a mutual verification regime, which might reassure the Russians, is that it would require the Russians to sign up to a process that the Russians knew in advance would conclude that the Russians were in breach of the treaty and the Americans were not. So why on earth would they agree to do that?

Q28 **Gavin Robinson:** That being the case, what steps could be taken to satisfy, meet or address some of the concerns that are being put forward by Russia?

Dr Stocker: I am not sure that there are any.

Douglas Barrie: To the extent that the Russian counter-allegations are simply that, just counter-allegations, it is a kind of tit-for-tat mirroring behaviour, where the Russians have the less coherent and less solid case. To speak to your point about the Russian population more broadly and how these things are perceived, I think the challenge that the US and the West in general faces in this area, is how you manage the narrative in

terms of how the West responds. It will be very easy for Putin to portray any kind of material US and western response as simply another example of US aggression against Russia. "This is Russia being contained. We have seen NATO expansion. We were dissed all the way through the 1990s." You go back to his 2007 Wehrkundetagung speech, where Putin basically says, "I have had it with the US and the West. I want Mother Russia to be great again." That narrative is now embedded in his messaging to the Russian people. He will try to manage what the West does, to support that narrative.

- Q29 **Graham P. Jones:** We touched earlier on the issue within the treaty of geographic challenges, particularly from south of Russia. You have also touched on the versatility of NATO weapons systems and the fact that third countries could develop these weapons outside of the INF treaty, which is just the US and Russia. Does this place an unfair restraint on the Americans and the Russians: the fact that there are these developing, or other, elements and components to intermediate nuclear forces that threaten both Russia and America, or certainly Russia—or a perceived threat?

Dr Stocker: I would not put it quite in terms of fairness, because we are talking about strategic affairs, after all, and fairness is arguably of little relevance; but I would certainly say that the irony of bilateral agreements such as the INF treaty is that the principal beneficiaries are often not the signatories. We have been here before. The 1972 ABM treaty, which was signed, again, by Washington and Moscow: I would argue that the principal beneficiary was the UK. So with INF: not necessarily when it was signed, but certainly today, the principal beneficiary of the INF treaty is not the Americans or the Russians; it is the Chinese, because the other two large powers are constrained and the Chinese are not. You can see that in unfairness terms, perhaps, but actually it is just simply more that that is a reality of enduring bilateral agreements in what is increasingly a multilateral world.

- Q30 **Graham P. Jones:** That freedom of third countries: do you think that that is increasingly making the INF treaty less viable—unsustainable?

Dr Stocker: I would argue that it is less important than it was when it was signed in the rapidly changing circumstances of the mid-1980s—the role that it played in the rapidly changing relations between Moscow and the West. It is still of some use, not least as a confidence-building measure.

Actually, arms control treaties in themselves tend not to bring about reductions in armaments, because countries will only sign such agreements if they have already decided that they are sufficiently secure that they are prepared to reduce their armaments. The role of arms control agreements tends to then be in building confidence between parties in doing what they have already decided they are broadly comfortable doing. It puts a sort of regulatory structure around a process of an easing of tension and therefore a reduction in armaments that is going on anyway.



It is certainly the case that the circumstances of today are utterly changed from 30 years ago when the INF treaty was signed—except to note, of course, that Russia has shown a residual attachment to its bilateral agreements with Washington, because they remain a symbol of its former superpower status. The retention of those instruments tends to give the Russian state a degree of exclusivity in international affairs, which, absent the Cold War, they have largely lost. So the Russians do have something of an emotional attachment to exclusive bilateral agreements with the Americans, which are of a nature that people like the Chinese and the Indians, and so on, don't enjoy.

Douglas Barrie: I think it is worth saying that the principal beneficiaries of the INF treaty are actually the Europeans. Those weapons were aimed very much at us. In terms of does it constrain US and Russian behaviour in terms of certain weapons types, yes—but does it really matter? The US is concerned about Chinese developments, certainly, but the US has got lots of other clubs in its golf bag to deal with those problems.

Dr Williams: Arms control is a product of its time, so I think perhaps the question we should be asking is: if the ultimate goal is to incorporate countries like China into some sort of an INF agreement, are we better off doing that with the current INF treaty, or with getting rid of it altogether? I would argue that the current INF treaty provides a unique degree of transparency, predictability and confidence-building measures that it is worth trying to save if the goal is to eventually include other countries, but I would say that with a word of caution.

I believe there was an earlier question about whether Russia has raised the possibility of expanding INF to include China. Something that Russia does quite consistently in nuclear non-proliferation treaty meetings is call for multilateral arms control. They are talking about more strategic arms control, such as New START. That is a consistent talking point for the Russians when it comes to arms control, but when they raise it, they are not just talking about China; they are also talking about incorporating the UK and France. Opening up a broader discussion about multilateralising arms control could raise other difficult questions, not just about China.

Q31 **Graham P. Jones:** So the violation by the Russians of the treaty doesn't invalidate every aspect of the treaty. The treaty still has some merit, even if it is limited, and that is, as you say, around reassurance, dialogue, and perhaps opportunity and a framework to extend to other third countries—particularly China, the United Kingdom and France—who could be brought in. Would that be a fair summary? The treaty has been violated, but it is not worth ditching.

Dr Stocker: That may be the case, particularly in terms of the impact of America's relations with its European allies, and how they might react. There is also the concern that if the Americans, which they have not yet done, give the formal six months' notice that they are required to give before withdrawing from the treaty, you could argue that they will have effectively rewarded the Russians for breaching the treaty and are letting



HOUSE OF COMMONS

them off the hook. That is quite a tricky one to play diplomatically. It is clear that there are people, even in the US Administration, who are still trying to hold off on formally abrogating the treaty because it may be premature and unnecessary, and might have adverse consequences.

- Q32 **Graham P. Jones:** In terms of diplomacy, confidence building and it being a framework for moving into a new dimension with other countries, it would be a loss; is that what you are saying? At the moment, the Russians are in violation of the treaty, and if there are no sanctions to violations, what is the validity of the treaty in trying to control arms? The Americans' simple logic is: walk away because the Russians are in violation.

Douglas Barrie: True, but one thing that strikes me about the violation is that the INF covers two classes of weapons: cruise missiles, obviously, and intermediate-range ballistic weaponry. In terms of stability, cruise missiles are the less threatening of the two. When allegations started to bubble up from the US, there was some concern that another system might actually have been the cause, which was RS-26 Rubezh—a ballistic missile that goes just above 5,500 km. What has happened is serious, but had that been the cause of the treaty breach, it would have been even more serious, because of the nature of the weapon.

The Russians have been fairly cautious in deploying the alleged cruise missile, and at the moment they have stuck to that. They haven't gone anywhere else; this is not an across-the-board attempt at breaching, but it may be about pushing the door to see how far they can go. It is worth keeping that in mind and, for that reason, trying to sustain the treaty if possible.

Dr Williams: Your question is essentially: is INF worth saving? It really depends on whether the Russians are interested in coming back into compliance. If they are not interested in that and will continue to violate the treaty, then no, there are limits to the length that we will go to in order to save INF. If you have a treaty that one side blatantly violates for years on end, and they do not come back into compliance, that also undermines a lot of the benefits of arms control that you were outlining. It undermines the credibility of arms control agreements; it undermines dialogue and transparency.

- Q33 **Graham P. Jones:** It undermines other treaties if you are not prepared to take a stand on this treaty.

Dr Williams: It undermines our credibility—absolutely. It really depends on whether or not Russia is interested in coming back into compliance. If we are at the stage of talking about formal announcement of withdrawal, how withdrawal happens is just as important as if withdrawal happens. Withdrawal can happen in a way that sustains credibility and the benefits of arms control itself, and that tries to carry those forward—just not in a treaty that Russia is openly violating.

- Q34 **Phil Wilson:** Why do you think that the US has decided to withdraw now?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

What is the difference in the approach to the INF treaty between the Trump Administration and Obama? Why has it happened now? We have heard that these violations have apparently been going on for quite a while. Why now and not under Obama?

Dr Williams: The Obama Administration was the first to acknowledge the violation in 2014 and in subsequent State Department reports and bilateral meetings. Why now? As with everything in the United States at the moment, domestic politics plays a role. In his announcement of the US intention to withdraw President Trump specifically talked about Obama's failures. As with many of his foreign policy decisions, he is trying to differentiate himself from Obama. There is the possibility that this decision was made as another step, similar to the Iran nuclear deal, of President Trump trying to distance himself from his predecessor.

It is also important to emphasise that Russia has been violating this treaty for approximately five years. The decision to pursue or consider withdrawal is not just coming from the President or the National Security Council; it is also coming from defence intellectuals and the defence establishment, which is saying that Russia has been violating this treaty.

Q35 **Phil Wilson:** So can it be perceived that because of the nature of politics in the US at the moment this decision, which might be the right decision, is being made for the wrong reasons?

Dr Williams: I wouldn't go that far, because as I was saying, in the defence community there is this perception that Russia cannot just violate the treaty in perpetuity. If you are a believer in arms control, you also have to believe that arms control must be upheld. On the domestic political angle, I am not comfortable saying that this decision is being made purely for domestic politics. It is a mixture of things.

This non-compliance by Russia is also part of a pattern of behaviour. If this was a one-off non-compliance that we could try to resolve in a technical dialogue, that would be one discussion that we would be having, but that is not what is going on here. This is part of an ongoing pattern of Russian aggression, including nuclear bullying and nuclear modernisation, which I think does contribute to why the announcement was made now.

Dr Stocker: I would just add that in foreign policy terms you could interpret the announcement but not the implementation of withdrawal as being a useful way of just putting a little more pressure on the Russian Government to say, "We know what you're doing. It is going to have consequences." It is ramping up the pressure a bit.

I would surmise that domestically it is probably quite useful for Trump to be seen to be taking a hard line with Russia because of the ongoing inquiries about Russian interference in his election to the White House. Being seen to be tough in a way that does not have any immediate downsides, which formal withdrawal might do, might be quite a clever way of doing things.



On the other hand, you could interpret it as just being impulsive. I certainly do not know which of those two interpretations is right. I think you would have to go to a lobby journalist in the White House to get a better insight into which of those is the more likely, and it may be both.

Q36 Phil Wilson: To get on to the consequences of withdrawal from the deal, what does it ultimately mean for new START? I think it expires in 2021.

Also, I think you mentioned that it is of its time. The agreement was made 30-odd years ago, at the time when the Soviet Union was still around. Therefore is this bilateral approach a kind of relic of that time? Is there still a need for a bilateral approach to these agreements? Does it have to be more multilateral? What I am concerned about is the future of the architecture of all the nuclear arms agreements. If bilateralism is seen as a relic of the past, how do you include other countries in that? How do we keep control of these weapons that can destroy the world?

Dr Stocker: The bilateralism is a key issue. During the Cold War, bilateralism was the main approach for obvious reasons, and that was difficult enough. Any sort of multilateral approach is inherently much more complex. The more parties to the process you have, the more complex and difficult it is. That is first because all the parties have different circumstances, different perceptions and different interests, but also because the things you are trying to control are usually not entirely symmetrical. Countries do not have exactly the same kinds of systems. You get into calculations like, "How many apples equal a pear?" The prospects for replicating in a multilateral way what we previously achieved with considerable difficulty bilaterally are really challenging.

I would question whether there is much of a future for formal multilateralism. Some commentators are starting to say that there is little scope for that. None the less, as states recognise their own interests and the stake they have in the wider international system, a more informal system of multilateralism might arise, absent formal binding legal treaties. None the less, there is an increasing recognition among states that every action has a reaction, and that everything a state does in terms of strategic posture, weapons acquisition and so on needs to take into account the likely reactions of others and thereby calculate whether a particular measure might be self-defeating. One would hope that the Russian Government would be seriously considering whether an INF treaty breach could prove to be counterproductive, for example. I think the future for multilateral agreements is probably pretty slender. Would you agree, Heather?

Dr Williams: I would agree.

Q37 Phil Wilson: So what is the answer? You have got these bilateral agreements between NATO countries and Russia. With proliferation elsewhere, how do we control that? How do we stop that, if a multilateral approach is just too complicated? There must be some answer to how we sort this out, I would have thought.



Dr Williams: I do not think that bilateral and multilateral are mutually exclusive. It depends on the types of weapons that we are talking about. For strategic weapons, we are still in a bilateral era, because the United States and Russia have thousands more than everyone else combined. In that sense, it is still a bilateral arms control issue.

In terms of the consequences of US withdrawal from INF—again, it depends on how withdrawal happens—it could be a weakening of US credibility. Russia often still points to US withdrawal from the ABM treaty in 2002 as evidence that it is not a credible arms control partner. At the same time, Russia still needs arms control. There is bilateral for strategic systems. If we want to start talking about arms control for emerging technologies—artificial intelligence, cyber—that is something where we are seeing some progress on multilateral efforts within the United Nations. That is a type of arms control very different from what we are really talking about.

I do not think we should say that it will always be one or the other. A great example of recent multilateral nuclear arms control was the Iran nuclear deal. US withdrawal from INF, following its withdrawal from the joint comprehensive plan of action, is where US credibility could be really damaged. That would be more in the multilateral setting than in the bilateral one.

Douglas Barrie: Heather said earlier that it is as much about how the US gets out of INF, if that is what will happen, and how that is portrayed. There is a damage management issue. Assuming, as we do, that the Russians are in material breach, they have played rather well in this one. They can portray that the US is abrogating this treaty—it walked away from it and from ABM. If the US pulls out, it is important that it is absolutely clear why, and that the US puts in the public domain the evidence that supports its allegations with regard to a GLCM; otherwise, that provides the Russians with yet more ammunition to say, “Actually, it is the US.”

Q38 **Phil Wilson:** We are led to believe that Trump is the supreme deal maker, and that the deal with Iran was not as it should be, and the INF treaty, etc. He must be really careful about what he will replace it with or how he will take it forward. That is what you are saying, isn't it?

Douglas Barrie: I suppose the other thing that may be worth mentioning is whether this is a last-ditch gamble, in the same way that Trump suggested all sorts of misery for North Korea. He took them right up to the wire and then suddenly it turned very quickly. Is there a brinkmanship element where he says, “We have one last chance to get the Russians back into compliance”? It is like good cop/bad cop except you can portray Trump as bad cop/bad cop. He presented the Russians with a *démarche*, in effect, which said, “If you don't sort this out and come clean, it's all over.” Is that brinkmanship or is it the US thinking, “We have been trying to sort this out since 2011; we haven't succeeded and we are going to



walk away from it"? Then it is a question of ensuring that it is the Russians who seem to be the cause rather than Washington.

Dr Stocker: There is a loose historical precedent here—the ABM treaty, which has been mentioned. Interestingly, the Americans walked away from that 30 years after it had been signed. There might be a rule of thumb that there is a 30-year shelf life for arms control agreements. Prior to the Americans doing that—it was well signposted what George Bush's intentions were—there were all kinds of dire predictions: it would be the end of arms control altogether, the end of strategic stability—whatever that meant after the Cold War—and that it would initiate a new strategic arms race. The ABM treaty went and none of those things happened. Six months later you could be forgiven for wondering what the fuss was all about.

That is not a reliable predictor of what might happen if the INF treaty went away, particularly because the Americans would abrogate it for very different reasons. But we should not automatically assume that when one party walks away from what hitherto has been a totemic agreement, all the dire predictions will automatically follow, because clearly they do not.

- Q39 **John Spellar:** We have ducked around the way in which this has been handled, but would it not have been much better for the United States to have built up international support, especially from NATO members? The announcement on the treaty could have come at the end of that process, rather than the discussion, debate and public examination such as we are having today, coming after the announcement.

Dr Williams: Arguably, the US did build up that support in NATO—in the Brussels communiqué there was a pretty strong statement. However, I agree with the premise: as strong as the language is in the Brussels statement, it is a big leap from that to talking about withdrawal. If the United States chooses to withdraw, it has the right to do so if it declares Russia to be in material breach, preferably doing so with the co-operation of allies. It can also withdraw—under, I think, article 15 of the treaty—saying that its supreme interest in staying in is no longer an option.

On other options for how the US proceeds going forward, it clearly needs to do a bit of a better job of engaging with allies and talking about the options for withdrawal. As I understand it, the announcement came as a bit of a surprise to quite a few allies, despite the impression of, "Oh, but you had said that Russia is non-compliant"—again, that is a bit of a jump. Going forward, to re-emphasise this point, NATO unity has to be a priority, and that is something that the US can work on by sharing the intelligence and building consensus. It is also a role for the UK to play: trying to build consensus and unity within NATO around what happens to the INF treaty.

- Q40 **Gavin Robinson:** I am almost in danger of "asked and answered" on my question. Dr Stocker, you indicated that China had been the main beneficiary. Dr Barrie, you talked about the Europeans being the main beneficiary of the INF treaty. Dr Williams talked about transparency and the reliability of the structures to put confidence into the process around



arms treaties. Is the treaty worth saving? If it is, how does the US go forward in ensuring Russian compliance?

Dr Stocker: It is probably worth saving, although that does not mean that it is possible, and I wouldn't overstate the importance of whether it is saved or not. It is of its time, and its time has gone, in part at least. Of more significance might be what the parties to the treaty, and third parties, might do as a consequence if it is not saved. That is very much a second-order question. Even if it is not saved, I think that others' reactions are likely to be modest, because there is no need to react significantly if the treaty dies. Indeed, many commentators have been saying that it has been dying for years anyway.

Dr Williams: I would say yes, it is worth saving, but it depends on Russia. As I said before, it really depends on whether Russia is interested in coming back into compliance, but I think it is worth saving in terms of—Jeremy mentioned this—strategic stability. But what does that mean? When we think of strategic stability, it is arms race stability and crisis stability. We are on the cusp of an arms race, if we are not already in one, and not just on nuclear-capable cruise missiles, but on emerging technologies, such as hypersonic glide vehicles. Arms control has a history of helping to maintain arms races and to manage weapons. If anything, this is a moment in history when we really should be pursuing arms control options and trying to strengthen arms control.

In terms of crisis stability, as we discussed at the outset, Eastern Europe and the Baltic regions have proved to be relatively volatile regions in the past few years, to the surprise of many of us. Arms control is also a really good tool for trying to prevent crises from escalating in those regions, and for reassuring NATO allies. There is also sustaining the credibility of arms control as a practice; if we ever want to incorporate China or emerging technology, we need to show that arms control works, and that it can be saved. At the same time, how do we get that? If it depends on whether Russia will come back into compliance, how do we do that?

The only way in which the Russians will come back into compliance is if they are given a face-saving option. For domestic political reasons, they cannot be seen to be bowing to western pressure. Various ways to offer Russia that face-saving option have been discussed, but it might come at too high a cost. That is the predicament we find ourselves in.

Douglas Barrie: I think there is consensus on the panel that the treaty is probably worth saving, if that can be done in a way that does not actually undermine having the treaty in the first place. In terms of face-saving options, one of the things that I have discussed with a couple of colleagues is whether or not you negotiate cruise missiles—certainly subsonic cruise missiles—out of the treaty. You just say, "Let's remove them." The advantage for the Russians is that it gets them out of the predicament of how you come clean on the fact that you have breached the treaty. For the US, it perhaps answers one of their questions and one of their issues, which is how you deal with the situation in the Indo-Pacific,



HOUSE OF COMMONS

where you are looking to counter what you see as Chinese advantage. One way that you could do that is with extended-range cruise missiles.

Furthermore, the risk in the treaty ending is what happens next, in terms of whether there is a rush to rearm in a specific area. Do the Russians then deploy far more of the system that the US is concerned about? As Jeremy said, that is by no means certain, but it has to be managed very carefully if that does happen.

- Q41 **Chair:** I will just pick up on that, Douglas, to ensure I understood you completely. What you are saying is that one answer might be to say, "Let the treaty no longer apply to cruise missiles, and apply only to ballistic missiles." Is that the idea?

Douglas Barrie: Yes, and I would caveat that slightly further, picking up on what Heather was saying about high-speed weapons and increasing interest in developing that area. I would probably suggest that you caveat it by taking subsonic cruise missiles out of the INF, but also set a speed gate, if you like, that says subsonic is okay, but supersonic and hypersonic are not. Otherwise, if you took cruise missiles out completely, without any kind of speed restriction, you potentially risk the problem of seeing the proliferation of high-speed weapons, which would be fundamentally destabilising.

- Q42 **Chair:** But you are saying that you would be content to see nuclear-armed cruise missiles brought back into the European theatre.

Douglas Barrie: Dual-capable, potentially. That is one of the things that we—

- Q43 **Chair:** Yes, but that effectively is saying that they could be nuclear-armed.

Douglas Barrie: Yes.

- Q44 **Chair:** I will ask the others to come in at this point and perhaps comment on what Douglas has just said, because you might not agree with it. Let us assume that one of two things happens. The first is that the treaty remains in force, but is weakened to the extent that certain cruise missiles that could have nuclear warheads are allowed to be deployed in the European theatre. Or let us say that there is no agreement at all, and it is decided that the treaty is a dead duck, and that counter-measures must be taken. What are the technical options that would be available? For example, would it be possible to counter the threat of Russian intermediate-range ballistic missiles in the European theatre by deploying intermediate-range cruise missiles with nuclear warheads at sea? Or would that not have the same effect of countering it politically, given that one lot would be visible and the other lot would not?

How would you react to those possibilities? What other steps could be taken, other than the possibility of replaying the scenario of 1983 and starting to deploy land-based intermediate-range nuclear missiles in NATO countries, with all the ramifications of that?



Douglas Barrie: Perhaps I will start. It is worth keeping in mind that we already live with Russian nuclear-tipped cruise missiles. They have a quite considerable air-launched inventory. That is already there.

- Q45 **Chair:** In the 1980s, we lived with various Russian strategic systems, but we still felt it necessary to specifically counter the intermediate-range SS-20 ballistic missiles. I do not think that that is much of an answer, frankly. Of course there is a nuclear threat that will persist for either side, irrespective of whether this treaty stands or falls, is there not?

Douglas Barrie: The question is in some ways why cruise missiles ended up in INF in the first place. The real concern—having been back and looked at it—was round the SS-20. It was such a capable system.

The GLCMs seem to have been swept up in there anyway. I would also say that the Russians so far have been—“restrained” is perhaps the wrong word, but they have not put a great deal of the treaty breach system into service so far. They have opportunities to do more. Whether they do so or not is something we need to look at very carefully.

In terms of responses, I go back to the earlier comment about trying to avoid playing into Putin’s hands by mirroring what we think the Russians are doing. There are some defensive measures that could be taken, which would be useful for European countries to do anyway, in terms of air defence and cruise missile defence. Those would be of a wider benefit and would also act as a counter.

- Q46 **Chair:** You are saying we may have to walk away from this treaty and tear it up because the Russians have developed a ballistic missile that is breaching the treaty, but that, having torn it all up, we should not do any counter-deployments at all. Is that what you are saying?

Douglas Barrie: No. It is a cruise missile, not a ballistic missile, that is the cause of the treaty breach. The implication of walking away from the treaty is that you are actually doing something anyway. You are saying, “The US thinks the Russians have abrogated the treaty to such an extent that we can no longer remain in it, because it devalues arms control.” In terms of how the Europeans respond to this, there are a number of options, some of which are defensive and some of which are potentially of a more “offensive” nature, but all of which could actually be in the conventional realm.

- Q47 **Chair:** I do not want to push this too far, and I am keen to bring others in, but I am still not quite following the logic of this. I accept your point that it is a cruise missile that we are worried about that is breaching the treaty. You are saying, in part, “Well, there’s not much time for it to have been deployed in any significant numbers yet.” Surely, unless there is a threat of some form of counter-deployment, there is an absolute guarantee that it is going to be deployed in large numbers. Are you saying that America should go to the trouble of tearing up this treaty but not doing anything corresponding?

Douglas Barrie: No, I’m not saying that.



Q48 **Chair:** If so, what are you saying they should do? I come back to my question: what are the technical options? For example, if they do not want to deploy nuclear-tipped cruise missiles on the ground in NATO countries in Europe, should they announce that they will have on permanent patrol a submarine armed with countervailing missiles?

Douglas Barrie: We saw a bit of that in the nuclear posture review, where the US began to talk about things it could do. I think there was some signalling going on there to Moscow that said, "Unless you get into compliance with this treaty, here are our options."

Q49 **Chair:** What are those options? That is what I am asking you.

Douglas Barrie: Okay. The submarine-launched nuclear-tipped cruise missile is obviously one. It is preferable to going back to the 1980s approach of having Pershing II and Gryphon cruise missiles in Europe, not least because I think that would be a hard sell in today's Europe.

Q50 **Chair:** It was a pretty hard sell in the Europe of the 1980s.

Douglas Barrie: I think you would find it an even harder sell today. That would be very, very difficult to do. Submarine and ship-based is a far better option in that sense, and it plays to the US's strengths.

Q51 **Chair:** And it doesn't breach the treaty anyway, does it?

Douglas Barrie: No, you are still technically in compliance.

Q52 **Chair:** Heather, what do you make of all this?

Dr Williams: I quickly want to answer an earlier question you posed, which we did not quite get to, about making amendments to the treaty. I am highly sceptical of that, simply because I do not think you can renegotiate INF at this point. If we wanted to, the Russians would probably try to extract too high a cost for doing so, particularly with Aegis Ashore missile defence, because that is what they are really after.

On the previous discussion, the US has already given signals on how it will proceed in the event that it withdraws. Those are the supplemental capabilities that are included in the nuclear posture review—exploring a new sea-launched cruise missile; a new warhead for the SLBMs; and the research and development investment we saw in the 2017 Nuclear Defence Authorisation Act. It is essential that the US continues with its development and deployment of the new air-launched cruise missile. As some of you may know, that was highly controversial in Washington DC, but nobody seems to be talking about it now. Continuing deployment of the long-range stand-off weapon—

Q53 **Chair:** Can I just check that point with you? For the air-launched cruise missiles, where would the aircraft be based that would be carrying them?

Dr Williams: In the United States.

Q54 **Chair:** So, there would be a theatre missile that would be carried by an aircraft based the other side of the Atlantic. Do you think that would have

the psychological effect of offsetting the psychological effect of a lot of ground-launched cruise missiles being deployed by Russia in Europe?

Dr Williams: In combination with the other components of the US triad, and potentially development of the supplemental capabilities, then yes, I do.

Chair: Please carry on.

Dr Williams: My last point had to do with NATO specifically. I am not a nuclear targeter, as you might have guessed, but in the event of US withdrawal from INF, it would seem timely and necessary for NATO to write a new DDPR; to revisit NATO's nuclear planning among the three nuclear powers within NATO; and to consider whether NATO needs to have a new nuclear doctrine or posture. Again, that would really depend, if the US withdraws, on how the withdrawal happens, and on watching what the Russians do with the system.

Q55 **Chair:** Jeremy, what do you think the options are, technically in particular?

Dr Stocker: I think the Americans have an interesting option. If they do formally withdraw from the treaty—and we don't know that they will or when; we could be having this conversation again in 12 months' time, with the Americans still not having done it—they have the option of saying, "The treaty is no more, but we have no intentions of deploying systems that would previously have not been INF treaty compliant, because we don't need to." That would be a further quite useful step, it seems to me, if they resolve to go that far.

In terms of the technical responses, the issue is more about whether you have the physical means to implement whatever your deterrent posture is. There you have to do some analysis and say, "In view of how the Russians are adapting their posture, and the capabilities that they are deploying in support of that posture, is there anything else we need to do that we are not currently able to do?"

Because Russia's strategic geography is so different from Europe's and the United States', the Russians very naturally have a much greater interest in deploying the kind of missile that we now believe they have. Just look at a map and you can see why it makes more sense for them. In the West, we just don't need to do that.

I agree with Douglas on the prospect of putting a new generation of land-based nuclear weapons into European soil today. As you said, Mr Chairman, it was difficult enough in the 1980s. In the 2010s, no European Government will want to go to the trouble and political difficulty of doing that, particularly because technically there are alternatives—sea-based in particular, but also air-launched.

The aircraft could be based in Europe if you wanted to send that political signal, because air-launched missiles are not governed by the INF treaty. There are all kinds of technical ways of adapting to a post-INF world



HOUSE OF COMMONS

without having to deploy the systems that would previously have been in breach of the INF treaty.

- Q56 **Chair:** But would you all agree that, if it were decided that the Russian breach was so serious that the treaty had to be junked, it would look rather pathetic not to take any specific steps to counter a breach that you regarded as so serious that the treaty had to be junked?

Dr Stocker: I think you can do that in terms of declaratory policy, and say, "The Russians have this capability. It is in breach of the treaty. We, therefore, regard the treaty as no longer in force. However, we have these other means, which are more appropriate to our circumstances and are an adequate counter to the new problem that the Russians have posed to us." Purely in terms of alliance politics, that is far more realistic than any plans to deploy new types of nuclear weapons on European soil.

In fact, NATO has a more immediate problem there, which is that the DCA—the dual-capable aircraft—deployed by European NATO countries to deliver American freefall nuclear weapons are rapidly becoming obsolescent. Although I know the Americans are talking about replacing them with nuclear-capable F-35s, the idea that any European Government is going to invest in nuclear-capable aircraft in Europe is fanciful. I would argue that that is a much more pressing strategic conundrum for NATO than a response to a Russian breach of the INF treaty.

Douglas Barrie: May I make a couple of very brief points? The bomber is based in the US, but it is rotational in and out of Europe. A very obvious way of signalling US displeasure with INF collapse is to see more of that—to see more B-1s and B-2s rotated in and out of Europe.

- Q57 **Chair:** When you say, "rotated in and out of Europe", do you mean in and out of European bases?

Douglas Barrie: Yes, coming to the UK, spending a month deployed here.

- Q58 **Chair:** So we could see air-launched cruise missiles on US aircraft based in the UK.

Douglas Barrie: No; you could see US bomber aircraft capable of carrying air-launched cruise missiles deployed on a more regular basis in the European theatre. The point on the NATO DCA is interesting, because the Belgians, who are one of the nations declared in that role, have just bought the F-35. I think that was a pretty clear signal of their thinking on this. The Germans are now in the process of deciding how they replace their Tornados, which are the DCA that the Germans operate. There is a choice in how you go about doing that, whether that be the F-35, the Typhoon or a mix of both.

- Q59 **Phil Wilson:** What role do you think Europe and the UK have in all this, in trying to resolve this dispute, considering that you are absolutely right that there would be no political appetite in Europe or the UK to go back to the way things were in the 1980s? What do you think the answer is? What more can we be doing to help resolve the problem?



Dr Stocker: I think the first thing we would usefully do is make clear that the assessment that the Russians are in breach of the INF treaty is not only an American assessment—that we had independently come to the same or a similar conclusion. That in itself would be very helpful.

In terms of how we would react if the INF treaty was abrogated, we would need to look at any responses that we would need to make, and that would depend on whether, with the end of the treaty, the Russians started deploying nuclear-tipped SSC-8s into Europe. I would be surprised if they did, but if they did, we would need to take a view on that. I do not think that would go much further than perhaps revisiting the question of how many Trident warheads there are, and of what yield the mix is. From a UK point of view, that would be an adequate response that we may or may not want to signal. I am not sure that anything much beyond that is feasible.

The cruise missile threat might provide an incentive to spend rather more on conventional air defence, so that the Russians could not achieve strategic leverage from one or two missiles, because they would be vulnerable to air defence. It would up the ante; if the Russians wanted to try anything, they would have to do it on such a scale that they would have to think rather more deeply about it. Beyond that, I am not sure that the UK would need to be doing much. In terms of our defence posture overall, there are many other much more pressing requirements than addressing this problem at this stage.

Q60 **Phil Wilson:** Is there nothing more that we can be doing diplomatically, such as talking to people, like the Russians and Americans?

Dr Williams: I was going to suggest three specific diplomatic steps. First, pressure the Russians to return to compliance; pressure them to re-engage with strategic stability dialogues; and bring this up in bilateral discussions and in UN settings. In every possible setting, bring up Britain's concern about this violation, and encourage the Russians to return to compliance.

Secondly, communicate to the United States what is in Europe's interests in this. In this Administration, the Department of Defense has proven in its national security documents, speeches and leadership that they really care about allies. The allies are front and centre of the national security strategy and the nuclear posture review. The Department of Defense seems willing to listen, and interested in listening, to allies. So as America's closest ally, the UK has the unique position that it can communicate its interests very clearly.

Lastly, we can diplomatically—again coming back to my main point—maintain NATO unity. NATO unity is all 29 members hopefully acting in concert, although I recognise the challenges that that presents for certain factions and certain countries. However the US proceeds, I think it is really important that all NATO members take a unified position in supporting that, perhaps with some caveats.

Q61 Chair: Are there any last comments that any of you would like to add as we conclude?

Dr Williams: I have a final one, if I may, very quickly, because it didn't come up—the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. The NPT is scheduled to have its five-year review conference in 2020. Already, this is going to be a very difficult review conference. A few of you have brought up questions and concerns about what all this means for the global nuclear order and arms control regimes. The NPT is the foundation of all that and, quite frankly, it is in a very delicate state.

If INF collapses, that will make this review conference even more difficult, because the non-nuclear weapon states have been consistently pressuring the nuclear weapon possessors to do more towards disarmament, particularly pressuring the US and Russia to do more towards arms control. If one of the existing arms control tools falls apart, that will empower many of the pro-disarmament groups within the NPT, many of whom support the recent treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

That could serve as a distraction within the NPT, and it could undermine some of Britain's interests, such as talking about continued WMD use, albeit chemical weapons; trying to get the DPRK back into the NPT; or all the UK's great work on disarmament verification. If we get too caught up in these disarmament issues, as important as they are, they will really challenge this NPT review cycle. I wanted to ensure that we did not think about INF or bilateral arms control in isolation; they are part of a much bigger problem that we are seeing across the global nuclear regime.

Douglas Barrie: I would echo that. I have to remind myself that if we look at the history of the INF, it was a fairly rocky road; things didn't always go as anticipated. So remain engaged—continue to talk. That is important. When you have a real issue with the Russians, you have to try to keep them talking.

Q62 Chair: So continue with the dual-track approach.

Douglas Barrie: Yes, carrot and stick.

Dr Stocker: At this very early stage in this issue, we have probably just about covered the bases that we sensibly can.

Chair: Thank you. I am going to do something unusual and give the last word to a Russian. Ex-President Gorbachev published his memoirs in 1995, and the English translation came out the following year. As we started off today's session with the events of the 1980s, I think it would be interesting to have his perspective.

This is what he says: "The decision to deploy SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe had reflected the style of the Soviet leadership at the time, decision-making fraught with grave consequences for the country. I had arrived at the sad conclusion that this step, fateful both for our country and Europe and for the rest of the world, had been taken without the necessary political and strategic analysis of its possible



HOUSE OF COMMONS

consequences...Technological progress allowed the creation of SS-20 missiles far superior to their predecessors in terms of range, precision, guidance and all other properties. Essentially they had the characteristics of strategic weapons. Whatever the arguments advanced at the time to justify the deployment of such missiles, the Soviet leadership failed to take into account the probable reaction of the Western countries. I would even go so far as to characterise it as an unforgivable adventure, embarked on by the previous Soviet leadership under pressure from the military-industrial complex. They might have assumed that, while we deployed our missiles, Western counter-measures would be impeded by the peace movement. If so, such a calculation was more than naive."

He concludes as follows: "our military experts were fully aware that to deploy the SS-20 was a dangerous venture, since we would be unable to protect ourselves against the Pershing II. Marshal Akhromeyev also shared this view. An expert in the field and a straightforward person, he did not conceal his negative view of this fatal adventure—and he later contributed greatly to the removal of the hazard we had brought upon ourselves."

Why is it that people can only say these matters after they have ceased to be in power? With that, the session is concluded.