



Select Committee on International Relations

Corrected oral evidence: Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and nuclear disarmament

Wednesday 20 February 2019

10.40 am

Watch the meeting

Members present: Lord Howell of Guildford (The Chairman); Baroness Coussins; Lord Grocott; Lord Hannay of Chiswick; Lord Jopling; Lord Purvis of Tweed; Baroness Smith of Newnham; Lord Wood of Anfield.

Evidence Session No. 12

Heard in Public

Questions 113 - 120

Witnesses

I: Alexandra Bell, Senior Policy Director, Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation; Dr Oliver Meier, Deputy Head, International Security Division, German Institute for International Affairs.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Alexandra Bell and Dr Oliver Meier.

Q113 **The Chairman:** Good morning, Alexandra Bell and Dr Meier. Thank you very much for being with us; we much appreciate your giving us your time to share your wisdom with us. I should say formally that this is a recorded session, so everything is transcribed—obviously there will be a transcript afterwards should you wish to adjust it in line with what you thought you said. I also remind my colleagues to declare any interests when they ask questions. I will explain for your patience that, because of international timing and videoconferences from Beijing and Russia that we are having later in the morning, we do not have nearly as much time with you as we would like. I will have to ask my colleagues to keep their questions short and you, if possible, although the issues are complex, to curtail your answers reasonably. That is the time constraint on us, for which I can only apologise—but it is unavoidable.

I will aim my first question at Alexandra Bell, Senior Policy Director at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. We are looking at a world in which arms control issues are certainly in some disturbance. Some would say we that are entering a world of weaker arms control—or one without it altogether? The context, of course, is the decision of Moscow and Washington to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and there are questions about START—the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty—and New START. There is a general feeling that the old order and the simplicities—if I dare put them like that—of the 20th century, mutual deterrence and the two-only pattern of arms control, have gone, with the entrance of new challenges, new technology and so on. Would you like to start, Ms Bell, by giving us your view on that? I will then ask Dr Meier to do the same.

Alexandra Bell: Absolutely. First, I thank the House of Lords International Relations Committee for inviting me to speak today; it is truly an honour. I also thank you for your interest in this subject. The world is facing many challenges but none so great as the threats posed by nuclear weapons. It is imperative that our leaders help to find and implement ways to reduce the nuclear threat. I also thank the Committee for the broad perspectives, backgrounds and ages of the various witnesses that you have had in front of you. I think it is important, when facing these challenges, to get as many views from around the world as possible.

Arms control is a tool, so we will never live in a world without it. But, yes, we are heading towards a world in which we not using this essential tool. The US-Russian strategic stability relationship is at its lowest point since the end of the Cold War. After the success of New START, further progress in bilateral arms control was thwarted by the Russian invasion into Ukraine, Russian disinterest in US proposals and US disinterest in Russian preconditions for negotiations. Adding to those problems was the Russian violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, first made public in 2014. Barring an intervention from President Trump and

President Putin, it seems likely that the INF Treaty will collapse in August. That collapse could precipitate the reintroduction of a short-warning nuclear attack threat on capitals in Europe.

Rumours now abound that the Trump Administration is not interested in extending the New START treaty for an additional five years, as allowed for under the terms of the treaty. The Russian Federation has also produced a list of what it says are US compliance problems with the treaty. Any issues regarding compliance are best handled by the Bilateral Consultative Commission, the body designed to handle these implementation issues. The fact that the Russians are regularly referencing these issues in the press is a cause for concern. New START could be the next victim of a deteriorating US-Russian strategic stability relationship. Given that the United States and Russia still possess over 90% of the nuclear weapons in the world, other nuclear weapons states feel little pressure to participate in arms control and disarmament discussions. Of course, as I stated before, arms control is a tool and not an end state. States will create, join, implement and use arms control agreements when they believe that those agreements are in their national security interest.

Dr Oliver Meier: I, too, thank you for inviting me to speak today. As Ms Bell said, this inquiry is important, and useful for the broader community of us working on these issues. I wish more parliaments would take the time and make the effort to do this kind of hearing. I am grateful to be able to contribute. I will not repeat what has been said but will try to add a few additional thoughts.

From a German perspective, this crisis in arms control that has been described is worrying because Germany and many other European countries—including the United Kingdom I think—are trying to find ways to preserve important elements of the nuclear order. Arms control is one important element of that nuclear order and, particularly between the UK and Germany, there are ways to engage on these issues—among the NATO nuclear weapons states, the UK is probably on many issues closest to the German position, particularly on arms control issues. We have been seeing a move backwards on arms control for a number of years now, and the imminent collapse of the INF Treaty and the uncertain future of the New START Treaty are clear indications of the lack of willingness of the great powers, generally speaking, to restrict their military potential, which is the core of arms control—particularly nuclear arms control.

New technologies, as you mentioned, are a factor in this. Some of these new technologies are a way to equalise military advantages for some of the threshold states that complicate the picture. At the same time, the US in particular but also other great powers want to maintain military dominance in all domains. That in itself is also driving arms races and is complicating nuclear arms control. We see this dynamic that we have tried to contain now emerge in full swing. That makes it very difficult to re-engage on arms control, because there is no agreement on whether

we should do this separately on the different issues that are before us in nuclear arms control and in new technologies altogether—that is part of the problem.

That being said, I think there are things Europeans could do, particularly on INF and on preventing the collapse of the New START treaty. I think we should be cautious about the arguments that we have been hearing from the Trump Administration, for example, that we need to get a better deal and that we need to leave INF to get a better agreement. We have seen this pattern of argument on other issue areas too. Leaving the INF treaty will make it less likely, not more, that additional states will accept restrictions on their nuclear capabilities. Europeans should also resist the temptation to use old patterns, particularly of the dual-track decision that was adopted 40 years ago. Europeans should be advocates for new types of arms control agreements. Germany will host a conference on new technologies on arms control on 15 March as one way to further that necessary step. But it is not sufficient—we need to keep the focus on nuclear arms control as well as on nuclear weapons.

The Chairman: Would it be true to say that Germany is in a unique position, because it is an immensely powerful state yet you are a non-nuclear state? We have heard some evidence that, as the NPT review approaches in a year or two, the non-nuclear and nuclear states will be more at odds and that patience is running out and so on. How do you think Germany views that situation?

Dr Oliver Meier: I am sorry. Patience running out in terms of what?

The Chairman: Whether the NPT is being fulfilled, whether the existing powers are disarming in the way that they promised and whether the whole balance of the original NPT can be sustained.

Dr Oliver Meier: Germany has a foot in both camps. It is very interested in nuclear arms control and disarmament, but at the same time we are a NATO member. We are participating in NATO nuclear sharing arrangements, including by hosting US nuclear weapons. We are in a unique position where we can bridge some of the camps and advocate solutions that are attractive to both deterrence advocates and disarmament advocates. That is the unique advantage that Germany has, but it is also the dilemma that is haunting German arms control and deterrence policies, in that we are in this middle position and have been trying historically to build bridges in the NPT, particularly for the European Union. That has become much harder also within the EU, partly because of the discussion on the Ban Treaty.

Q114 **Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** I should declare an interest as a member of the European Leadership Network. Can you go a little further on the INF Treaty? Is it your view, particularly yours, Dr Meier, but not only yours, that the INF is really past praying for now, or is it that, out of the ashes of the INF Treaty, something useful could be constructed? If it is the second of those, is the approach which tries to bring the Chinese and others into an arms control measure that relates to intermediate weapons

what the Europeans ought to be pressing for, or is it really pretty hopeless? Alternatively, should we look at some attempt to regionalise the ban on intermediate nuclear weapons, so that at least we prevent a deployment on both sides in Europe—on the Russian side and on the NATO side?

Dr Oliver Meier: I think we are in the twilight zone now with regard to the INF Treaty, where both sides have declared suspension. The treaty is likely to run out by 2 August. Of course, nobody will say that we are going to stop trying to save the treaty. We have now seen more information coming out with regard to alleged violations, which I think it would be worth while to follow up on a reciprocal basis. That is the problematic question right now and one of the issues that is making the situation so difficult. Basically, the NATO position, the Western position, is that Russia has to come back into compliance.

I disagree with the view that reciprocity cannot be part of the solution, because a lot of the Russian allegations are unfounded. It would be easy for NATO to enter a reciprocal process to clear up those allegations. There is potentially a lot to win by engaging in such a process and, as far as I can see, very little to lose. That is my take on the situation up to 2 August, but because the chances of that are very slim, we should now think about trying to preserve elements of the INF Treaty or to build on that.

Some of the things that you mentioned are worth pursuing; for example, trying to bring in additional states. I am pessimistic as to whether China is going to be very interested because I do not see what incentive there would be for it to engage in such a discussion. We have to put something on the table to encourage these countries—China, India, Pakistan and other countries that have INF systems—to enter such talks. It might also be worth while to think about building on certain elements in terms of banning nuclear-armed cruise missiles, for example—Andy Weber and a group in the US are proposing that. I am a bit sceptical about a regional approach, banning deployments in Europe, because there was a reason why INF was a global agreement—reached back in 1987. Those reasons still exist; that is, we do not want basically to push the problem towards Asia, which would be highly problematic.

Alexandra Bell: It is in the interest of global security to preserve the INF treaty as it now stands. Whether that is possible is unclear. Diplomatic options are still on the table, as Dr Meier intimated. There is possible trade space between exhibitions of the Mark 41 launcher in exchange for a better look at the 9M729 missile. Eventually, it will need to be taken offline. Russia will need to decide whether it is worth losing the INF Treaty to preserve that one particular type of missile and a capability it has in other systems.

It took us years to build the INF Treaty. There is no reason to think that we could just automatically add in new parties that have never participated in conversations like this before. If we want to talk about including China, India and Pakistan, we need to talk about doctrine,

transparency and confidence-building measures—“Why do they have these missiles?” At that point, you start getting into possible controls, the end product of which could be another agreement or another treaty. At the least, we need to have dialogue with these countries, but at this point we are not.

The Chairman: You are really saying, ‘Don’t withdraw from treaties’—in fact, you call it a malpractice—and that the right approach is just to build on them.

Alexandra Bell: Absolutely. It is good to have a plan in place before we leave a treaty that has been integral to Euro-Atlantic security for the past 30 years.

Q115 **Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Can you both give us your thoughts as to how European countries—in that definition, I would include, obviously, the United Kingdom, France and Germany in particular—should respond to changes in US nuclear policy, including withdrawal from the JCPOA¹, the Iranian deal? We have talked about the INF Treaty, so perhaps that is less prominent in this question. What do you think of the efforts being made by the State Department to discuss something which I think is now called Creating the Conditions for Nuclear Disarmament?

Alexandra Bell: As an American, I would advise European countries and the United Kingdom in particular to be a good friend to my country. Good friends are honest about what they think about certain policies. At times, that means being brutally honest. Some European countries have already made it clear that they do not agree with the US decision to abandon the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran. The United States’ own intelligence agencies have affirmed that Iran is in compliance with the agreement, so scuttling the JCPOA in the hope of creating another one seems an unlikely move for European states. It is important to keep voicing those concerns about the US policies. We discussed the INF. That is a harder subject. The Russians created this crisis when they decided to build and deploy the 9M729 missile, so it is understandable that the European approach has been to back the US approach. Again, I think that making every effort before August to get the parties to reach an agreement to avert the collapse of that treaty is important.

The Creating Conditions for a Nuclear Disarmament initiative is still in formation. I believe that the Administration are seeking to create something similar to the IPNDV, the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. In that structure, there are working groups focused on specific topics within a larger discussion. I had heard that they were hoping to start this in the spring of 2019, but it is unclear whether they will meet that timeline. From my perspective, given this Administration’s seeming distaste for international co-operation, the CCND represents a small hope that the United States is aware of its NPT Article VI commitments and does not want to show up at the 2020 NPT Review Conference being unable to show that it has done any work in

¹ The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

trying to further progress in disarmament. It is important for European allies to work with the United States on this. At the same time, it is important for Europe to encourage the US to do more than simply have working group meetings. Things are on the table. At a time when qualitative arms control is not possible, there is space for quantitative arms control. For example, three protocols to nuclear weapons-free zones are sitting before the US Senate. Those could be ratified very quickly should the Trump Administration decide to move forward on them. That is the kind of low-hanging fruit in disarmament that is important, as well as initiatives such as Creating the Conditions for Nuclear Disarmament.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Could you say which the regions are?

Alexandra Bell: Yes: Africa, the South Pacific and central Asia.

Q116 **The Chairman:** Dr Meier, this 'good friends' business is not going terribly well, with your Chancellor in Munich disagreeing with the American Vice-President on almost every fundamental strategic issue, is it?

Dr Oliver Meier: Yes, and I think the Iran agreement, which your question was on, is one element of that where Europeans and the Trump Administration are at odds. For me, the JCPOA is the single most important issue for European credibility on non-proliferation, for a number of reasons: first, on the substance itself, because it restricts Iran's ability to develop a nuclear weapons capability for a significant amount of time, and it is important for the region—imagine a nuclear arms race on top of all the problems we are having in the region right now. I think it is important for Europe's strategic autonomy, and we have seen this now unfolding with the extraterritorial sanctions that have been applied to Europe, and to its ability to maintain legitimate trade with Iran; I think it is a litmus test for Europeans to uphold their international commitments, despite US policies to leverage its economic power through these sanctions. That is very important for Europe to have. It is important for the NPT.

We have a double standard here, with the summit coming up between President Trump and Kim Jong-un—it is very important, but here the US sometimes seems to be courting a country that is violating international norms and agreements and at the same time trying to punish a country such as Iran, which is currently upholding its international non-proliferation commitments. That is a problem for the NPT, and I think Europeans have to take a position on this. They are doing this; they have invested a lot politically, and they have come a long way.

I have been following this issue for some time. After the Trump Administration took office, there was a lot of scepticism. Some measures have been put in place—activation of the blocking statute was one such step where many were sceptical whether it made sense. We now have this new instrument in support of trade exchanges, INSTEX, which is also a novel instrument. It is symbolic right now but it could evolve into something that is also substantively important in terms of European autonomy.

I think Europeans should keep at it. They should try to bring others into the boat. They should not burn trans-Atlantic bridges—there will be elections in the US, and there is a possibility that the US will change its position on the JCPOA, because it simply does not make sense from a strategic point of view. Europeans should engage with Iran; clearly there are other issues on which we want to engage with Iran, and Europeans are trying to do that—it is very difficult right now, but that is another thing that Europeans need to do to put this in the context of a regional approach on security issues.

On the CCWG I echo what has been said. It is an important initiative because we need to talk about the conditions in order to make progress on nuclear disarmament. The approach in itself is the right one, and so is the basic idea that Europeans should engage on, but they should make sure that this does not turn basically into a self-serving attempt to deflect disarmament pressures. That is the suspicion of many of those following these issues—that the US is not so much willing to talk about its own contribution, and the contribution of other nuclear weapons states, to the disarmament situation that we have right now. That is part of the problem.

We have to keep in mind that the current nuclear dynamic is one of vertical proliferation within the nuclear weapons states and not so much one of horizontal proliferation. For the first time in many years, we have a situation where we have no country suspected of a clandestine nuclear weapons programme and we must keep that important progress in mind. We are not in a strong position, but that is the situation we have reached. Therefore I think it is wrong-headed to cite proliferation pressures in order to increase reliance on nuclear weapons. That is important progress we have made.

That also means we need to look at the contribution of nuclear weapons states to the dilemmas that we have. Europeans should endorse the initiatives. They should run with it, but maybe in different directions to make it inclusive. They should make sure they have input into the agenda on the topics being discussed and the products, of course. That also probably means putting some money into this and making sure that it is not only a US-operated exercise. In 2007, I think Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett described the role of the UK as a 'disarmament laboratory'. That is a useful point of reference also going into the CCWG. There are many elements in that proposal that may be worth picking up in the context of this initiative as well.

Q117 The Chairman: Dr Bell, do you think that your message about no arms deal being perfect—everyone having to compromise—is getting through in any way to the President of the United States and the White House?

Alexandra Bell: It seems to be in terms of North Korea. He seems quite willing to talk about negotiations with North Korea as a long process. I agree with Dr Meier that we have had a bit of a disconnect in how we have been dealing with North Korea as opposed to Iran, and I do not think that is good for the overall non-proliferation regime. It was also

quite troubling that Secretary Pompeo referenced the difference being that North Korea actually had nuclear weapons—I do not think we should be encouraging countries to get nuclear weapons in order to get a better deal from us.

The President might not be thinking about broad arms control and the fact that things were never perfect. For example, the Russians were violating the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty for many years—it took about six years for the US to push the Russians back into compliance with that treaty, although we eventually did. At the same time we were doing that, we were negotiating the INF Treaty, because President Reagan was able to see that INF was in our national security interests at the same time we were dealing with the violation of the ABM Treaty. We can walk and chew gum at the same time when it comes to an issue as important as nuclear weapons and I hope that the Administration sees that. The difference that I see now in the US is that Congress has a renewed interest in strategic stability issues. Over the past couple of years we have been seeing more legislation and more discussion of US nuclear doctrine coming from both the House and the Senate. That is an incredibly important thing as we deal with this sort of changed environment.

I do not like to think of our current state so much as a decline as a transformation of how we are going to have to deal with arms control and non-proliferation in the future. For example, how do you deal with an asymmetric set-up of various different countries in an agreement, where they are not necessarily trading numbers of warheads for numbers of warheads or numbers of delivery systems for that, but where you have asymmetric trades going on, such as reductions in exchange for transparency and accounting of particular numbers and agreements not to move certain systems? It is impossible to do without the help of the legislature, without clear directives coming from the US Congress for the Administration to branch out and be creative. That probably holds for every country: it is not something that should simply be left to the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This is a whole-of-government problem and it needs a whole-of-government approach.

The Chairman: That is very helpful, particularly that last point. Thank you very much.

Q118 **Lord Grocott:** I want to turn to the nuclear states that are not signatories to the NPT—it strikes me, as someone relatively new to the subject, as something that not many of our witnesses have paid much attention to, although maybe we have not asked the right questions. Is it not odd that four of the nine states are not signatories to the treaty? It is at least an issue. Let us park North Korea for a moment because that is a special case. In respect of the other three, first, I have a basic factual question: what do we know about their nuclear weapons capacity? We see all the figures about the relative strengths of the nuclear states in respect of their nuclear weapons, but what do we know about the non-signatories to the treaty? Secondly, what efforts, if any, are made by the nuclear states that are signatories—particularly, I suppose, the Western

states in this respect, since we are talking about liaising with India, Pakistan and Israel—to engage them in this whole process, or is it an issue that is so difficult that everyone talks about something else?

Alexandra Bell: JFK warned, before the NPT was created, that we might be looking at a world with dozens of nuclear weapons states. The fact that there are only four of these states in the wake of the entry into force of the NPT is a win; it is not an ideal situation, but we could have been facing something far worse if we had not had the NPT in place. As I mentioned, I do not think the first step with the other four nuclear weapon states is necessarily to get them into treaties on a reductions basis. That is not necessarily something they are ready for. The US and the Russians spent years talking before we got to a legally binding, verifiable nuclear arms agreement.

That said, there is unfinished business that could help to move the ball with some of these states. For example, on the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone, a push for this kind of zone has been happening for two decades. It is in fact what derailed the consensus at the 2015 NPT Review Conference. We are in a position now where nations are saying they should go ahead and have a conference like this without the consent and buy-in of Israel. The US thinks that is a terrible idea—this is a regional problem, so all members of the region should be brought in, in a good-faith effort to deal with the problems. But what responsible nuclear weapons states and allies can be doing is encouraging states in the region to salvage the consensus points that already exist and begin a dialogue and a conference agenda that would suit all parties. Creative ideas for how to go forward are numerous, one of which is a testing moratorium in the region. Could that be a short-term goal, where all countries in the region agree that they will not test nuclear weapons? That should not be too hard, because none of them have plans to test nuclear weapons.

The next step could be to see whether you could get Israel, Iran and Egypt to finally ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. All are signatories but none has ratified, and the US and China are also in that camp, while India, Pakistan and North Korea have to sign and ratify the treaty. How can you start putting the pieces into place to get people on board with that treaty, which is an essential step in any attempt to get further disarmament throughout the world? That is where countries such as Germany and England can be influential as parties to this type of agreement, as countries that are not interested in having the global taboo on nuclear explosive testing start again. Can they be influential in those regions? The Pakistanis at one point put a nuclear testing moratorium on the table, but the Indians did not take them up on that, and I think it is perfectly reasonable for other states to be asking why. Is there a way in which they could get to a moratorium that would eventually lead to CTBT ratification? There are interim steps that could happen that are not the big nuclear reduction treaty that everyone eventually wants to see.

Dr Oliver Meier: It is difficult to give a one-size-fits-all answer to the question of how to deal with the non-members because their security system is very different and their nuclear programmes are driven primarily by regional concerns. That being said, when dealing with all three states—or four, depending on how you count them—outside the NPT, it is important to watch out for unintended consequences for the NPT itself. I say that because in the US-India deal the exemption that was granted to India in 2008 by the Nuclear Suppliers Group is, to me, an example of how not to do it. We have watered down safeguard standards and nuclear export control standards without India committing to significant steps towards nuclear disarmament and arms control to constrain its nuclear capabilities. The damage that has been done has affected the Nuclear Suppliers Group but also to some degree the NPT. Special deals that may be motivated by regional concerns or bilateral relations can be problematic for the global regime that we have on nuclear weapons.

I agree about engaging these countries on issues that are rather loosely codified in the NPT context, which for example makes it more likely or at least easier to engage them on nuclear security. These countries engaged in the nuclear security summit under the Obama Administration—some of them pride themselves on that—which was very useful. The regional confidence-building steps that have been mentioned are important and I think that Europeans can help to foster agreement on such steps. The Creating the Conditions Working Group that was proposed may also be an avenue where you can engage those states in dialogue over what they see as the conditions for engaging on nuclear arms control and the broader NPT agenda. Again, to come back to the first question that you posed, abandoning the arms control agreements that we have makes it less likely to engage some of these countries because they all basically argue that they are ready to engage when the two greatest powers come down in terms of the size of their arsenal. Abandoning one or maybe both of the treaties that we still have would, obviously, make it less likely that they engaged.

My final point is that what NATO does on nuclear policies matters globally in terms of setting the tone for engaging with these countries. Three of the five NPT nuclear weapons states are NATO states, while eight of the 14 states that have nuclear weapons on their territory are Alliance members. That in itself makes it clear that whatever the alliance does on nuclear policies has an important impact on the way we talk about nuclear weapons and the way we engage countries outside the NPT on these issues.

Q119 **Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Your characterisation, Dr Meier, of the India-Pakistan-Israel conundrum does not really fit the fact that it is Pakistan that is preventing the P5 from signing the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. It of course uses its Chinese proxy for avoiding that as well. But would it not make sense to try to find a way of pushing forward the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty provisions, for example by taking them to the General Assembly rather than them remaining gummed up in this

Conference on Disarmament where consensus is a requirement?

Dr Oliver Meier: I think that it makes sense, and the Pakistani position is obviously motivated by its relationship towards India. That is the way it frames the argument, but, personally, I think it would make sense to take this out of the Conference on Disarmament and to try to start a serious discussion on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty outside the conference—if only to flush out the real positions of the other countries that are now hiding behind Pakistan. I would find it interesting to see how other countries, once such a decision is taken, would position themselves on the treaty. On the substance, if we can get an agreement by all those states that now are committed to stopping the production of fissile material for weapons purposes, confirming that in a multilateral context, we would be a long way better off than we are today.

Alexandra Bell: I will add that the United States tried to break the logjam at the Conference on Disarmament in the previous Administration by proposing that perhaps the programme of work would be on a fissile material treaty—to take off the “cut-off” as a precondition for negotiation and make it all about total stockpiles that currently exist. That is what Pakistan says is its problem—that other countries have large stockpiles of existing fissile material, so it is not fair to Pakistan. But I agree with Dr Meier that a lot of countries are hiding behind Pakistan and are very happy to see a lack of progress. The US was somewhat criticised for putting this proposal forward; I think it was necessary to try to move things forward. It is unclear to me what the US or other responsible nuclear weapons states have done in the interim to try to push the agenda at the CD. I think the problem with moving it over to the General Assembly is that, effectively, then you would be saying that the Conference on Disarmament is dead. Is that something that we want? Perhaps that could be under discussion, but, if there is another treaty on nuclear weapons negotiated out of the CD, I think you will be effectively killing that organisation.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Well, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was not killed by taking it to the General Assembly. It did not kill the Conference on Disarmament, did it?

Alexandra Bell: I believe that CTBT was negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament; it was the last one that was successfully negotiated. That was 23 years ago, which is not a good track record.

Q120 **The Chairman:** I have a final question for you, because, alas, this is unfinished business and what you are telling us is fascinating. Do you think that a future Administration—or present one—in America would ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty that the Senate turned down 20 years ago?

Alexandra Bell: I worked extensively on this in the previous Administration, dealing specifically with what went wrong in 1999 in the US ratification process. The former Commander of Strategic Command was sent around to talk to each and every Senator who voted on that

treaty and he was able to assess that there were two issues that Senators who voted against the treaty had. The first was whether the US could maintain a safe, secure and effective stockpile without explosive nuclear testing and the second was whether the IMS² would be able to detect illicit explosive tests even at very low yields. The answer to both of those questions, some 20 years down the road, is yes—we can maintain the stockpile without explosive nuclear testing. In fact, our scientists have repeatedly said that we know more about our nuclear weapons now we are not blowing them up than we did before. The science is amazing; we have been able, every year, to certify to the Congress that the US arsenal is safe, secure and effective. On the IMS front, the International Monitoring System is a marvel of modern science that not only can detect nuclear explosive tests at very low yields, but also has third and fourth order utility in things like tsunami detection and tracking radioactive particulates in atmosphere.

So the concerns of the US Senate have been allayed; now it is a question of how much political capital a future Administration would want to spend to get it ratified. There are forces in the US Senate that never want to ratify agreements, no matter what they are. They exist. But I am very much against the idea that the US Senate is incapable of ratifying any more treaties—particularly multilateral treaties. As I said, countries will get into treaties when they see that it is in their national security interests. I would be thrilled to be part of an Administration trying to make that case to the Senate. As a side note, I would say that there are states very invested in having a CTBT enter into force. Utah is one of them: I believe that it is possible to get Republican Senators from Utah, having been downwind from the Nevada nuclear test site, on board in principle, more from the idea that they do not want to see a return to testing on US soil. Can you build from that? I think it is very possible. You just have to have the political will.

The Chairman: There, alas, I think we will have to cut you both off, because we have Beijing coming on the line. I thank you, Dr Meier and Alexandra Bell, very much indeed. You have imparted a lot of wisdom to us, and what you have said is very helpful. We wish you well in your further researches and work as well. Thank you very much.

² The International Monitoring System