



Select Committee on International Relations

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

Wednesday 20 February 2019

12.15 pm

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. 14

Heard in Public

Questions 128 - 133

Witness

I: Dr Anastasia Malygina, Associate Professor, School of International Relations, St Petersburg University.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

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

Examination of witness

Dr Anastasia Malygina.

Q128 **The Chairman:** Good morning, Dr Malygina. I am the Chairman of the House of Lords International Relations Committee. We welcome you this morning and are very grateful to you for sparing your valuable time and your thoughts to help us in our inquiries and report on the crucial question of nuclear proliferation and the future of nuclear arms control. I begin by reminding you that the whole of this interview will be on a transcript, which of course you will be free to alter or change as you wish, in line with what you believe is correct. I remind my colleagues around the table that they should declare their interests when we put forward certain questions.

I ask a blunt and central question: how important are nuclear weapons now to Russia, and how has that changed, not only since the end of the Cold War but in very recent times as well? We get the impression that there is a much stronger emphasis on the importance of nuclear weapons, both tactical and intercontinental, and on the new technologies associated with them. How do you see the situation? Can you help us?

Dr Anastasia Malygina: First, I thank you for inviting me to talk. To begin, I need to remind you that the Soviet Union got nuclear weapons in the late 1940s to deter a US nuclear attack. Many Soviet proposals for nuclear disarmament and the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons were rejected by the West on the grounds that the USSR had conventional superiority. Since the end of the Cold War, a lot has changed. The USSR is no more and conventional superiority has become the trademark of the West. Nevertheless, nuclear weapons are still seen by Russia as a powerful deterrent against major aggression—involving either WMDs¹ or conventional weapons—when the very existence of the nation is at stake.

Today, the situation has changed again. Russia has not regained global conventional superiority and does not need that, but its conventional forces are much stronger now. Russia now sees an increasing role for non-nuclear components of strategic deterrence. In principle, that allows Russia to be more at ease with the idea of nuclear reductions and disarmament, but a policy of nuclear arms control has to be pragmatic. Such pragmatism suggests that several factors should be taken into consideration. If you allow me, I would like to briefly describe the three groups of factors.

First, the progress towards lesser reliance on nuclear weapons must take into account all factors affecting strategic stability and security and not lead to new imbalances or unilateral security advantages. Particular attention should be paid in this context to the potential effects of missile defence, new weapons systems and potential new arms race theatres, such as outer space.

¹ Weapons of mass destruction

The second group refers to the nature of political relations between the major powers. Such political relations must be based on international law and the principles of the UN charter. A responsible attitude to existing arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation agreements is also fundamentally important. Russia's perception is that we have not seen much of that lately, starting with the US withdrawal from the ABM treaty, followed by the JCPOA and INF.

The third group includes the need to restore and improve genuine dialogue and to reinvent the art and know-how of the common search for security solutions. The Russian Federation has repeatedly called for the creation of appropriate conditions conducive to practical steps to free the world from nuclear weapons.

Q129 The Chairman: Thank you for that opening statement, which was very clear. In your paper, published on 30 March 2017 on the European Leadership Network website, you sounded a little disappointed and said you did not think that arms control may be the area for relaunching a good dialogue between Washington and Moscow. Yet you rightly advocate that some step-by-step moves—nothing dramatic, but 'a sustained multi-level dialogue'—are indeed the right way forward. Please explain to us how those two views match together, because it is not quite clear to me.

Dr Anastasia Malygina: I think the bilateral channels of communication were the first to suffer from the increase in tensions. Different multilateral forums continued to be shock absorbers, letting Russia and the US—and in some situations Russia and the UK—continue some dialogue on nuclear issues and on a broader strategic stability agenda. I think we need to continue attempts to restore and improve dialogue but, on a bilateral level, we see that it is quite complicated. Bilateral channels for communications and substantive dialogue on strategic stability and nuclear arms control between Russia and the West are blocked now.² We see that there are difficulties regarding the multilateral forums of co-operation on issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. If you would like me to extend this part later, I will do so.

I now switch to the second part, regarding a step-by-step approach. I believe there is a need for careful consideration of all aspects that affect strategic stability and security. There can be no ready-made hasty solutions. What we can do now is think about what can be done to

² Sergey Lavrov commented on the statement made by President Putin on 2 February 2019 during his meeting with the Foreign Minister and the Defence Minister: "When the United States initiated the procedure to withdraw from the INF Treaty, President Putin said at a meeting with Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu and me that we had more than once told our American partners about all our initiatives, and that our partners surely know about them. If they opted for disregarding these initiatives, we will no longer knock on a locked door and will stop reminding our partners about our initiatives. Our American colleagues can tell us when they are ready. We will be willing to start the talks". Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks and answers at a meeting with the Association of European Business in the Russian Federation, Moscow, February 21 2019. http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/3536538

compensate for the damage and the shock if the INF Treaty ceases to exist. Secondly, we must now do everything possible to save the New START. It is relatively simple: just extend it. This will buy time for further discussions on international security and arms control. But Russia's position is that the extension of the New START would require full and verifiable US compliance with the treaty provisions, and Russia can see that now that is not the case.

Q130 Lord Hannay of Chiswick: We understand that Russia's position on nuclear weapons has changed since the end of the Cold War, with your perception that you are facing superiority in the conventional field and that nuclear weapons have to deter this, even if we find the idea that NATO or any of its members might launch a conventional war with Russia quite fanciful. I think we understand that, but could you perhaps explain to us why President Putin now publicly uses language about the use of nuclear weapons that would have been considered taboo during the Cold War, when the confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States was pretty sharp? Does it mean that he has abandoned the view, which I think was held by most of the Soviet leadership over the years, that a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought? Has he changed his mind?

Dr Anastasia Malygina: It is better to ask President Putin what he implies when he uses these words. I can say only how I interpret the official statements made by Russia's leadership. No, I do not see that the Russian Government have changed their attitude to nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are considered powerful instruments for deterrence. They are not seen as battlefield weapons. The official position is that nuclear weapons are a deterrent against a major aggression involving WMDs or conventional weapons, and that is all. I do not see any changes in the attitude towards nuclear weapons and nuclear war. Another thing that I should mention is that the Russian leadership has a very responsible attitude towards Russia's obligations under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. Russia has done a lot to comply with the norms and principles stated in the preamble and Article 6 of the NPT. Regarding the INF Treaty, for example, the Russian President stated and continues to state that Russia sees this treaty as one of the major pillars of the international security architecture currently being dismantled by the US. President Putin made a clear statement that although Russia is preparing an adequate answer to the possible US withdrawal from the INF Treaty, Russia will not deploy land-based short-range and medium-range missiles either in Europe or in other regions of the world until the US deploys such missiles in the corresponding regions. So Russia has no plans to provoke any escalation of tensions and is open to constructive dialogue aimed at preserving the balance of interests. Russia is very concerned by the unilateral steps of other states' depositories to the NPT, which undermine the sustainability of the NPT.

Q131 Lord Purvis of Tweed: Good afternoon, Dr Malygina. My question follows from your earlier comments. I noticed you referencing President Putin's statement that he would not apply the intermediate-range forces,

but I am just reading his statement to his parliament today, which says that he would direct his weapons to cities in the US instead of doing that, so the belligerent language seems to be getting worse, which will be of concern to many people. In your paper, to which the Lord Chairman referred, you still held out hope for Article 13 of the INF Treaty to be the mechanism that could still be operated to resolve questions relating to obligations and viability. However, if this is now likely to be part of an agreement that will collapse, and you have indicated the concerns about the lack of confidence that the START process will be extended, what are the areas where you can see that there could conceivably be any form of dialogue between the US and Russia at the moment? If there is no way forward, it would raise great concerns for the viability of all other aspects of arms control if the two large powers are creating even more tensions at the moment.

Dr Anastasia Malygina: I believe Russia is still open to constructive dialogue aimed at saving the key aims of bilateral nuclear arms control. I think there is still a small possibility that the INF Treaty could still be saved. Russia's official position is that to make that happen the US and its closest allies have to change their current state of mind and come up with rational proposals for discussion, so I believe that substantive dialogue is still possible, although that possibility is quite small. Arms control is considered by Russia to be a critical element for preserving strategic stability and peace. Without it, there can be no transparency and predictability. That is why I am sure that Moscow is open to dialogue on the outstanding issues of regional and global security in different parts of the world. Russia traditionally considers US-Russian nuclear arms control agreements as key elements of international strategic stability, so Moscow addresses the history of US-Russian bilateral nuclear arms control co-operation and negotiations as a series of practical steps towards the implementation of the norms stated in the preamble and Article 6 of the NPT.

I think there is still a list of issues within the nuclear non-proliferation agenda where the West and Russia have enough commonality in their positions and can continue substantive dialogue. To my mind, more attention can be paid to the dialogue within the P5 format. Another issue that needs attention is the negotiations over the Weapons-of-Mass-destruction-Free Zone in the Middle East. The co-operation within the NPT PrepCom format needs more attention. The chain of unilateral steps made by the US has undermined the effectiveness of this format of multilateral nuclear non-proliferation co-operation.

Lord Purvis of Tweed: You may be able to help me on this. The concerns about Russia's approach go well beyond this current president. President Obama had concerns in 2014 that the terms of the INF Treaty were not being met. President Obama and Europe were consistent in not moving away from the treaty but in trying to use the elements of the treaty that Russia did not use itself. So how can you say that the problem is simply unilateral actions by the other party, when the whole intention of the INF mechanism is to have that dialogue to resolve some of these

issues?

Dr Anastasia Malygina: Can you please reframe the question? I am not sure I have the sense of it.

Lord Purvis of Tweed: I understood your last comment to be that you signalled that unilateral actions by the US undermined the process. However, my understanding is that the significant concerns about Russia's approach to its new weapons system date back many years, not just to President Trump. President Obama attempted to use the processes of the INF Treaty that the Russians did not wish to use.

Dr Anastasia Malygina: The verification of the INF treaty was a long process. Many concerns of both parties regarding compliance with the treaty were productively discussed within the frameworks established by the treaty, so I do not think it is correct to say that only the US had concerns regarding Russian compliance with the INF; Russia had concerns as well and talked about those concerns within the procedures established by the INF. Washington's behaviour meant that it was not ready for constructive discussion; and it does not accept the proposals suggested by Russia thus undermining any further possibility of addressing reciprocally concerns within the procedures of the INF. Now Russia insists that the US needs to come up with rational suggestions for continuing the dialogue, but there have been no such suggestions. As I see it, the major consideration behind the announcement of the US withdrawal from the INF Treaty was the intention to have freedom to deploy corresponding missiles in the north-west Pacific, aiming them against China. So I do not see the US really showing any interest in saving the treaty.

The Chairman: I do not think we shall get much further on that one. Baroness Smith would like to ask you a question.

Q132 **Baroness Smith of Newnham:** How far is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty a priority for Russia? How far is Russia trying to work to respond to the wider challenges of non-proliferation and disarmament?

Dr Anastasia Malygina: For Russia, the credibility and sustainability of the NPT regime is a matter of high priority. Moscow is highly concerned about the unilateral steps made by other states' depositories that undermine the treaty. Russia has been active in searching for mutually acceptable solutions that would increase transparency and confidence among States Parties around nuclear non-proliferation agreements. Russia was active in facilitating the dialogue over the Iranian nuclear programme and the security problems on the Korean peninsula, and those efforts have been reasonably effective. At the same time, Russian diplomats have put a lot of effort into preserving the impartial, depoliticised and technically justified nature of the IAEA system of safeguards that is based on the agreements concluded between the states and the agency.

Russia is very concerned about the attempts to politicise the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Russia, together with other members of the organisation, has been protecting the OPCW against any departure from the scope of its purposes and functions determined by the Chemical Weapons Convention. Russia continues co-operation to support the Biological Weapons Convention regime. In this sphere there are positive examples of effective co-operation at both bilateral and multilateral levels. At the same time, Russia continues to be proactive in searching for solutions to prevent an arms race in outer space. Russia shows readiness to promote and support any initiatives contributing to the use and exploration of outer space.

Baroness Smith of Newnham: How is that going to help non-proliferation?

Dr Anastasia Malygina: The two factors are connected because there is a broader disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. The Russian position is that a further step-by-step approach in preserving strategic stability needs to take into consideration possible progress in technology and the possible new theatres of the arms race. That is why I insist that the Russian initiatives and proactive policy in the realm of the exploration and peaceful use of outer space and the prevention of the weaponisation of outer space are critical and can be seen as examples of a really effective and proactive policy within the global disarmament agenda.

I would like to give two examples. With regard to outer space arms control co-operation, there are two proposals. One is the Russian-Chinese draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and the use or threat of force against outer space objects. The other is the Russian No first Placement initiative, which is increasingly getting global.³ These two examples can be mentioned as another effective effort with regard to the wider non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

I would like to add a third point. When we are talking about additional possible issues where Russia and the West have similar positions, we can look at the agenda for the Conference on Disarmament. Much more effort could be put towards revitalising the Conference on Disarmament. Here, again, I emphasise that Russia continues to put much effort towards revitalising the Conference on Disarmament. Russia insists that the UN multilateral disarmament machinery must be the key element for arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament co-operation.

Baroness Smith of Newnham: To what extent do you think that wider tensions between Russia and the West make all these initiatives harder? Are there any ways of resolving them—in the context, obviously, of nuclear co-operation?

³ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 5 December 2018 [on the report of the First Committee (A/73/508)] No first placement of weapons in outer space. A/RES/73/31 available at <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/31>

Dr Anastasia Malygina: Of course the tensions influence the perspectives and efficiency of multilateral co-operation and global non-proliferation diplomacy, but I need to remind you that tensions did not appear yesterday. For a long period there was a firewall that protected the sustainability of multilateral dialogue, and that firewall seemed strong enough. P5 conferences have convened regularly since 2009, and co-operation with the NPT PrepCom format has been really productive. However, on the initiative of the Western countries the P5 stepped away from the previous agreement to avoid mutual criticism during the NPT review process. This seriously undermined co-operation in spheres where Russia and the West had no serious disagreements. Moreover, recently the P5 NATO members have started to bring up issues not directly related to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. As seen from Russia this aggravates the situation within the NPT review cycle, where the atmosphere is already tense. I guess Russia will take this into account when elaborating its position for the 2020 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

The situation concerning the weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone in the Middle East remains difficult, in many ways because of different approaches among the P5 countries. The 2015 NPT Review Conference failed to adopt a Final Document because the US, the UK and Canada opposed the provisions on the Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone in the Middle East being included in the draft Final Document. Here, I emphasise that Russia considers any attempts to remove that issue from the scope of the NPT Review Conference are counterproductive because it will not satisfy the Arab states and may seriously affect the situation at the 2020 NPT Review Conference. The JCPOA is suffering from the shock created by the US withdrawal. And it is not a secret that a major consideration behind the US withdrawal from the INF Treaty was that the US did not need that treaty any more. All these factors undermine the possibility of a constructive P5 process. The fact that the most recent P5 meeting in China ended with no joint statement shows that trust is really very low. I suppose that Russia has no problem with conducting full-scale dialogue within multilateral formats, but Russia sees a lack of will among its western counterparts.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Dr Malygina. I think Lord Hannay has a final question.

Q133 **Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** May we go back briefly to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons? I think you said that Russia was opposed to the 'politicisation' of this process, but I do not imagine you would contest—I am not suggesting who was responsible—that a chemical weapons substance was used in Salisbury and that chemical weapons have been used in Syria since it adhered to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Why is it politicising the process to give the organisation the opportunity to find out who was responsible for those acts and to bring that out into the open? That surely is not politicisation; it is simply fulfilling the purposes of the convention.

Dr Anastasia Malygina: The Chemical Weapons Convention establishes impartial, depoliticised and technically justified procedures that can be used to address concerns regarding the compliance of States Parties to its provisions. The departure from this code—from the purposes and functions prescribed by the Chemical Weapons Convention—means politicisation of the OPCW. That is what I meant. We saw such attempts to politicise the work of the OPCW in both cases that you mentioned. The procedures were not used properly while investigating the use of chemical weapons in Syria. That raised a big question regarding the sufficiency and credibility of the conclusions of the Joint Investigation Mechanism.

With regard to the second case you mentioned, the UK Government did not show readiness for responsible and mutually respectful discussion that would take into consideration all the details of the incident. By this, the situation was politicised. If we look at the text of the Chemical Weapons Convention and address its letter and spirit, we see that the incident you mentioned should not have been addressed in the context of the Convention, but it was and in violation of the procedures prescribed by that Convention. The attempt to use those procedures to address the issue was another attempt at the politicisation of the OPCW.

The Chairman: Dr Anastasia Malygina, that completes our questioning this morning. We are very grateful to you for putting before us the Russian position on many areas. The world depends on great powers such as Russia working constructively with all other powers for better arms control and to prevent new arms races which would destroy us all. We have a common interest in achieving that but obvious differences about how to get there. I thank you on behalf of the Committee for answering our questions.

Dr Anastasia Malygina: Thank you very much.