Dr David Lowry, Senior International Research Fellow, Institute for Resource and Security Studies – Written evidence (NPT0031)

Questions

Nuclear risk

1. What is your evaluation of the current level of risk that nuclear weapons, of any type, could be used?

"For more than sixty years, good management and good fortune have meant that nuclear arsenals have not been used. But we cannot rely on history just to repeat itself."

- Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP, when Foreign Secretary, speech in Washington DC, 25 June 2007

Very high, as all nuclear WMDs are held by Governments such as the UK which mistakenly believe their possession adds to national security, rather than undermining it. This creates the conditions for almost certain accidents. Let me give the most celebrated example of the deadly danger of so-called nuclear deterrence: it is from the Daily Telegraph obituary on 18 September 2017 of Lieutenant Colonel Stanislav Petrov, who has been dubbed 'The Man Who Saved the World.'

"Stanislav Petrov, a lieutenant colonel in the Soviet Air Defence Forces, was the officer on duty at the Soviet Union’s early warning centre when malfunctioning computers signaled the United States had launched missiles at the country in September 1983. His decision to ignore warnings is credited with averting Atomic Armageddon. On the night of September 26, 1983, he was on duty at the Soviet Union’s early warning centre near Moscow when computers warned that the United States had fired five nuclear missiles at the country. The 1983 false alarm is perhaps the closest the world has come to nuclear war"

The machine indicated the information was of the highest certainty," Petrov later recalled. "On the wall big red letters burnt the word: START. That meant the missile had definitely been fired."

He had just minutes to decide whether to assess the attack as genuine and inform the Kremlin that the United States was starting World War Three - or tell his commanders that the Soviet Union's early warning system was faulty. Guessing that a genuine American attack would have involved hundreds of missiles, he put the alarm down to a computer malfunction.

Lt Col Petrov was vindicated when an internal investigation following the incident concluded that Soviet satellites had mistaken sunlight reflected on clouds for rocket engines. The Soviet government’s policy in the event of a US nuclear attack was to launch an immediate and all-out retaliatory strike in accordance with the principle of Mutually Assured Destruction.

Although Petrov was feted by his colleagues and initially praised by superiors for his actions, he was not rewarded. He later complained that he was scolded by superiors.

2 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/0/stanislav-petrov-true-story-grumpy-russian-singlehandedly-stopped/
for failing to complete a routine paperwork during the incident and had been scapegoated by generals embarrassed by the failure of the early warning system.”

I saw the Danish documentary film *The Man Who Saved The World* that recounted these events at an international nuclear disarmament conference on the *Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons* organised by the Austrian foreign ministry in December 2014, along with several US nuclear weapons experts. It was chilling experience for each of us.³

For a very detailed survey of other such incidents, called “Broken Arrows” in the understated language of nuclear weapons risk experts, see the report published by the distinguished international affairs London think tank, Chatham House in April 2014, under the title: ‘Too Close for Comfort: Cases of Near Nuclear Use and Options for Policy,’ by Dr Patricia Lewis, research director for international security, and her colleagues Dr Heather Williams, Sasan Aghlani, and Benoît Pelopidas.⁴

*The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty*

2. Ahead of the 2020 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), what are the biggest challenges facing global nuclear diplomacy? In my view the continued blatant violation by the UK of its legal obligations to be engaged in good faith negotiations towards nuclear disarmament, as stipulated by Article 6 of the NPT. The UK is the worst violator because it is a depositary state (with the US and Russia, originally the USSR, who have entered into several nuclear arms control and disarmament negotiations in SALT 1 & 2, START, and INF), charged with protecting the interests of signatory members states. China and France, as later nuclear weapon state signatories to the NPT, are also in violation, but do not have depositary state status.

Current Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson told MPs in Defence Questions on 14 January 2019 that “We constantly have discussions right across Government to make sure that our continuous at-sea nuclear deterrence can be sustained… and will continue to do so in the long term... our nuclear deterrent has kept Britain, and also our NATO partners, safe over 50 years... We have to recognise the need to invest in a whole spectrum of different capabilities, [including] nuclear deterrence.”⁵

This contemporary ministerial assertion in respect of the continuous requirement for British nuclear weapons could have been cited from defence ministers going back over 67 years.

Up to 1968 that was a national security decision purely the responsibility of the Government of the day. Post 1968 when the UK signed the NPT, the UK possession and deployment his was no longer solely a UK national security issue, but an international legal nuclear disarmament obligation.

Let me demonstrate, using materials extracted from British Official diplomatic papers I discovered in the British National Archives the differences between British official

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Man_Who_Saved_the_World
⁴ https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/199200
disarmament promises recorded for posterity and contrast those with the subsequent belligerent nuclear practice of development and deployment of Polaris and its replacement Trident nuclear WMD systems, in violation of clear NPT commitments and on-the-record pledges.

A memorandum prepared by the Foreign Office in advance of the visit to London of the then Soviet premier, Alexei Kosygin, in February 1967, included the following final paragraph:

“We assume that the Soviet Union regard, as we do, the proposed review conference (for the NPT) as being an adequate assurance to the non-nuclears that the military nuclear powers are serious about the need for action on nuclear disarmament.”

Nearly a year later, on 18 January 1968, Fred Mulley MP, the then Labour Minister of State for Disarmament at the Foreign Office, told the 358th Plenary meeting of the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC) - the forerunner to the present day UN Committee on Disarmament (CD) - in respect of the then proposed Article 6 of the nascent NPT:

“My own Government have consistently held that the [Nuclear Nonproliferation] Treaty should and must lead to such [nuclear] disarmament.” (emphasis added).

He added:” If it is fair to describe the danger of proliferation as an obstacle to disarmament, it is equally fair to say that without some progress in disarmament, the NPT will not last....As I have made clear in previous speeches my Government accepts the obligation to participate fully in the negotiations required by Article 6 and it is our desire that these negotiations should begin as soon as possible (emphasis added) and should produce speedy and successful results. There is no excuse now for allowing a long delay to follow the signing of this Treaty, as happened after the Partial Test Ban Treaty, before further measures can be agreed and implemented.”

Mr Mulley subsequently wrote a confidential memorandum to the British Cabinet Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (OPD(68)6), on 26 January 1968, in which he set out the then policy position on NPT article 6 (which at this stage in negotiations did not yet include the clause “at an early date”):

“A number of countries may withhold their ratification of the Treaty until the nuclear weapon states show they are taking seriously the obligations which this Article imposes upon them. It will therefore be essential to follow the Treaty up quickly with further nuclear disarmament measures (emphasis added) if it is to be brought into force and remain in force thereafter.”

If we leap forward nearly, nearly forty years, we can see what the then New Labour Foreign Office ministers thought about the status of British nuclear disarmament under the NPT.

On 10 March 2007, the then Foreign Secretary had a Letter to the Editor published in The Times, under the headline ‘Is Mr Gorbachev’s concern over Trident misplaced’ responding to an earlier letter published on 8 March, from former Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev. Inter alia, She wrote:

“[By replacing Trident we will] simply enable the UK to maintain a deterrent until we can achieve our continuing objective of a world free of nuclear weapons.”

She later added:

“...We continue to encourage Russia and the US to make further bilateral [nuclear disarmament] progress. They are still some way from the point at which the part of
the global stockpile that belongs to the UK (less than 1 percent) would need to be included in such negotiations.”

A few weeks later in early May 2007 in Vienna, the then British Disarmament Ambassador, Foreign Office diplomat John Duncan presented the UK submission to the NPT preparatory committee, asserting: "The United Kingdom is absolutely committed to the principles and practice of multilateral nuclear disarmament. Our ultimate goal remains unchanged: we will work towards a safer world free from nuclear weapons - and we stand by our unequivocal undertaking to accomplish their total elimination."

He went on to claim that the UK "continues to support the disarmament obligations set out in Article 6 of the Treaty [NPT] and has an excellent record in meeting these commitments."

This was, and remains, a contestable claim, as the Article 6 that the ambassador invoked requires the nuclear weapons states signed up to the NPT "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

Not one UK nuclear weapon or warhead had, or has since, been withdrawn from operational service as a result of multilateral disarmament negotiations in the 50 years of the NPT, as was confirmed in a written reply on 16 May 2007 by the then defence secretary Des Browne MP (a recent witness before this committee inquiry as Lord Browne), who told the independent MP Dai Davies in a written reply: “None of the [nuclear weapons reductions since 1998 ] have taken place as a result of any separate multilateral disarmament negotiations.”

And then, as now, nearly 12 years on, none of Britain’s nuclear arsenal features in any nuclear disarmament negotiations. The only UK nuclear weapons withdrawn from service over the past five decades are those declared surplus to requirements by the military, by unilateral decision by Government, so they represent no reduction in nuclear reliance.

The UK has presented a genuinely schizophrenic policy on need for retention of nuclear WMDs and aspiration towards a nuclear weapons-free world for the entire sixty year period since the NPT was signed on 5 July 1968, with justification for possession and deployment of nuclear WMDs coming alongside pledges for nuclear disarmament, but never quite yet.

On 25th June 2007, Margaret Becket MP made a valedictory speech as British foreign Secretary at the annual Carnegie Endowment Non Proliferation conference in Washington DC. She told delegates robustly in her keynote speech: “What we need is both vision - a scenario for a world free of nuclear weapons. And action - progressive steps to reduce warhead numbers and to limit the role of nuclear weapons in security policy. These two strands are separate but they are mutually reinforcing. Both are necessary, both at the moment too weak. … Weak action on disarmament, weak consensus on proliferation are in none of our interests... we need the international community to be foursquare and united behind the global non-

6 Hansard, column 820w
https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm070516/text/70516w0015.htm#07051686000187
proliferation regime.... So we have grounds for optimism; but none for complacency. The successes we have had in the past have not come about by accident but by applied effort. We will need much more of the same in the months and years to come. That will mean continued momentum and consensus on non-proliferation, certainly. But, and this is my main argument today, the chances of achieving that are greatly increased if we can also point to genuine commitment and concrete action on nuclear disarmament. After all, we all signed up to the goal of the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons back in 1968; so what does simply restating that goal achieve today? More than you might imagine. Because, and I'll be blunt, there are some who are in danger of losing faith in the possibility of ever reaching that goal. 

When it comes to building this new impetus for global nuclear disarmament, I want the UK to be at the forefront of both the thinking and the practical work. To be, as it were, a "disarmament laboratory". I would suggest to the Committee they might ask their witnesses from the Foreign Office how their former Foreign Secretary's vision for nuclear disarmament has been realized across the subsequent 12 years. My own assessment set out above suggests extreme "bad faith" by successive administrations with many vague promises of supporting a nuclear weapons free world, but zero UK nuclear weapons entered into nuclear disarmament negotiations and a £205 billion Trident nuclear WMD renewal programme underway.

a. To what extent do states still view the NPT as relevant?

I think it was a huge error of the non-nuclear weapons member states of the NPT to agree under political pressure to the indefinite extension of the NPT the 1995 NPT review Conference, because, by so doing they removed the leverage they had to force compliance by the nuclear weapons states parties to comply with the exigencies of Article 6 of the NPT.

b. What are the prospects for other components of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty (CTBT)? Whilst NWS violate their solemn obligations under existing multilateral arms control treaties, poor.

c. How important are these agreements to the wider rules-based international order?

They would be infinitely improved if the UK, along with the other nuclear weapons states parties, were abide by their NPT Article 6 obligations, in the same way that the 190 or so non-nuclear weapons states, such as Iran, have fully abided by theirs. But if the UK continues to play fast and loose with rules, only following those it cherry picks as suiting itself, this will erode, undermine and ultimately destroy the rules based international security order, as it demonstrates contempt towards such international norms of compliance.

Here is what Reaching Critical Will - A programme of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom WILPF) - said in its October 2013 pamphlet, Preventing Collapse – the NPT and a Ban on Nuclear Weapons, on this question:

"The promise of the NPT to achieve nuclear disarmament has gone unfulfilled while new restrictions to guard against proliferation have been imposed. Nuclear-armed states..."
modernize and maintain their nuclear arsenals in a way that belies their legal obligations to pursue disarmament. The “step-by-step” agenda for nuclear disarmament has not achieved interim objectives such as entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, negotiations of a fissile materials cut-off treaty, or full implementation of the 2010 NPT action plan, let alone the requirement of elimination. Some NPT state parties have engaged in nuclear-related cooperation with non-state parties, directly or indirectly facilitating their nuclear weapons programmes.”  

To what extent does the existence of three nuclear armed states outside the NPT (India, Israel and Pakistan) destabilise the overall regime?

All three, along with North Korea, are very dangerous and have significantly undermined their own – and their regional- security by developing and deploying nuclear weapons.

Here is an extract from the influential Indian daily newspaper, The Hindustan Times, looking back last year to twenty years of the nuclear-weapons stand-off between India and Pakistan:

“Two nuclear-armed neighbours outside the NPT regime, their ties marked by constant strains, couldn’t move beyond the basics in building mutual confidence on the nuclear issue. The two countries annually exchange a list of their nuclear installations…”

India has a nuclear doctrine of no first use. Pakistan’s nuclear doctrine resembles that of the US during the Cold War: if the integrity of the country is being threatened, it reserves the right to use nuclear weapons.

The nuclear situation in the sub-Continent

Here is what the India’s Foreign minister Vijay Gokhale told a forum, the 1st Disarmament and International Security Affairs Fellowship organised by the Ministry of External Affairs at the Indian Foreign Services Institute, backed by the United Nations Under Secretary General and High Representative for Disarmament Izumi Nakamitsu, earlier in January 2019.

"India’s nuclear doctrine is based on a policy of minimum credible deterrence with a posture of no-first-use and non-use of atomic weapons against non-nuclear weapon states.” (Emphasis added)

(India’s nuclear doctrine based on policy of minimum credible deterrence: Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale.

It is clear this rational directly reflects the justification the UK Government persistently uses to defend maintenance of British nuclear WMDs.

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e. What prospects are there for a Middle East WMD free zone?

The only nuclear-armed state in the Middle East is Israel. It does not possess its 200 nuclear warheads for national survival or deterrence, but has threatened to use them against non-nuclear neighbouring states. One such documented incidence came in the 7-day war in 1967, according to an exclusive report in the New York Times, which began:

"On the eve of the Arab-Israeli war, 50 years ago this week, Israeli officials raced to assemble an atomic device and developed a plan to detonate it atop a mountain in the Sinai Peninsula as a warning to Egyptian and other Arab forces.".12

Interestingly, on 19 April 2018 the United States Government issued a working paper to the preparatory committee for the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) currently ongoing in Geneva, entitled "Establishing regional conditions conducive to a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems,".13

This seven page paper asserts: "Over the course of recent decades, a number of regional States, including Iraq, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic, have all pursued undeclared weapons of mass destruction-related programs and activities, in violation of arms control obligation."

But it omitted to make mention of Israel, the only nation in the region possessing nuclear weapons, and which refuses to join the NPT. Such partial politics is very bad diplomacy.

However, there are some positive possibilities: Just over ten years ago, Israel took virtually unreported steps that might achieve the national security it understandably seeks in the region by divesting itself of its own nuclear weapons in multilateral regional negotiations.

At the completely overlooked Paris Summit of Mediterranean countries, held on 13 July 2008, under the co-presidency of the French Republic and the Arab Republic of Egypt and in the presence of Israel - which was represented by its then Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert - the issue of peace within the region were explored in depth, and the final declaration stated the participants were in favour of:

"regional security by acting in favour of nuclear, chemical and biological non-proliferation through adherence to and compliance with a combination of international and regional nonproliferation regimes and arms control and disarmament agreements."

The final document goes on to say:
"The parties shall pursue a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems. Furthermore the parties will consider practical steps to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well as excessive

accumulation of conventional arms; refrain from developing military capacity beyond their legitimate defence requirements, at the same time reaffirming their resolve to achieve the same degree of security and mutual confidence with the lowest possible levels of troops and weaponry and adherence to CCW (the convention on certain conventional weapons) promote conditions likely to develop good-neighbourly relations among themselves and support processes aimed at stability, security”.

This declaration was cited in a speech made by the current leader of the Labour Party, a long standing advocate of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, in a debate on the NPT held 11 Nov 2009, which I commend to the Committee.

The United States

3. To what extent will the United States’ withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, as well as US efforts to achieve the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, affect the wider nuclear non-proliferation regime?

The US Administration’s withdrawal from the multilateral Iran nuclear deal is both bad diplomacy, in its unilateral renunciation of multilateral treaty which undermines the US reliability as a partner in all other multilateral treaties to which it is a signatory party, and is based on demonstrable deliberately distorted intelligence. It is reported widely that the other parties to the treaty, and very importantly the International Atomic Energy Agency, as the agreed verification body of the, that Iran is in compliance.

Current US National Security Advisor, Ambassador John Bolton, has resurrected the distortion of intelligence he has promoted in the past, and was catastrophically misused by the George W Bush US administration in 2002-3 to justify the invasion of Iraq, which has led to hug loss of life, destruction of civil society and economic and political chaos in Iraq ever since. One US-based British commentator on middle east security issues, Mehdi Hasan, recently wrote

“"In March 2015, Bolton, then a private citizen, wrote an op-ed for the New York Times headlined, “To Stop Iran’s Bomb, Bomb Iran.” In July 2017, just eight months prior to joining the Trump administration, Bolton told a gathering of the cultish Iranian exile group Mujahedin-e-Khalq that “the declared policy of the United States of America should be the overthrow of the mullahs’ regime in Tehran” and that “before 2019, we here will celebrate in Tehran”.”

The initiative taken by Presidents Trump and Kim Jon-un to meet bilaterally in Singapore on 12 June 2018 to discuss ways of tension reduction and eventual
denuclearisation on the Korean Peninsula is very much to be welcomed. One experienced, sage US commentator set out a possible – and sensible - diplomatic agenda “

An early goal should be to reach a common understanding, in writing, about what denuclearization entails—a crucial detail left out of the Singapore summit joint statement. A good basis would be the 1992 Joint Declaration on Denuclearization by North and South Korea.

Next, the United States will want North Korea to solidify its voluntary nuclear test moratorium by signing the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and expand on its missile testing halt to include an end to new ballistic missile production. It also will be crucial to secure a pledge from North Korea to halt fissile material production. These steps would help ensure that North Korea cannot expand its arsenal while negotiations continue.

Another early goal should be to secure North Korea’s commitment to deliver a full declaration of its nuclear infrastructure, materials, and weapons to be verified later by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) using guidelines and techniques established by the IAEA Model Additional Protocol for nuclear safeguards.

Further, the two sides will need to agree to a process and a timeline for dismantling North Korea’s stockpile of 10 to 50 nuclear weapons and securing separated fissile material. This work would likely have to be supervised by specialists from nuclear-weapon states in cooperation with North Korean technical experts.”

("After the Singapore Summit,” Arms Control Today, July/August 2018, briefing by Daryl G Kimball, Executive Director of US Arms Control Association; 18

Interested parties and other regional Governments back the initiative, but want wider involvement. For example ”President Trump should refrain from acting on his own, and actively implement measures to achieve North Korea's denuclearization through team play by the U.S. government. In doing so, it would be helpful to listen humbly to the opinions of its allies including Japan.” 19

My own commentary on the Singapore summit, pointing out how British nuclear technology helped North Korea make both plutonium and enriched uranium for its military nuclear programme.20

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18 https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-07/focus/after-singapore-summit
19 Editorial: Japan should complain to US about stalled N. Korean denuclearization,’ Mainichi (Japan), 28 August 2018; https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180828/p2a/00m/0na/023000c
Nuclear arms control

4. To what extent and why are existing nuclear arms control agreements being challenged, particularly the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) and the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), and what prospect is there for further such agreements? What prospects are there of progress in negotiating a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT)?

As mentioned in response to Q3, it is very bad diplomatic practice for a signatory state to unilaterally abrogate a treaty, even if it gives advance notice of its intention to do so.21

I have always considered a FMCT an essential component of a suite of arms control and disarmament agreements required to achieve global nuclear disarmament.

Under a new so-called “voluntary safeguards agreement (VOA) signed on 7 June this year between the UK and the UN international watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to replace the existing trilateral 1977 agreement between UK-IAEA and the EU nuclear watchdog body, Euratom, under Brexit arrangements, it includes in its very first article, the following exclusion:

“The United Kingdom shall accept the application of safeguards, in accordance with the terms of this Agreement, on all source or special fissionable material in facilities or parts thereof within the United Kingdom, subject to exclusions for national security reasons only, with a view to enabling the Agency to verify that such material is not, except as provided for in this Agreement, withdrawn from civil activities.” 22(emphasis added)

Lest any member of the Committee thinks this is simply an enabling option, very unlikely to be implemented, we know from ministerial written answers in the House of Commons and annual publications by the UK nuclear regulator, the Office for Nuclear Regulation, under the predecessor trilateral agreement (in force from September 1978), which this new treaty replaces, there have been several hundred occasions when nuclear materials, including plutonium, has been withdrawn from safeguards cover.

A written answer to Green Party MP Caroline Lucas on 17 December by foreign office minister, Sir Alan Duncan, withdrawals year by year since 1999 were as follows: in 2000 there were 6; in 2001, 18; in 2002, 11; in 2003, 20; in 2004 19; in 2005, 17; in 2006, 16; in 2007, 31; in 2008, 19; in 2009, 15; in 2010, 14; in 2011, 17; in 2012, 19; in 2013, 34; in 2014, 18, in 2015, 29; in 2016, 44 and in 2017 35 withdrawals.23 Previous withdrawals since 1978 are recorded in the following document deposited in the House of Commons library: ‘Withdrawals from safeguards pursuant to the UK safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Euratom.’ (17 pages), following a written Parliamentary Question nearly 19 years ago (Official Report, 28 July 2000, Column 1094W)24

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24 ‘Withdrawals from safeguards pursuant to the UK safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Euratom.’ (17 pages), following a written Parliamentary Question nearly 19
In total nuclear materials have been withdrawn form safeguards and notified to the IAEA over 600 times in the 40 years life of the trilateral treaty.

The new international treaty that put this agreement into law was passed unopposed by MPs on 17 December 2017, de facto legitimising large scale plutonium proliferation with impunity by the UK Government.25

This loophole would have to be closed in each nuclear weapons state with so-called voluntary safeguards agreements, or a FMCT would be fatally undermined.

Nuclear modernisation programmes
5. What effect will nuclear renewal programmes have on the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime? To what extent could technological developments—including in missile capabilities, warhead strength, and verification—undermine existing non-proliferation and arms control agreements?

It is obvious from submissions made by non-nuclear weapons states to successive quinquennial NPT review conferences and their precoms that dozens of memmbber states regard the continued qualitative vertical proliferation by nuclear weapons states (NWS) parties in direct violation to Article 6 obligations to do the opposite undermines the normative power of being a signatory state to control horizontal proliferation. The most clear articulation of this has come from the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a NNWS, whose criticisms of the vertical proliferation of nuclear WMDs while being excoriated by the NWSs parties to abide by the NPT is unanswerable. Instead the NWS provide diversionary frothing hypocrisy, justifying their 60 year violation of the NPT by attacking state in compliance. It is an ‘Alice in Wonderland’ diplomatic situation that is unsustainable.

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." “The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.” “The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that's all.” 26

As an example of any number of NPT PreComs, here an extract from an article I wrote after the 2007 PrepCom in Vienna:

“The committee's chairman, Japan's permanent representative to the UN missions in Vienna, ambassador Yukiya Amano [who subsequently became IAEA Director- General] noted in his own factual summary of the two week's deliberations, that the states parties said "the total elimination of nuclear weapons was the only guarantee against their use or threat of use". It was stressed, he said, that the "indefinite extension of the NPT (as was agreed in 1995) did not imply the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons"....” He also noted, with clear inference to the UK Trident programme, that "concern and disappointment were voiced about plans to replace or modernise nuclear weapons and their means of delivery or platform."

A few days after the close of the preparatory committee, on 15 May, US ambassador Gregory Schulte addressed an audience at the University of Vienna, opening with the uncontestable words: "In one blinding flash, a nuclear weapon can kill, maim, and destroy on a scale without parallel, sending political shockwaves and economic dislocation across the globe." Fingering Iran, he added: "The risk of nuclear weapons spreading to renegade regimes and transnational terrorists is one of today's gravest dangers to our United Nations."

Yet the US has currently deployed worldwide 9,938 nuclear weapons, according to an excellent study, Model Nuclear Inventory, prepared by a New York-based non-governmental organisation, Reaching Critical Will, which cleverly donated copies of the inventory to each delegation in Vienna.27

Iran, meanwhile, had none; and still has none.

_As a security and non-proliferation expert, I find the speeches of UK disarmament ambassadors and foreign office ministers to these NPT events continually embarrassing an utterly indefensible._

New technologies

6. To what extent will technological developments, both directly relating to nuclear weapons and in the wider defence and security sphere, affect nuclear diplomacy?

The NWS, by justifying their own possession of nuclear weapons, have attempted to normalize elite deployment by members of the nuclear weapons club. So we can expect the periodic unveiling of new and more deadly nuclear weapons by the nuclear club members, such as Russia atomic Avangard hypersonic maneuverable re-entry vehicle for ICBMs, as the qualitative nuclear arms race is ratcheted up with impunity.28 This revelation came nine months after Russia’s President Vladimir Putin praised his nation’s growing hypersonic arsenal as “invincible.”

On 17 January 2019, the US Government announced its own purported technology fix to an perceived nuclear arms threat problem, rather than turning to diplomacy, in unveiling its Missile Defense Review Program.29 The highly respected think tank, US Arms Control Association, published an analytical briefing, which opens as follows:

“The Trump administration’s long-awaited Missile Defense Review… proposes a significant and costly expansion of the role and scope of U.S. missile defenses that is likely to exacerbate Russian and Chinese concerns about the threat to their strategic nuclear deterrents, undermine strategic stability, and further complicate the prospects for additional nuclear arms reductions.

Of particular concern was President Donald Trump’s statement during his remarks at the Pentagon that the goal of U.S. missile defenses is to “ensure we can detect and destroy any missile launched against the United States anywhere, anytime, anyplace.” This would be a costly, unachievable, and destabilizing departure from longstanding policy and contradicts the text of the review, which limits U.S. homeland missiles defense to their traditional role of defending against limited attacks from North Korea or Iran. In addition, the review proposes to ‘further thicken defensive capabilities for the U.S. homeland’ with the new Aegis S4B Block IIA Interceptor, hundreds of which could eventually be deployed on land and at sea across the globe.”

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The UK’s hugely expensive - in financial and diplomatic terms - renewal of Trident is another indefensible example of atomic escalation.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
7. If it were to enter into force, how would the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (commonly referred to as the Ban Treaty) affect efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and bring about disarmament?

The “Nuclear Ban”, whose originators and promoters - The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) were awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize for their initiative and its success - is an essential complement to the NPT regime. I would direct the Committee to read the document published in October 2013 by ICAN’s partner organization, WILPF, in New York, titled Preventing collapse: the NPT and a ban on nuclear weapons 31

I would also recommend that the Committee consults this report ( also by Reaching Critical Will, an international disarmament and diplomatic lobby group, based in New York) on the conference hosted by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna in December 2014, (which I attended) that created the diplomatic climate for the Ban Treaty to be actualized. It is titled: Filling the gap: report on the Vienna conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons: a conference report for the meeting hosted by the government of Austria on 8-9 December 2014 on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. 32

I provided a detailed written submission to the Vienna conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, which may be consulted. 33

The P5
8. What are the policies of other P5 countries (China, France, Russia and the United States), and the UK’s other partners, on the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and on nuclear weapons more generally? Have these policies changed, and if so, why? How effective has the P5 process been, and what role will it have in the future?

The P5 is a self-appointed, collectively hypocritical atomic elite club, with zero credibility on non-proliferation, time after time telling NNWS to do as they say, but not do as they do themselves, ie promote persistent vertical and qualitative self-proliferation.

I explained this in an article I wrote four years ago, reproduced below. Sadly, not one word needs altering today; the same critical argument remains intact.

Tuesday, 10 February 2015

The two faces of the UK over nuclear WMDs

Today the Foreign and Commonwealth Office opens a new Diplomatic Academy, the first in the FCO’s history. The FCO media material describes the new venture thus: “The Diplomatic Academy will be a centre of excellence to help all staff from across government working on international issues to share expertise and learn from one another. It will help the organisation extend its networks and to engage with academic and diplomatic institutions and others. Learning will be accessible and inspiring, and it will provide a space for challenging conventional thinking.”  

By chance, on Wednesday and Thursday last week, Foreign Office diplomacy was in top gear as our mandarins hosted a two day high-level meeting at its London conference venue, Lancaster House, of senior diplomatic representatives of the other four members of the self-appointed nuclear weapons club on the United Nations Security Council, the so-called Permanent Five (P5).

This brought to London Wang Qun, Director General, Department of Arms Control and Disarmament for China; Hélène Duchêne, Director for Strategic Affairs for France; Rose Gottemoeller, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security for the United States; and Grigory Berdennikov, Ambassador-at-Large for Russia, to meet with the FCO’s top disarmament diplomat, Peter Jones, Director for Defence and International Security, according to a written answer to Labour MP Paul Flynn on 9 February.

The answer by Foreign Office minister Tobias Ellwood also said: “The London P5 Conference covered a wide range of issues relevant to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, encompassing disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Conference included outreach with a number of non-nuclear weapon states – Australia, Canada, Mexico, the Netherlands and the United Arab Emirates – as well as civil society. P5 delegates also visited the Atomic Weapons Establishment; this was part of our efforts to enhance transparency, but appropriate measures were put in place to ensure that our national security interests were protected.)

After their meeting on 6 February the P5 diplomats issued a joint statement through the Foreign Office.

Aside from warm words proclaiming they all supported the 189-nation Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and were working to strengthen it at the forthcoming NPT review conference in New York in April/May (contemporaneous with the UK General Election) they asserted “The P5 also considered a wide array of issues related to and steps towards making progress on all three pillars of the NPT: disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In addition, the P5 had constructive and productive discussions with a number of non-nuclear-weapon states and civil society representatives.)

Then in a very interesting passage, considering it is co-signed by Russia, it asserted: “At their 2015 Conference the P5 restated their belief that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty remains the essential cornerstone for the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, and is an essential contribution to international security and stability.”

It then added: “The P5 reaffirmed that a step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament that promotes international stability, peace and undiminished and increased security for all remains the only realistic and practical route to achieving a
world without nuclear weapons. To this end, the P5 discussed issues related to international security and strategic stability and their nuclear doctrines in order to enhance mutual understanding in these areas...The P5 stressed that addressing further prospects for nuclear disarmament would require taking into account all factors that could affect global strategic stability. In doing so they stressed the importance of engaging in frank and constructive dialogue to that end.”

For those wishing to rid the planet of nuclear WMDs, all of this sounds hopeful, until the facts intervene, revealing all rank and stinking hypocrisy!

Within two days the press was revealing:

**£4.2bn: the bill for replacing Trident before parliament gives go-ahead**

*(Sunday Herald, 8 February)*

Scottish–based investigative journalist Rob Edwards, unveiled that the official public spending watchdog, the UK National Audit Office, in a new report has revealed that this £4,200,000,000 (£4.2 billion) is being spent on designing new submarines, reactors and missile compartments ahead of a long-promised decision on Trident replacement by MPs in 2016, after this year’s UK general election. Edwards reported the MoD as saying it has always been transparent about the costs “whilst protecting our commercial position”.

The NAO report, *Major Projects Report 2014 and the Equipment Plan 2014 to 2024*, (with Appendices and project summary sheets) reveals that the MoD has underestimated the cost of upgrading the nuclear reactors that power Trident submarines by £151 million.

The SNP Westminster leader and defence spokesman, Angus Robertson, retorted “Costs are spiraling out of control before MPs have even had a chance to vote on renewal. It is utterly unacceptable that over £4 billion will be blown on replacing Trident nuclear weapons before parliament actually decides on whether or not to even give it the go ahead. In no other democracy, at a time of deep austerity and cuts, would money be spent on committing to such a massive project without consulting parliamentarians.”

**Spending on replacing Trident before 2016**

Future submarines concept / £198m  
Next generation reactor concept / £305m  
Reactor technology concept / £80m  
Missile compartment concept/ £271m  
Future submarines assessment / £2,000m  
Next generation reactor assessment / £1,171m  
Reactor technology assessment / £148m  
**Total / £4,173m**  
Already spent / £2,068m

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[37](http://www.robedwards.com/2015/02/42bn-the-bill-for-replacing-trident-before-parliament-gives-go-ahead.html)
Less than a month ago in a Parliamentary debate on 20 January on the Trident nuclear WMD system, Defence Secretary Michael Fallon told MPs “we are planning to replace the current Vanguard submarines—not the Trident missile or the warheads. We are planning to replace the submarines in the late 2020s, by which time our Vanguard submarines will be 35 years old.”

He also asserted: “We are clear that the nuclear deterrent is the only assured way to deter nuclear threats....” and added “we cannot gamble with our country’s national security. We have to plan for a major direct nuclear threat to this country, or to our NATO allies, that might emerge over the 50 years during which the next generation of submarines will be in service. We already know that there are substantial nuclear arsenals and that the number of nuclear states has increased.... This country faces the threat of nuclear blackmail from rogue states. .. there is simply no alternative to a continuous at-sea deterrent that can provide the same level of protection and the ability to deter an aggressor. We know that because successive Governments have looked at the different options for delivering a deterrent capability. Most recently, the Trident alternatives review in 2013 demonstrated that no alternative system is as capable or cost-effective as a Trident-based deterrent.”

Then, amongst this missile waving nuclear belligerence, he confusing interpolated the following observation “Let me be clear: we hope never to use nuclear weapons, but to go on delivering a deterrent effect. However, we also share the vision of a world that is without nuclear weapons, achieved through multilateral disarmament.”

But it is clear from the burden of his own argument, he does not believe a word about a nuclear weapon-free world.

Liberal Democrat Treasury minister Danny Alexander subsequently told Flynn in a written answer on 30 January “This Government is committed to maintain a credible and effective continuous at-sea [nuclear] deterrent.” Two days later, on The Sunday Politics on BBC One television, Labour shadow Foreign Secretary Douglas Alexander insisted to programme host Andrew Neil that his party would “not negotiate over Britain's nuclear deterrent.”

British nuclear WMD policy is Janus-like, facing towards nuclear disarmament if discussed by the Foreign office, but towards nuclear re-armament if discussed by the Ministry of Defence, the Liberal Democrat front bench ministers and the Labour shadow front bench ministers.

These politicians will all be relieved that they will be engaged in a belligerent election campaign when the NPT review conference is underway: otherwise they would have to explain to 184 non-nuclear weapons states in New York why they all plan to violate the UK’s legal requirement under NPT article 6 “ to pursue negotiations in good faith.
on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament...” by renewing the Trident nuclear WMD system.

**The role of the UK**

9. How effective a role has the UK played in global nuclear diplomacy in recent years? How could the UK more effectively engage on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament? What should the UK Government’s priorities be ahead of the 2020 NPT Review Conference?

The UK has had a very ineffective – frankly negative - role in global nuclear diplomacy for fifty years, because it stubbornly refuses to abide by the commitments the UK signed up to implement “in good faith” when it ratified the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, the text of which UK diplomats partly authored. For fifty years the UK has demonstrated on the world stage just about as much bad faith as any government could possibly show.

In a House of Commons debate on Trident renewal four years ago, the then UK Defence Secretary Michael Fallon told Parliament “we also share the vision of a world that is without nuclear weapons, achieved through multilateral disarmament.”

Yet four years on, at Defence questions on 14 January this year, the current Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson made these statements in his oral answers: “The Vanguard-class life extension and availability sustainment programmes are essential to maintaining the United Kingdom’s continuous at-sea deterrence and are prioritised accordingly...” adding “We constantly have discussions right across Government to make sure that our continuous at-sea nuclear deterrence can be sustained. We have been investing in technology and parts to make sure that the Vanguard class has everything it needs in the future. But what is critical is the investment we are making... many Members on both sides of the House who are absolute supporters of the importance of the continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent and understand how vital it is to keeping Britain safe.... our nuclear deterrent has kept Britain, and also our NATO partners, safe over 50 years.”

Moreover, in a subsequent debate on a confidence motion in the Conservative Government, on 16 January this year. Cabinet minister Michael Gove, answering the debate do the Government made the following slightly hysterical remarks, challenging the Leader of the Official Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn’s personal political stance against Trident, exclaiming indignantly: “He wants to get rid of our nuclear deterrent.” As if this was some very bad idea. And added: “...no deterrent - no way can this country ever allow that man to be our Prime Minister and in charge of our national security.”

The Government persistently presents a political Janus-like posture on nuclear weapons: ministers regularly defend their possession as essential for national and regional security, while simultaneously asserting they believe in multilateral nuclear disarmament, but never quite yet! It is a literally incredible posture, deeply damaging for the global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

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41 Hansard, 20 January 2015, column 105, www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm150120/debtext/150120-0002.htm
42 https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-01-14/debates/B155F4FA-6BB4-40FF-B8A5-F3E3F96E7BC1/Vanguard-ClassLifeExtensionProgramme
43 https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-01-16/debates/D130C27B-C328-48F8-8596-03F05BF2EF8A/NoConfidenceInHerMajesty%E2%80%99sGovernment
My simple proposal would be for the UK to take the lead – as it honourably did fifty odd years ago when the NPT was being negotiated, as I established at the beginning of this submission, in convening multilateral nuclear disarmament talks at the United Nations.

*If they do not, the non-aligned and other NNWS finally lose patience at the 2020 NPT review conference, leading the final unraveling of fifty years of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the NWS will be 100 per cent responsible.*

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