

EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium

Promoting the European network of independent non-proliferation and disarmament think tanks

E-newsletter of the European Network of Independent Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Think Tanks

NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES FROM CHEMICAL SCIENCE ADVANCEMENTS, AN INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDER KELLE



Alexander Kelle is Senior researcher at the Berlin office of the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH). He heads the CBW network for a comprehensive reinforcement of norms against chemical and biological weapons. Previously, he was Senior Policy Officer in the Office of Strategy and Policy of the OPCW in The Hague (2013-2019). Prior to this he taught and conducted research at the universities of Bradford, Belfast and Bath. After working at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt for several years, he spent an academic year as Science Fellow at Stanford University. He received his PhD in political science from J.W. Goethe Universität Frankfurt.

Chemical agents that fall outside of the traditional scope of military agents—such as chlorine and other TICs, fentanyl and other incapacitants and opioids, and Novichoks—have demonstrated growing potential for weaponization purposes. Also, advances in chemical engineering and rapidly expanding global supply networks are making weaponized chemicals increasingly accessible. Non-state actors such as ISIS and other terrorist groups might gain access to or master these new agents and technologies. What can be done to tackle these emerging multi-faceted threats?

The prohibitions of the Chemical Weapons Convention cover all toxic chemicals, including TICs and newly developed nerve agents, if intended to harm humans or animals. Therefore, the issue is not so much one of scope, but of practical implementation of the CWC and other tools available. In the CWC context, new nerve agents have already been added to the Schedules of Chemicals, resulting in new declaration requirements for states parties. In addition, OPCW and its member states are already working to prevent the misuse of toxic chemicals by non-state actors through a range of chemical safety and security measures. These are also the subject of a number of OPCW capacity development activities. A third element concerns the transfers of toxic chemicals or their precursors across borders. Again, the obligation not to transfer chemical weapons is contained in the CWC, but the practical implementation is left to individual states through their national export control measures. The effectiveness of such controls increases when coordinated among like-minded states, for example in the Australia Group.

At the same time, long-lasting threats persist. What mechanisms could be developed to ensure that States Parties to the CWC (such as Syria and Russia) do not develop and use such weapons? What can the OPCW do to hold Convention violators accountable?

OPCW activities to attribute CW use have so far focused on Syria, where the Executive Council has taken several decisions since 2013 to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Convention

Based on continued Syrian noncompliance with these decisions, the Conference of the States Parties in April 2021 suspended some of the countries privileges under the CWC, such as its voting rights in the organization. No comparable Executive Council decisions have been taken in relation to the Russian use of Novichok nerve agents. As a result, Russia has not been subjected to a comparable public shaming by having its rights under CWC suspended. In addition, the OPCW should streamline the attribution work of the Investigation and Identification Team into the regular verification work of the organization. This would provide a solid basis for further cooperation with international criminal justice actors like the ICC or a potential future Syria tribunal and allow the OPCW to contribute crucial evidence to any such proceedings that seek to ensure accountability for CW use.

In this context, what specific role can the EU play in consolidating the chemical weapons regime?

The EU will be crucial in keeping up the pressure on those states developing and using CW to come into compliance with CWC provisions. EU support for the OPCW in relation to Syria is already strong, both in political and financial terms. Concerning Russia, the EU should seek to formally involve the Executive Council in demanding clarification of the Novichok use cases according to Article IX (3) of the CWC. While this may not lead to a fundamental change in Russian behavior, it could provide the basis for a Conference of States Parties decision similar to the one taken on Syria in April 2021. In addition, the EU should use its resources to support capacity development activities in relation to national implementation measures and in the field of chemical safety and security, both of which would also contribute to addressing the threat of chemical terrorism.

CTBT AFTER RUSSIA'S WITHDRAWAL

On November 2, following a unanimous vote by both branches of the Russian parliament, President Putin signed a law withdrawing Russia's ratification from the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The CTBT, opened for signature in 1996 and ratified by Moscow in 2000, prohibits all nuclear explosive tests on land, air, sea, and underground. Remarkably, none of the 620 Russian MPs expressed doubts or objections regarding this reversal of Moscow's stance. Russia is among the 44 countries whose ratification is needed for the Treaty's entry into force.

Moscow's decision to de-ratify is a significant setback for the CTBT and sends a discouraging signal to other nuclear weapons states that have yet to sign or ratify the treaty, including the US, China, Israel, India, Pakistan, and the DPRK, as well as some potential nuclear proliferators. The tenuous argument used to justify this move is that Russia must have the same status as the United States, which has signed but not ratified the treaty. Russia's withdrawal is widely interpreted as a definitive and potentially contagious "niet", not least because the prospect of a US ratification remains remote.

Russia's promise to continue the moratorium on nuclear testing, upheld by all states since 1998 with the exception of North Korea (which has been sanctioned by the UN Security Council for carrying out six nuclear explosions since 2006), and its continued participation in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), are non-legally binding commitments and as such cannot compensate for the withdrawal from a legally binding treaty.

The CTBT, along with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), is the cornerstone of the EU's consensus on nuclear matters. All EU member states, both NATO and non-NATO members, have ratified and strongly support the CTBT. The EU High Representative of for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, expressed deep regret over Russia's decision, denouncing it as unjustifiable and the Russian not-so-veiled threats to resume nuclear tests as irresponsible.

The international community cannot ignore this worrying step back in nuclear arms control, which undermines the global security framework and increases the risk of a resurgence of nuclear explosions. In view of this mounting risk, the European Union should strengthen its support for the CTBTO and intensify its action aimed at promoting the global adherence to the CTBT.

Carlo Trezza was Italy's Ambassador for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. He chaired the Conference on Disarmament, the UN Secretary General's Advisory Board for Disarmament Matters, the Missile Technology Control Regime

Latest Publications

[NATO allies fully suspend implementation of the CFE Treaty.](#) William Alberque. IISS Online Analysis. November 2023

[Russia claims to have tested nuclear-powered cruise missile.](#) Timothy Wright. IISS Research Article - Missile Dialogue Initiative. October 2023

[Feminist foreign policy and nuclear weapons: Contributions and implications.](#) Laura Rose Brown. Eu Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Papers. November 2023

[UK thinking on AI integration and interaction with nuclear command and control, force structure, and decision-making.](#) Alice Saltini. European Leadership Network. November 2023

Network Calls

The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS) is looking for a junior-level analysts who have demonstrable knowledge in multiple knowledge domains and superior analytical skills.

More info: [Here](#)

The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) is looking for a programme manager responsible for overseeing all the administrative arrangements of the International Security research group at RUSI.

More info: [Here](#)

EU NEWS

STATEMENT BY THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ON THE REVOCATION OF THE RATIFICATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR TEST BAN TREATY (CTBT)

ON 2 NOVEMBER, THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE, ON BEHALF OF THE EU, ISSUED A STATEMENT CONDEMNING RUSSIA'S DECISION TO REVOKE ITS RATIFICATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR TEST BAN TREATY (CTBT). THIS DECISION BY THE RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES CAME IN THE CONTEXT OF ITS MILITARY AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE AND AFTER MONTHS OF NUCLEAR RHETORIC AND THREATS, SOME OF WHICH SPECIFICALLY TARGETED A RESUMPTION OF NUCLEAR TESTING.

THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE SAID, DEEPLY DEPLORES THIS DECISION BY RUSSIA AND CALLS ON IT TO CONTINUE TO RESPECT THE OBJECT AND PURPOSE OF THE TREATY, AND RECALLED THAT RUSSIA IS COMMITTED TO WORKING TOWARDS THE EARLY ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE CTBT. FURTHERMORE, IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ARTICLE XIV CONFERENCES, RUSSIA COMMITTED ITSELF TO PROMOTE THE TREATY AT THE HIGHEST POLITICAL LEVEL AND THROUGH ALL AVAILABLE BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL CHANNELS. THIS LATEST MOVE REPRESENTS A SERIOUS BACKTRACKING ON THESE COMMITMENTS, WHICH IS COMPOUNDED BY RUSSIA'S STATUS AS A PERMANENT MEMBER OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL.

ALL EU MEMBER STATES HAVE RATIFIED THE COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR TEST BAN TREATY AND HAVE BEEN WORKING TOWARDS ITS ENTRY INTO FORCE FOR MANY YEARS. THE TREATY IS A CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT INSTRUMENT FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AND NON-PROLIFERATION. IT HAS ESTABLISHED A POWERFUL NORM AGAINST NUCLEAR TESTING. IT IS CRUCIAL FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY THAT ALL STATES FULLY OBSERVE THE MORATORIUM ON NUCLEAR WEAPON TEST EXPLOSIONS OR ANY OTHER NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS, AND REFRAIN FROM ANY ACTION CONTRARY TO THE OBJECT AND PURPOSE OF THE TREATY.

MOREOVER, THE EUROPEAN UNION CONTINUES TO URGE ALL STATES THAT HAVE NOT YET DONE SO, IN PARTICULAR THOSE LISTED IN ANNEX 2, TO SIGN AND RATIFY THE CTBT WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS OR FURTHER DELAY. LIKEWISE, THE EUROPEAN UNION REMAINS FULLY COMMITTED TO PROMOTING THE ENTRY INTO FORCE AND UNIVERSALISATION OF THE CTBT, AND TO ACHIEVING ITS OBJECTIVES FOR A WORLD FREE OF NUCLEAR TESTING.

MORE INFO: [HERE](#)

NETWORK NEWS

2023 EU NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

ON 4-5 DECEMBER 2023, THE ISTITUTO AFFARI INTERNAZIONALI (IAI), ON BEHALF OF THE EU NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT CONSORTIUM, WILL ORGANIZE THE EU NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE IN BRUSSELS. THE CONFERENCE, IN ITS 12TH EDITION, IS A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL EVENT THAT GATHERS EVERY YEAR NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT EXPERTS FROM GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS WORLDWIDE. OVER THE COURSE OF TWO DAYS, PARTICIPANTS ENGAGE IN AN OPEN DISCUSSION, COVERING ISSUES RELATED TO ARMS CONTROL, DISARMAMENT, NON-PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION (WMD), THEIR DELIVERY SYSTEMS, AND SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS (SALWS). THE AIM OF THE CONFERENCE IS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU STRATEGIC COMPASS BY PROVIDING RECOMMENDATIONS ON EU NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT POLICIES.

MORE INFO: [HERE](#)

5TH SESSION OF THE DETERRENCE AND ARMS CONTROL CONVERSATION

WILLIAM ALBERQUE (DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY, TECHNOLOGY AND ARMS CONTROL AT THE IISS EUROPE OFFICE IN BERLIN) WILL DISCUSS NATO'S NUCLEAR DETERRENT: HISTORY AND FUTURE ADAPTATION. NATO'S NUCLEAR DETERRENT, AS PART OF ITS OVERALL DETERRENCE POSTURE, EVOLVED FROM THE COLD WAR TO TODAY – SOMETIMES DUE TO THOUGHTFUL DECISION-MAKING, AND SOMETIMES DUE TO INERTIA. HOWEVER, RUSSIA'S DISRUPTION OF THE EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY ENVIRONMENT, ESPECIALLY IN ITS ONGOING WAR AGAINST UKRAINE, AS WELL AS OTHER CHANGES TO THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT, HAS FORCED ALLIES TO RE-LEARN AND RE-THINK DETERRENCE FROM THE GROUND UP. THIS INCLUDES CONCEPTS LIKE FORWARD DEFENCE, INTEGRATED DETERRENCE, AND THE RE-INTRODUCTION OF STANDING DEFENCE PLANS FOR NATO TERRITORY FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1989.

MORE INFO: [HERE](#)

SEMINAR SERIES ON THE US FOREIGN POLICY | EUROMISSILES: THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS THAT NEARLY DESTROYED NATO

THE BARCELONA INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (IBEI) ORGANISES A SEMINAR ON THE HISTORY OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS FOCALISED ON THE EUROMISSILES, THEATER NUCLEAR FORCES TRAINED ON TARGETS ACROSS THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT, BOTH EAST AND WEST, DURING THE COLD WAR.

MORE INFO: [HERE](#)