

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

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Interview with Laura Rockwood



Laura Rockwood was appointed as Executive Director of the VCDNP as of 1 June 2015. She was most recently a Senior Research Fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School Belfer Center Managing the Atom Project. Ms. Rockwood retired in November 2013 from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as the Section Head for Non-Proliferation and Policy Making in the Office of Legal Affairs, where she had served since 1985. Prior to working for the IAEA she was employed by the US Department of Energy as a trial attorney in radiation injury cases, and as counsel in general legal matters.

In the last few months, the US - DPRK relation has witnessed fluctuating developments: from fiery declarations, to historic negotiations and "denuclearization" agreements, to the sudden canceling of US Secretary of State's visit to the DPRK. In your view, are there real prospects for US - DPRK cooperation on DPRK nuclear disarmament?

Certainly, nobody would like to see this process fail. However, I am not very optimistic about the likelihood of it resulting in a success in terms of actual denuclearization, and for a variety of reasons. First of all, the DPRK has invested considerable time, resources, and energy to developing its nuclear capabilities and it would be difficult to imagine that Kim Jong-Un (KJU) would be willing to relinquish that which got him to the table in the first place. Secondly, while in principle it is always a good idea to have leaders talk to each other, I am not certain that President Trump was adequately prepared for this dialogue nor fully aware of the significance of the meeting. For several generations, the leaders of the DPRK have tried to establish a conversation with US Presidents. With President Trump simply agreeing to meet with KJU, the DPRK already "brought a point home". What is paramount in these situations is to consult in advance with experts who have a deep understanding of and in-depth knowledge about the context and where leverage buttons might be to maximize the outcome of the negotiation. However, I am not sure that President Trump advisors had such preparation. Having said that, sometimes it takes the willingness to do something different to change the existing dynamics and, hopefully, something good will come out of this process.

What type of economic incentives and security guarantees should be offered to DPRK?

Well, the DPRK has already set preconditions: no regime change and the signing of a peace treaty. Lifting sanctions, establishing trade and economic ties between the DPRK and South Korea, and permanently halting US - ROK joint military exercises could certainly also serve as incentives for the DPRK to denuclearize.

Should denuclearization become a concrete possibility, what steps would the disarmament verification process include? And how long would it take to be completed?

The verification process should begin with the country's complete declaration of its nuclear capabilities, including its nuclear material, facilities, and activities, ideally accompanied by a commitment to stop uranium reprocessing and enriching. Assuming that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is tasked with verifying that declaration, it would start the verification process by sending inspectors to the country to verify not only that the declaration is correct but complete and, if the case, attest to the non-operation/dismantlement of the existing reprocessing and enrichment facilities. In terms of verification of the dismantlement of the actual nuclear weapons, while the process might occur simultaneously with the IAEA's verification of the DPRK's declaration, it is difficult to imagine that the task of verifying dismantlement will fall to the IAEA. Most likely this would take the form of a bilateral effort between the US and the DPRK, rather than a multilateral effort including other nuclear-weapon States. This would certainly mitigate the risk that countries that might have an interest in "obfuscating fingerprints" on the DPRK nuclear programme would have the opportunity to do so. The weapons' demounting verification process would likely include verification of the removal of the weapons from the delivery systems, their disassembly. The nuclear material removed from the weapons programme should be placed under IAEA safeguards. In terms of how long this entire effort would take, there have been estimates from a couple of years to on the order of 10 years. It's difficult to say unless and until there is some kind of agreement on the commitments to be undertaken by the DPRK.

To what extent can other regional actors contribute to the process? Can the EU play a role at all?

It would be good to see the EU having a role in this, but I am not certain whether the EU itself is very much geared toward it. The EU involvement would certainly add a layer of credibility to the process, and likely the DPRK would be amenable to having them at the table, especially when discussing sanctions relief and economic engagement - similarly to the role that the EU played with the JCPOA. Such involvement could result in an improved economic status for the people of the DPRK, supporting KJU's development agenda and increasing his internal support in the country. However, with the DPRK's emphasis on negotiations with the US, I do not envision the EU playing a significant role in the resolution of the DPRK issue.

Chemical Weapons Prohibition Regime: The Challenges Ahead

The Fourth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which will be held in The Hague on 21-30 November 2018, will be an occasion to assess the effectiveness of the chemical weapons prohibition regime and reaffirm the role of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) - the CWC's implementing body.

The OPCW, which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013 for its efforts towards chemical disarmament, enjoys an impressive track record: since its founding in 1997, it has overseen the destruction of over 96% of declared chemical weapons stockpiles worldwide. Despite this success, serious challenges to the OPCW's work and the wider chemical weapons prohibition regime have emerged over the past six years, with nerve and chemical agents being used on multiple occasions in Syria and, most recently, in Salisbury, United Kingdom. These events have sparked a debate on the future of the organization: while some State Parties have called for a reduction in size and budget, others have tabled proposals to enhance the verification regime and strengthen the OPCW's capacity to investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons.

In the wake of the first nerve agent attack on European soil since World War II, the European Union (EU) has an even stronger role to play in supporting the OPCW and the prohibition regime. The EU has recently endorsed a British proposal to grant the OPCW the power to assign responsibility for chemical attacks, a reform that was eventually approved by the vast majority of State Parties to the organization. This is an important breakthrough, considering that previously the organization could only attest the use of chemical weapons, but not attribute responsibility. Looking ahead, a greater effort should be undertaken to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons and their use by both state and non-state actors. This shift of focus from disarmament to non-proliferation and deterrence is crucial to increase the OPCW's ability to cope with new and emerging threats to international peace and security.

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EU News

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Recent Arms Control, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Events

[2018 Biological Weapons Convention Meetings of Experts, Geneva, 7-16 August 2018](#)

[Arms Trade Treaty Fourth Conference of States Parties, Tokyo, 20-24 August 2018](#)

[2018 Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems \(LAWS\), Geneva, 27-31 August 2018](#)

[The Third Part of the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, 30 July 2018 - 10 September 2018](#)

Latest Publications

[Preventing Black-Market Trade in Nuclear Technology](#), Matthew Bunn, Martin B. Malin, William C. Potter, Leonard Spector, June 2018

[The Future of Conventional Arms Control in Europe](#), Łukasz Kulesa, European Leadership Network (ELN), July 2018

[Nuclear diplomacy: a niche diplomacy for middle powers](#), Emmanuelle Maitre, La Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (FRS), July 2018

[Germany is now talking about nukes. Thanks, Trump](#), Mark Fitzpatrick, The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), 29th August 2018

EU INSTITUTIONAL NEWS

The EU responds to the re-imposition of US sanctions following Washington's withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

Following US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), on 6 August 2018 the US announced the re-imposition of sanctions against Iran, targeting any company doing business with Iran or involved in the country. The controversial and unilateral decision has caused concern among Washington's European allies, who consider the JCPOA a "[key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture, \[...\] crucial for the security of the region, of Europe, and of the entire world](#)". The EU has always maintained a firm position regarding the necessity to keep the deal alive and to respect its terms. High Representative Federica Mogherini, recently issued a joint statement with the E3 Foreign Ministers (Jean-Yves Le Drian of France, Heiko Maas of Germany, Jeremy Hunt of the United Kingdom) reconfirming the commitment of the remaining parties to the JCPOA to preserve all financial channels with Iran.

In an effort to mitigate the impact of extra-territorial US sanctions on EU companies doing legitimate business with Iran, the EU amended the [Annex](#) to Council Regulation (EC) No 2271/96 (also known as [Blocking Statute](#)). The updated version entered into force on 7 August 2018. The Blocking Statute allows EU operators to recover damages arising from US-imposed sanctions "from the persons causing them and nullifies the effect in the EU of any foreign court rulings based on them. It also forbids EU persons from complying with those sanctions, unless exceptionally authorised to do so by the Commission in case non-compliance seriously damages their interests or the interests of the Union". The EU additionally published a [Guidance Note](#) to facilitate understanding of the relevant legal acts.

[Joint statement by High Representative Federica Mogherini and Foreign Ministers of E3 \(Jean-Yves Le Drian of France, Heiko Maas of Germany, Jeremy Hunt of the United Kingdom\) on the re-imposition of US sanctions due to its withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\)](#)

NETWORK NEWS

EU Call: Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Internships at European think tanks – Requirements for Students

The EU Non-proliferation and Disarmament Consortium will support 36 Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Internships between 2018 and 2021. The duration of each internship will be 3 months (13 weeks). While interns are expected to cover their living and traveling costs, the EU NPD Consortium can provide limited subsidies (500€ / month) for a limited number of interns.

The call is directed at junior diplomats, master students, PhD students, post-docs or journalists from EU Member States, or from specific partner countries of the EU, with a strong and proven interest in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, and corresponding EU policies, strategies and institutions. Six Internships are also reserved for non-European candidates, ideally from South Asia, East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.

Applicants should have a University Bachelor degree (as a minimum) and be prepared to spend three months outside their country of residence.

Application process:

Applicants must select **only one** institute among the members of the EU NPD Network and send their applications to such institute for approval.

Application material: Résumé or CV; Cover letter detailing expectations from the internship (what the intern is expecting to learn) and explaining the selection of the host institute (why the intern has chosen that institute)

Institutes that receive applications will take on the first part of the selection process by selecting candidates. Once the first part of the selection process is completed, Institutes will send the applications of the selected candidates to the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) for the second and final round of the selection process.

To receive the Information Brochure, or for further information on the call, please contact Sophia Wenzel from the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF): wenzel@hsfk.de