

The Use of Nerve Agents and the Future of the CWC: Interview with Joachim Krause



Joachim Krause is the Director of the Institute for Security Policy at the University of Kiel (ISPK). His research focuses on international strategic issues, terrorism, nuclear non-proliferation, multilateralism, German and European foreign policy as well as theoretical and policy-oriented issues. He is also a member of the Executive Board of the Aspen Institute Germany and chairman of the Scientific Directorate of the German Council on Foreign Affairs.

The Institute for Security Policy at the University of Kiel (ISPK) aims to shape security policy discourse through focused, interdisciplinary, policy-oriented work. What are ISPK main lines of research in the field of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament?

Arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament currently do not figure very high on the agenda for ISPK. This has to do with the general decline of arms control due to the fundamental change in international relations. We are watching this change and we are concerned about its consequences, considering that arms control treaties seem to be losing their relevance and have been repeatedly violated.

You were part of the German delegation which negotiated the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). In recent years, the norm against the use of chemical weapons has been challenged several times and there are strong indications that Russian politician Alexei Navalny was poisoned with the Novichok agent. If confirmed, what implications will this event have on the CWC regime?

I think all evidence is pointing to the Russian state as the producer of Novichok and as the one body being responsible for the poisoning of the Russian politician, Alexei Navalny.

The similarities with the Skripal case are striking, and in the Skripal case, the evidence clearly pointed to the responsibility of a Russian secret service. Both cases demonstrate that some countries might not have qualms in using highly toxic nerve agents against their own citizens, and this is worrisome as it challenges not only their credibility on adherence to the CWC, but the regime as a whole.

What measures can be taken to counter this worrying trend that risk eroding the CWC regime? In particular, what role can be played by the EU in this effort?

The use of a highly toxic nerve agent by Russian authorities is further eroding the Chemical Weapons Convention regime and calls into question whether the Russian Federation still adheres to any arms control or disarmament provision. It should be noted that the Chemical Weapons Convention was not the first treaty to be violated. Europeans should not only use mechanisms under the Chemical Weapons Convention to react to Russia, but also re-assess their relationship with the country on a broader range of issues reaching a policy towards Russia which acknowledges Moscow's risky behaviour.

A Small Tweet of Calm

After a yearlong study into the role and impact of Twitter on international crises and political diplomacy, we have come to the conclusion that Twitter is not the place for the kind of nuanced, deliberate messaging needed during times of crisis, nor discussions regarding the future of arms control and international agreements. However, messages of 280 characters or less increasingly appear to be the medium of choice for the US when it comes to its diplomatic efforts concerning these issues. Our policy advice on this new means of political communication? In times of crisis, do not tweet! While social media might be an effective medium to connect with one's domestic base during a fraught election year, its use introduces significant risks to international diplomacy. A bellicose tweet from the US President calling for a forceful response to a perceived slight simultaneously appeals to a domestic base while risking kinetic escalation from a foreign audience. Our research suggests that the use of Twitter for political signals by the US, China, Iran and others is contributing to increasingly inscrutable digital diplomacy. The intended message is often lost in the web of tweets, responses and retweets and the risks of unintended escalations grow. A tweet will not start a war, but it could help things along, particularly in this increasingly opaque form of digital diplomacy. What role then for Europe? How can the EU and its member states seek to clear the waters and stabilise an increasingly fragile international system? What we propose is for the EU to be a voice of clarity and calm amongst the often louder, destabilising voices whose usage of this medium has led us to the brink of escalation one tweet at a time. By clearly and co-operatively using this same platform to inject sensible, nuanced and transparent signals, the EU can provide a counterweight to the destabilising actions of other actors.

Alexi Drew

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Latest Publications

75 Years After Trinity: A Legacy of Harm and Hope, The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) Editorial Team, 2020

Overcoming disunity: Reinventing the P5 Process a decade on, Maximilian Hoell and Andreas Persbo, European Leadership Network (ENL), 2020

Donald Trump Could Lose the Election by Authorizing a New Nuclear Weapons Test, Stephen Herzog, Benoît Pelopidas, Fabrício Fialho, The National Interest, 2020

Uncharted waters: Europe and the end of nuclear arms control, Ulrich Kühn, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH), 2020

Network Call

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme:

Applications Now Open until 11 October 2020

The IAEA Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme (MSCFP) seeks to inspire and support young women to pursue a career in nuclear science and technology, nuclear safety and security or non-proliferation. To that end, the MSCFP will provide scholarships to up to 100 selected candidates to study a master's degree in these fields. Scholarships will cover up to two years of tuition and living expenses.

The application process is now open for the MSCFP 2020 cycle, for scholarships in academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Detailed information on the programme and on how to apply can be found on the [IAEA website](#)

EU INSTITUTIONAL NEWS

The European Union delivers a statement on a UK draft resolution on responsible behaviour in outer space

On 26 August 2020, the European Union delivered a statement welcoming a [draft resolution](#) proposed by the United Kingdom and stressing its support for a strengthened normative and legal framework in outer space.

Ahead of the upcoming [session of the UN General Assembly First Committee on disarmament and international security](#), the United Kingdom presented a draft resolution titled “Reducing Space Threats through Responsible Behaviour”, which seeks to encourage a global discussion on what constitutes responsible behaviour in outer space. The EU praised the initiative, arguing that it contributes to threat and risk reduction in outer space and that it might “create momentum for more ambitious steps”, including the possibility of a legally binding instrument in the future.

Expressing concern over the security challenges emerging in outer space, the EU reiterated its ambition to both preserve “a safe and sustainable space environment and the peaceful use of outer space” and prevent an arms race in this domain, advocating for a comprehensive approach that complies with international law, particularly “in the framework of the United Nations.” The EU also argued that transparency and confidence-building measures should be pursued to reduce the risks of misperception and miscalculation and avoid inadvertent escalation. Finally, the EU once again stressed the need to reach a common understanding on which elements would embody responsible behaviour in outer space.

For more information: [Informal meeting on the new UN General Assembly First Committee Resolution – Reducing Space Threats through Responsible Behaviour – EU Statement](#)

NETWORK NEWS

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION: The NEXT GENERATION WORKSHOP

The Istituto Affari Internazionali, on behalf of the ENPDC, is organizing a “Next Generation Workshop”.

The workshop will be held *virtually* on 25 November 2020, from 9am to 5pm Central European Time (CET).

The Workshop will comprise four sessions on the following areas/topics:

- The Future of Nuclear Arms Control and Non-Proliferation in an Era of Crumbling Treaties
- Arms Trade Regulation and the Fight Against Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons
- Regional Threats to Non-Proliferation and Arms Control
- The Impact of Emerging Technologies on International Security and Arms Control: From Cyber Attacks to Autonomous Weapons

Presentations will offer the speakers’ view on the selected topic, followed by comments from other participants, including EU officials.

Selected speakers will also be invited to virtually participate in the 2020 EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (EUNPD) Conference, on 12-13 November 2020.

More info: [The EUNPD Next Generation Workshop](#)

Applicants must specify if they are applying as attendees or as speakers. Applicants must submit their candidacy by **12 October 2020** to eunpdc@iai.it
Young women are highly encouraged to apply.