

Russian Rearmament and the Conflict in Ukraine: Interview with Polina Sinovets



Polina Sinovets (PhD) is the Head of the Odessa Center for Nonproliferation (OdCNP) and an associate Professor at the Odessa I.I. Mechnikov National University. Author of more than 70 research publications in scientific journals in Ukraine, US, Russia, her scientific interest include: countries' nuclear policies, the non-proliferation regime and the nuclear deterrence theory. She is a member of the editorial staff of the international scientific journals: "ONU Herald" and "Political Life".

The mission of the Odessa Center for Non-Proliferation (OdCNP) is to provide a platform for education, training and research on topics related to international security and WMD Non-Proliferation. What are the main lines of activities of the Center?

The OdCNP is a university center, and this certainly defines most of our activities. There are three main lines. First, preparing the young generation of non-proliferation and arms control researchers. Since 2009 we have fulfilled this mission in cooperation with our oldest partner, the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority (SSM), in the framework of summer/winter schools in arms control and non-proliferation. Our audience are usually students, Ph.D. students, young researchers from Ukraine and other countries. For example, the summer school 2020, (to which the SSM, SIPRI and the US State Department contributed) gathered participants from all over Europe as well as the US and Africa. We also invite our lecturers from the leading think tanks of the world. Second is our research work on historical nuclear issues and current arms control challenges. An example of our historical work is the comprehensive Nuclear History of Ukraine, a volume by leading Ukrainian researchers to be published this year. An example of our work on current affairs is our research of the latest arms control trends in Europe. In particular, in 2019 we gathered a group of researchers for the workshop dedicated to the collapse of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the European states' policies over this issue. [The results of this work were published online.](#) We are planning to go on with this work in 2021, making a workshop on the wider range of arms control trends seen from the European angle. Third, we provide advisory work on arms control and non-proliferation to Ukrainian governmental bodies and NGOs. In particular, since 2016 we have participated in the Ukrainian Prism group

annual report evaluating the foreign policy of Ukraine, where we are responsible for analysing these particular fields.

One of the research focuses of your Center is Russian nuclear policy. Russia has engaged in a significant military build-up and nuclear weapon modernization program. How do these rearmament efforts impact the possibility for a renewed dialogue with the US and multilateral action on arms control and disarmament?

Since 2014 it has been hard to call Russia the exemplary state behind arms control efforts. Besides the military build-up, it has contributed to the collapse of the INF and the Conventional Forces in Europe treaties, as well as the crisis over the Open Skies Treaties. This said, Moscow has never closed the door to talks, especially with the United States. Unfortunately, during the last years Washington has shown no significant interest in re-engaging Russia in nuclear arms talks. However, there is now a new window of opportunity: the Biden administration came to power with a strong arms control agenda, so, if Russia is really interested in arms control, it has a chance to demonstrate it in action. Hopefully we will soon witness, if not a revival of arms control, at least efforts to keep it from unravelling altogether.

What are the most urgent arms control measures that the EU should promote to facilitate a negotiated solution of the Ukraine conflict?

As arms control is based on the idea of reciprocity and Russia (one of the main sides of the conflict) does not recognize its involvement in the Donbas, it is impossible to pursue ambitious arms control negotiations. Therefore, until Russia starts taking responsibility for its role in the Donbas conflict, any arms control measures will follow the path of the ceasefire agreements there, which is formally in place but is breached every day.

Involving Academia in Non-Proliferation

History proves that peaceful scientific research is not immune from proliferation risks. While comprehensive control regimes have been put in place to regulate international weapons and dual-use exports, much less has been done to address intangible technology transfers in the context of scientific research and academic exchange.

This is a highly controversial matter, since two legally-protected interests might collide: scientific freedom and international security. Setting up some universally accepted –not necessarily legally binding- export-control rules would only be possible as a result of an open and structured interaction between export control authorities, universities and researchers. Given the special sensitivity of this matter, a shared awareness of risks and a mutual understanding of concerns should be a pre-requisite.

Basic export control principles might not always be suitable for research conducted in an academic framework, so researchers and scientists need to have a prominent role on this debate. UN Security Council Resolution 1540 aimed at preventing non-state actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction offers a suitable framework to steer cooperation between national authorities, export control regimes and academia. This interaction could take a form similar to the "Wiesbaden process" involving industry in non-proliferation efforts which has proven to be a successful platform for interaction between governments and industry representatives.

UNSCR 1540 comprehensive review, expected to take place this year, will contribute to shaping the Non-Proliferation agenda for the years to come. As I discuss in my recent paper *Science, research, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540: The need of a "Wiesbaden process" for Academia*, this review offers a valuable opportunity for promoting the dialogue between public authorities and scientists. This new process could be a tangible achievement as it would confirm the resolution's relevance amid current political uncertainties, difficulties in consensus building and eroding Non-Proliferation instruments.

Ignacio Cartagena Núñez

Instituto de Cuestiones Internacionales y Política Exterior / EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Network



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Latest Publications

Post-shipment Control Measures: European Approaches to On-site Inspections of Exported Military Materiel, Andrea Varisco, Kolja Brockmann, Lucile Robin, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2020

NATO's Current and Future Support for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-proliferation, Rose Gottemoeller, Steven Hill, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), 2020

Gender Approaches to Cybersecurity: Design, Defence and Response, Katharine Millar, James Shires, Tatiana Tropina, The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), 2021

NATO Allies, don't dismiss the TPNW, Tom Sauer, European Leadership Network (ELN), 2021

Network Calls

THE PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION INTRODUCTORY COURSE

Applications are open for an intensive introductory course on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Organized by the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP), the course is open to graduate or post-graduate students in biological or chemical sciences. More info [here](#).

CALL FOR PAPER – CIENS International Conference

The Interdisciplinary Centre on Nuclear and Strategic Studies (CIENS), in partnership with the NPIHP (Wilson Center) has launched a Call for papers for the "Nuclear deterrence in Europe. Visions, debates, opportunities, and challenges from 1945 to present" Conference. More info [here](#)

NETWORK NEWS

The EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Papers Series

As part of its mandate, defined in Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/299 of 26 February 2018, the EU Non-Proliferation Consortium is publishing a new series of Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Policy Papers. One of the latest papers is authored by Federica Dall'Arche (Italy), researcher at the International Affairs Institute (IAI) on non-proliferation and disarmament, and on gender in international security.

The Case for Gender Balance in Arms Control, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Negotiations Summary:

While global efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and regulate small arms and light weapons (SALW) have gradually increased over the past four decades, the number of women involved in these efforts remains alarmingly small. Women face enormous obstacles when it comes to participation in diplomatic negotiations and decision-making processes, and arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament diplomacy is no exception. Women continue to be excluded or marginalized from these procedures and when they do participate it is often in low-level positions from which exerting influence is difficult. Studies have shown that women represent only 32 per cent of all participants in official arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament forums and that heads of delegations, as well as speakers in related events and conferences, are almost exclusively men. This paper investigates the possible causes of this imbalance and shows why a continuing gender disparity among experts and practitioners in the field is problematic. It demonstrates that the inclusion of women has positive effects on the outcome of negotiations and examines why this is the case. Finally, it discusses the ways in which the EU in particular, and the international community in general, can increase the number of women involved in the field.

Read the full paper [here](#)

Previous papers can be found [here](#)

CONSORTIUM NEWS

Young Women in Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Mentorship Programme

The International Affairs Institute (IAI) and the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP), on behalf of the EU Non-proliferation and Disarmament Consortium, invite female undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate students as well as recent graduates to apply to the *Young Women in Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Mentorship Programme*.

The mentorship programme seeks to engage young women in the field of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, and promote awareness about these issues. The programme will pair successful applicants with well-known experts to establish a mentoring relationship, which envisions regular videoconferencing sessions. Participants will also be expected to attend select conferences, including a next generation workshop in Spring 2021. Networking and career opportunities will be facilitated through seminars, socials, and other activities.

The mentorship programme is open to female students currently enrolled in undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate programmes, as well as recent graduates (graduated less than three years ago). The programme will be conducted in English; therefore, good English language skills are essential.

Applications should be submitted in English and include:

- 1.A curriculum vitae of the applicant (maximum 2 pages)
- 2.A letter of interest of no more than 500 words
- 3.A record of courses taken to date and grades received, and
- 4.One recommendation letter

The deadline for applications is **26 February 2021**

Application materials should be submitted via email to eunpdc@iai.it More info [here](#)