

On the Possibility of Nuclear Disarmament

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SAM LING GIBSON, JUL 7 2015

To What Extent Can Nuclear Disarmament be Achieved in the 21st Century?

Since the very outset of the nuclear age, the dangers of nuclear weapons (NWs) and their proliferation have been recognised (see Bull 1961), with such apprehensions being enshrined in the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); with its Article VI calling for “nuclear disarmament” as the eventual objective (UNODA 1968).

This begs the question, why then, four decades on, do these goals of ND (Nuclear Disarmament) remain elusive? Especially with such calls being repeated perennially at the NPT conferences, as well by the 2007 Global Zero disarmament initiative, which has garnered various world leaders, including Barack Obama. Contrarily, the President’s call for disarmament in 2009 has been criticised from various high-level officials, as “unwise” and “utopian” (Sagan and Waltz 2010, 88), and it is such fundamental ambivalences that lie at the heart of the abolition debate, and indeed IR itself.

The very breadth and extensiveness of this question thus requires a successive refinement of concepts to be responded to, which will be tested against historical experience and analytical thinking. Hence, this essay will first examine the motivations for NW acquisition and the Cold War’s (CW) realist underpinnings. Secondly, the normative restraints of the NP (non-proliferation) regime will be examined, and its effect on nuclear restraint. Indeed, such normative and realist logic behind NW acquirement and restraint continue to shape the present debate. Thirdly, the threats to post-CW, post 9/11 international security will be examined to highlight the decreased political and military utility of NWs. Finally, the latter two sections will critically analyse the principal theoretical perspectives on the ND debate, and the viewpoints of the NWS (Nuclear Weapons States) and NNWS (Non Nuclear Weapons States), to conclude that the powerful arguments for disarmament are not sufficient to overcome the realist paradigm that continues to drive international politics in the 21st Century.

1. Proliferation of NWs

Following the US Manhattan project and the first nuclear weapon in 1945, initial efforts towards bilateral US-Russian disarmament—notably the 1946 Baruch Plan—were insignificant in the face of rising CW tensions, and the Soviets followed with their first test bomb in 1949. Perceived national security and a permissive normative framework towards nuclearisation all influenced NWA (Nuclear Weapons Acquisition) by Britain (1952), France (1960), and China (1964). These 5 NWS, recognised as such under the NPT, are collectively known as the P5 due to their permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Deterrence and the CW

The theoretical underpinnings of this initial proliferation, were developed and influenced by concurrent neorealist thinkers- notably Waltz, who argued for an anarchic, unitary-state, self-help environment in which absolute security is impossible. The possession of levels of NWs survivable to second-strike, are therefore the ultimate defense, as retaliatory destruction would deter any would-be rational adversary, even from a position of conventional military superiority (Waltz 1981). According to this defensive deterrence logic, NWs are thus superfluous as a functional

On the Possibility of Nuclear Disarmament

Written by Sam Ling Gibson

military tool, and therefore, 'more may be better' as this proliferation would increase stability (Barkenbus 1989, 437; Waltz 1981). Beyond testings and of course Hiroshima and Nagasaki, neorealists have pointed to the non-use that has existed ever since (Mearsheimer 1990), and that "there has never been a full-scale [conventional] war between two nuclear-armed states" (Waltz 2012, 2). Others have challenged this defensive deterrence on several conceptual levels. Firstly, Buzan and Herring (1998, 165) assert the significance of the normative constraints of the 'Nuclear Taboo', which they identify as "a strategic cultural prohibition against the use of NWs." Secondly, despite the bipolar predictability and relative nuclear stability, the non-use of NWs during the CW did not mean an absence of conventional conflict (generally proxy wars) or the reduction of risk. Barkenbus (1989, 436) argues that the primary targets in a nuclear war would most likely be NWS, while Sauer and Pretorius (2014) note that despite their non-use, the security dilemma which Waltz predicted would end with nuclear proliferation, manifested itself in other ways – notably a nuclear arms race which far exceeded any reasonable levels of Credible Minimum Deterrence (CMD), both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Despite such conceptual flaws, the prevalent realist hegemony of security, combined with a permissive normative environment of the CW led to a discourse of deterrence becoming entrenched in national security status-quos. The result was to a rapid horizontal proliferation to the P5, and a massive vertical proliferation.

Post P5 NWS

The above national security driven motivation behind NWA remains a significant factor in consequent, post P5 cases of NWA. Even Sagan, and other abolitionists, despite being dismissive of neorealist pro-proliferation logic, in theorising on motivations for NWS, recognise that "states build nuclear weapons to increase national security against foreign threats, especially nuclear threats" (Sagan 1996, 55).

Perceived conventional insecurity was certainly key to Israel's NWA, and North Korea (NK) provides an even sharper illustration- international isolation and economic sanctions were insufficient in restraining the country's 2006 and 2009 nuclear tests (Sagan 2009, 57). Whether through this conventional insecurity, or in response to regional nuclearisation, we can see a web of causal reaction in NWA, which Sauer and Pretorius (2014) trace from Pakistan, to India, to China, with China referring to the US and Russia, and the UK and France to the USSR, who in turn pointed to the US, who reacted to a German NW program. As ex Pakistan leader Pervez Musharraf (2006, 285) commented, "Pakistan would never have done it if India hadn't done it first."

In addition to the strategic motivations behind NWA, the influence of certain normative aspects should be considered- namely the prestige and status that is perceivably conferred with the possession of the weapons. Meyer contends that in terms of NW procurement, "states tend to copy the behaviour of the states that they perceive to be successful"—isomorphism—and therefore attach a symbolic value to weapons which does not necessarily correspond to their "technical capabilities and national security needs" (Meyer 1998). This is particularly valid for NWs, as they are associated with great power status and political benefits—such as the P5's permanent UNSC membership. Therefore, a belief exists that NWs carry political utility, as they will at least enhance a countries regional or international prominence (Waltz 1981, 9). Many observers, for example see India's development of NWs as more than just a strategic response to China's program, as also signalling India's strive towards great power status (Knopf 2012, 118).

Following such motivations of national security and regional/international status, the post-P5 NWS—that is Israel, India, Pakistan and NK—developed their own weapons. As Betts's (1977) and Sagan's (1996) models of NWA show- motivations are affected in varying measures by considerations of national security, domestic politics, and normative factors. Iran is indicative here—showing normative and domestic motivations, in addition to perceived insecurity in response to, in part, deterring a weaponized Israel and a belligerent US in its region (Paul 2012).

2. Non-Proliferation

Bearing in mind the above powerful motivations to NWA, realist predictions of proliferation were pessimistic, with Bull (1961, 150) predicting between 15 and 35 NWS by 1985. However, the number of states that have opted to cross

On the Possibility of Nuclear Disarmament

Written by Sam Ling Gibson

the nuclear threshold remains very small, and realist predictions of a nuclear breakout have proven to be unfounded; we have even seen the abandonment of NW programs by countries considered to be 'pariah'- Libya, Iraq, and more recently Iran. This section will examine the factors behind this nuclear restraint; although the strategic thinking behind deterrence continues to influence NWA decisions, it has been counteracted by what many consider to be a powerful normative constraint of the Nuclear Proliferation Regime (NPR).

The NPR and Changing Norms

Considering the CW ND paradigm, the aforementioned criticisms of NWs proliferation fell largely on deaf ears, at least in mainstream policy and academic areas. However, towards the end of the CW, liberal and institutionalist schools of thought increasingly challenged the realist dominance of the security debate. Aside from a few 'proliferation optimists'—notably Waltz and Mearsheimer—today we see that Bulls and Barkenbus' "more may be worse" proliferation ideas have become prevalent, and consensus exists amongst politicians and experts that further proliferation conveys greater risk (Sauer and Pretorius 2014, 239). Therefore efforts have concentrated on measures designed to inhibit the further proliferation of NWs—various bilateral and multilateral initiatives, conferences, forums and treaties, as well as the instruments for enforcement and verification[1]—collectively known as the NPR. The cornerstone of regime is the 1968 NPT, which has an impressive 190 ratified signatory states, and rests on 3 principal objectives: "non-proliferation", "assistance with the development of nuclear energy", and "nuclear disarmament." (UNODA 1968). However, commitments towards this latter objective (Article VI) by the P5 are contested by the NNWS, many of which argue that in conjunction with Article II (that beyond the 1967 NPT 5 states, no more States acquire NWs (UNODA 1968)), it effectively freezes the nuclear club, leaving no room for the recognition of new powers (Meyer 1998). Many see such a structural impediment as leading to India, Pakistan and Israel's abandoning of the NPT in order to pursue their NWs programmes (for instance Cottey 2006, 10). These perceived discriminations, underscored by the West's quiet acquiescence in Israel's opaque military nuclear program, and the US-India 2006 Nuclear Deal, have led to allegations of a Western (Sagan 1996, 76), and cultural (Sauer and Pretorius 2014) bias, resulting in "a dual-standard sovereignty a hierarchy where what it is accepted for some nations is illegitimate for other" (Paul 2000 in Jo and Gartzke 2007, 171). Some have noted that such inherent hypocrisy has undermined the efficacy and universality of the regime; with many states withholding cooperation against potential proliferators such as Iran, Iraq and NK (Sauer and Pretorius 2014). Such institutional bargaining is argued to be key in Pakistan's decision to opt out of the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) in reaction to the perceived inconsistency in the regime regarding India's NWP (Knopf 2012).

In addition to the above lack of cohesion, weak enforcement mechanisms of the NPR, the NPTs article X—which allows states to withdraw—, as well as the caveats inherent in article IV which entitles NNWS to N energy, have all been cited as being influential in the nuclearisation of determined N aspirants (for instance see Cottey 2006, 10). In the case of the latter, it has been demonstrated that the transition from a civilian N program to a military one is relatively easy and fast, and, as Sagan (2009, 159) points out using the case of India, can be difficult to monitor.

Despite being an NPT signatory until 2003, NKs eventual acquisition of a NW in 2006 does sharply highlight these weaknesses to the regime, and leaves neorealists to question the normative power of the regime and conclude that despite the panoply of instruments, any nation intent on acquiring NWs ultimately cannot be prevented from doing so (Waltz 2012, 2).

Regardless of such tensions and challenges to the regime –from a constructivist perspective, its effect is that "that it appears to have shifted the norm concerning what acts grant prestige and legitimacy from the 1960s notion of joining 'the nuclear club' to the 1990s concept of joining 'the club of the nations adhering to the NPT'" (Sagan 1996, 76). Evidence of this can be seen in the nuclear latency of many states possessing civil nuclear programs, yet have chosen not to make the relatively easy transition to weaponisation. This normative strength has been substantiated using statistical analysis; NPT signatories "are less likely to initiate a NWs program" (Jo and Gartzke 2007, 167), while Sagan demonstrates this through juxtaposing the cases of France (acquired NWs in 1960) and Ukraine (abandoned its weapons in 1996), expounding that that both countries' nuclear decisions reflect the concurrent prestige and legitimacy regarding NWs possession (Sagan 1996, 76).

On the Possibility of Nuclear Disarmament

Written by Sam Ling Gibson

National Security Considerations

In contrast with the above constructivist argument that the regime has been maintained through normative weight, realists would argue that national security considerations have also been a major motivation behind nuclear restraint. As the determinist cases of NK and Iran show, if leaders perceive it in their national security interests, they may be prepared to act against the regime. Conversely, NWS, or NWS programmes may be abandoned if in national security interests, whether through internally driven shifts in security perceptions—as happened between Brazil and Argentina, and in South Africa (Sagan 1996, 61)—or externally imposed, more coercive measures as seen with Libya, Iraq, and more recently Iran (Paul 2012).

A further realist reasoning to nuclear restraint is the salience of security guarantees offered by the “umbrellas” of extended nuclear deterrence to would-be nuclear aspirants (e.g. Germany, Japan, South Korea) (Cottey 2006) or the abandonment of weapons (notably former Soviet NWS, who received security assurances from the P5 (Cirincione 2010, 529)).

Since the end of the CW, the normative strength of the regime and to a lesser extent positive and negative security stipulations have kept the N option off the table for the vast majority of states. Those who have initiated a NWS program have generally been restrained through a shift in perceptions—whether internal, or as a result enforcement mechanisms and coercive approaches within and outside of the NPR. Iran’s recent abandonment highlights the intertwined determinants involved in N restraint. These have been argued variously to be a combination of coercive sanctions imposed on the country, a realisation that the continuation of the program could provide greater risk than benefits to national security, and a shift in domestic debates and a leadership, which recognised this risk (Sauer and Pretorius 2014).

3. Proliferation Threats Today: States, NSAs and Rationality

As Knopf (2012, 107) reminds us, the NPR, negotiated at the height of the CW, was in response to specific concurrent threats— notably a deterrence paradigm between traditional superpower adversaries. Following the Copenhagen School of IR, proponents of disarmament and increasingly policymakers, on the other hand, point to a changed and more unstable post-CW landscape, with novel and significant threats to international security; further proliferation to New NWS; and sources generally overlooked by neorealists; Non-state Actors and global terrorism, which merit further discussion in this chapter as key aspects to the ND debate.

States and Rationality

Waltz (1981; 2012) and other neorealists assert that all state leaders are innately rational and survival seeking, and therefore deterrence *would* apply to a weaponized country, even one considered “pariah” and/or under non-democratic leadership. This rational-choice theory has been contested on various levels of analysis by both abolitionists and policymakers— chiefly insofar as it overlooks politico-cultural differences in which deterrence may not be effective against “pariah” states. For example, an organisational theory lens would posit greater unpredictability with authoritarian (Paul 2012) or military governments (Sagan and Waltz 2010). Such factors lead some to question the assumption of universal “instrumental rationality,” which Paul (2012) and Knopf (2012) consider absent in such revisionist states such as Iran and NK, as they may be driven by “value rationality,” i.e. they react more to the perceived injustice than to a strictly economic cost-benefit calculation. Such behavioural considerations, however, appear to have been refuted to some extent by the fact that, Iran, for reasons outlined above, abandoned its NW programme, whilst NK has never used NWS beyond initial testings. Indeed, according to the defensive neorealist logic, NK’s and Iran’s NWS programs are completely rational counterbalance to US coercion (Sagan & Waltz 2009, 92). Moreover, NK’s continued strategic alliance with China, as well as recent spur of diplomacy in response to the UN motion to investigate allegations of human rights violations (Potter 2014), suggests validation of Waltz’s assertion (1981) that NWS possession instil greater caution, and that leadership do essentially subscribe to instrumental rationality.

Nuclear Learning, Terrorism and ‘Loose Nukes’

On the Possibility of Nuclear Disarmament

Written by Sam Ling Gibson

Other related arguments of ND proponents appear to be more valid; that new NWS (whether pariah or not) lack the adequate safeguarding of nuclear materials, sophisticated command and control systems, and other protocols of long established NWS (Shultz et al 2007). This “nuclear learning” is cited by realists as being key to the CW deterrent stability (for instance Waltz, 1981), and its absence with new NWS leads to the prediction of greater scope for accidental use, or that such N materials could end up in the possession of violent non-state actors or “rogue” states (Knopf 2012, 114). This last scenario is substantiated with evidence of technical knowledge and/or material leakage from the former USSR, Pakistan, and possibly between NK and Iran, as well as Al Qaeda’s attempts to acquire nuclear materials (Paul 2012, 160). It is this latter corroboration, increasingly salient since 9/11, that informs a growing consensus amongst scholars and policymakers that nuclear terrorism is one of the greatest threats to international security today. Moreover, most experts would contest the instrumental rationality of such terrorist groups, which according to Paul (2012, 160) places them outside of the framework of traditional statist deterrence, leading many to believe that “if they have them, they’ll use them,” (Cottey 2006, 6).

Threats Today: a Case for Disarmament

The CW has left us with a staggering legacy of fissile material, nuclear weaponry and expertise, and additionally a ND paradigm, none of which are particularly useful in today’s post-CW, post 9/11 environment in which threats are greater from the further proliferation of NWs to new aspirant states or terrorist groups. Even those against nuclear abolition concede that nuclear war could happen, however unlikely (Waltz 1981, 15), and that if any NWs are used, then a retaliatory escalatory nuclear exchange is likely, in the short term, and an increased willingness to use them again in the future, tactically, accidentally, or otherwise considering a devalued taboo of non-use, and more broadly of nuclear deterrence (Cottey 2006, 6). Harari (2015) expounds that even a single use by terrorist groups, would effect a “radical political and societal transformation” and legitimised spectre of legitimised use of WMD by terrorist groups. Abolitionists see disarmament as the only guarantee to disable such proliferation and unauthorised use (Shultz et al 2007). As Rhodes says, “the world faces a stark choice: eliminate nuclear weapons and secure their fissile explosives or expect them to be used.” (Rhodes 2010 in Cirincione 2010, 529).

With reference to the Cuban Missile Crisis, Allison (1971) pointed out that even between nuclear “learned” and “rational” former superpowers, such rational actor models overlook the fact that even the game-theoretical actions do not always give you your predicted results, particularly during crises. Even if leaders of NNWS have so far acted rationally, at least in the sense of possessing NWs only as a defensive deterrent, the close calls of the CW underscores the gamble that the deterrence paradigm rests upon. Considering this, and the fact that no country has perfect nuclear security (Shultz et al 2007), the evidence that terrorists have attempted to exploit such weaknesses and acquire/use nuclear materials, and the fact that such threats cannot be responded to with NWs from a military utility perspective, gives the abolitionists a powerful case.

4. The Linkage Argument

Considering the arguments set out above, most in the arms-control community see the importance in further reductions of NWs. However here we see several key divergences, which straddle the NW debate, the nub of which is whether such reductions can, or should lead to ND. The 3 salient aspects to the ‘linkage’ argument will therefore be examined below.

‘Linkists’

Adherents of the linkage argument view the link between NP and ND as obvious, and that further reductions in NWs (as well as the deployment strategy behind them) as being a crucial first step towards the nuclear abolition objective. Judging from its proponents, many of them seasoned statesmen with first-hand experience with the realities of policymaking (for instance Hans Blix, and the so-called ‘Gang of Four’-Shultz, Perry, Kissinger, and Nunn) and therefore inherently recognise the dominance of deterrence logic which continues to motivate countries to acquire and maintain NWs capabilities. Thus a gradual step-by-step, trust-building, approach is recommended as the only viable route to disarmament, as the Blix Commission (2006, 109) sets out:

On the Possibility of Nuclear Disarmament

Written by Sam Ling Gibson

A nuclear disarmament treaty is achievable and can be reached through careful, sensible and practicable measures. Benchmarks should be set; definitions agreed; timetables drawn up and agreed upon; and transparency requirements agreed.

This linkage argument is a central tenet of the current Global Zero initiative, and has been espoused by a great deal of high-level politicians including, crucially, Obama. Moreover, leaders of several NWS claim that they are moving towards this, referring to the significant reductions in nuclear stockpiles that have taken place since the end of the CW. Particularly important in this regards is the US/Russian New START Treaty, which aims to cut deployed strategic warheads from the present levels of around 5000 to 1,550 (Knopf 2012, 115). Although such numerical reductions do appear significant, other 'linkists', and those who favour of a ban-first approach, contend that such reductions trajectories are meaningless, as they will never go below the floor levels of CMD, and simply codify the limited intentions of their signatories (for instance see Shultz et al 2007). This charge has been countered with the assertion that that these large-scale reductions demonstrate a symbolic willingness, or in Obama's words, a "foundation" for future progress (The Whitehouse 2010; also see Barkenbus 1989). Abolitionists argue that this largely symbolic gesture of reductions, is typical of the P5's defense towards their NPT commitments, and is contradicted by a continued first-use doctrine, further 'modernisation' programs, a deadlocked FMCT, and the continued US provision of N protection to other NNWS (The Whitehouse 2013; Wood 2014).

The evidence of Russian and US reticence to shrink weapons to a below-CMD level, "as long as these weapons exist" (Obama 2009) also underscores the paradox within the linkage approach, as affirmed by a US arms-control official (Wood 2014);

We cannot and will not support efforts to move to a nuclear weapons convention or the false hope of a fixed timeline for the elimination of all nuclear weapons. We cannot support and will oppose any effort to move to an international legal ban on nuclear weapons.

Therefore, despite their pro-linkage rhetoric to the contrary, empiricism shows the phased approach to be logically challenged, as the Obama administration is neither prepared to pursue a reductions first/treaty later approach or vice versa, while Russia does not even entertain the disarmament ideal (Medvedev 2010).

The Humanitarian Argument

The second and third linkage positions, which, albeit coming from very different angles, both recognise that stockpiles of NWs will never drop below the CMD floor. The humanitarian camp, alongside many of the linkage proponents, criticise that Waltz and other neorealists overlook the moral ramifications of NWs, and draw upon the normative case that the sheer devastational power of NWs would make their usage a violation of the principles of international law (Sauer and Pretorius 2014, 235-236). However, unlike the linkists, many humanitarians posit the incompatible and contradicting nature of deterrence logic and the step-by-step approach of Global Zero, and therefore recommend a legally binding nuclear weapons convention, *before* other steps (for instance Ki-moon 2009).

The Realist Perspective

In contrast to the humanitarian standpoint, the dominant, realist strand of the non-linkage hypothesis, would view the current predicted above-CMD reductions, as ample evidence that vertical reductions, and not ND are the end objective, or, that "no road leads from a world with a small number of NWs-states to a world with none" (Sagan and Waltz 2010, 96). Such a conviction rests on the deterrence logic laid out earlier in this essay, and that despite any rhetoric to suggest otherwise, ND would be unwise and disadvantageous to the current regime's interests, including such broader security alliances such as NATO, to which nuclear deterrence forms a central part of strategic doctrines (Gallagher 2011, 432).

5. NWS and NNWS Perspectives on Disarmament

Many pro-abolitionists point to the pivotal role of the US in beginning the norm changing away from NWs reliance,

On the Possibility of Nuclear Disarmament

Written by Sam Ling Gibson

due to its influential and commanding position as global hegemon (for instance Shultz et al 2007). In a nuclear free-world, they argue, the US would retain its conventional military superiority (for instance Santoro 2010).

Alongside the US, Russia displayed enthusiasm with the signing of the New START Treaty in 2010, which President Medvedev hailed as, “truly historic event...This agreement enhances strategic stability and, at the same time, enables us to rise to a higher level for cooperation between Russia and the United States” (The Whitehouse 2010). However, certain caveats lie within comments from the same press conference; Russian and Chinese strategic planners see US and NATO overwhelming conventional superiority as a security threat (Gallagher 2011, 436), to which their NWS gives them a conceptual strategic parity. Indeed, Medvedev expressed Russian reservations towards the continuation of the recently announced plans to construct a US “missile defense shield” in Poland (The Whitehouse 2010) and shortly after announced plans to counteract both this and a similar NATO project on its borders, by maintaining its “strategic nuclear balance”; modernising nuclear capabilities through more effective delivery systems and warheads, amongst other measures (Medvedev 2010). Many realist-theorists argue that these policies, and Russia’s military actions in the Ukraine, are an understandable, defensive response to very real threats (for instance, Arun 2014); notably the continued encroachment into Russia’s sphere of influence, both politically (EU) and militarily (the US and NATO).

Towards Global Zero – Responsibility and Political Willingness

Considering the US’s influential position, many linkists have pointed to crucial technical steps that should be taken, either unilaterally through halting NW modernisation programs and reducing allies reliance’s on its umbrella guarantees, and multilaterally, alongside other countries, through the conclusion of the CTBT, shifting away from the CW postures of weapons deployment, the creation and verification of international fuel banks and the prohibition of virtual arsenals (Shultz et al 2007; Paul 2012; Sagan 2009).

Most abolitionists, Sagan included, deem that for Global Zero to be viable, such meaningful actions from the top tier of nuclear powers need to take place, beyond merely numerical reductions. Knopf, from an institutional bargaining perspective, argues that adhering to some of these actions, or “indicators to commitment” would serve a huge symbolic role in persuading other NWS, and NNWS to reciprocate (Knopf 2012, 130), which, Sagan (1996) asserts will be facilitated by the normative strength of the regime. Sauer and Pretorius (2014) contend that the logic behind the normative success of the mine and cluster bomb conventions—notably the stigmatizing effect that they generated, which eventually pressured non-signatory states to sign up—could also be applied to ND. However, such normative arguments are still unlikely, however, to sway existentially threatened NWS, those who currently are offered protection by the US nuclear umbrella, broader security coalitions such as NATO (Sagan 2009, 163), let alone China and Russia with their understandable concern with US and NATO strategic policies and conventional superiority (Paul 2012).

This causal web of responsibility is however, a conceptually moot point, as beyond rhetoric, the US, and other established NWS are unwilling to let NWs fall below strategic deterrence levels. Exacerbated by tensions over the Crimea, Washington and Moscow’s earlier aspirations and numerical reductions are misaligned with actual strategic policies that have followed which include systematic nuclear and conventional weapons modernisation efforts and maintenance of second strike capabilities (The Whitehouse 2013; Medvedev 2010). This not only appears to affirm the non-linkage arguments discussed earlier, but also falls far short of the “indicators of commitment” that many abolitionists, NWS and NNWS call for.

Conclusion: Living with NWS

In sum, the salient arguments against NWs from previous sections—which in summary are; their non-utility as a military tool, in particularly against the post CW threats; ethical perspectives; strategic arguments against deterrence, with the adverse effects of the security dilemma, and further proliferation to New NWS—do offer a persuasive and logical case for the abolition of NWs, especially from the perspective of the status quo powers (at least following other technical steps conventional assurances/trust building). Such arguments are reflected in the recurrent affirmation of the importance of the ND objective from the NPT, as well as the renewed energy manifest in Global

On the Possibility of Nuclear Disarmament

Written by Sam Ling Gibson

Zero. However, as often as these calls for disarmament are made, the NPT meetings see increasing criticisms that such numerical reductions are insufficient (Knopf 2012, 115) and ultimately incompatible with the realisation of Article VI. Despite some visionary rhetoric and limited bilateral initiatives, recent actions of Russia and the US substantiate such criticisms, with relations appearing to remain fundamentally competitive between them (and to a lesser extent, China). Indeed, the CW above-CMD structures and belligerent doctrines still exist, and, at least qualitatively, are projected to increase (Medvedev 2010; The Whitehouse 2010; 2013) and many point to the increasing resemblance of the Ukraine to a proxy war (The Guardian 2015).

Some argue that it is such emergence of regional powers antagonistic to the US and the accompanying balancing-of-powers is evidence of the realist “default anarchic state” inherent to international politics (Arun 2014). Although this essay does recognise that IR continues to be characterised by a realist logic of uncertainty and self-help, it has demonstrated that the institutionalism, constructivist and liberal logic behind the normative strength of the NP regime does not amount to the unitary-state, anarchic environment outlined by Arun and Waltz. As determined above, from a technical perspective, ND is certainly possible this century—if not sooner. Preventing future countries from attaining NWs is certainly conceivable, but once obtained, however, the deterrence logic behind such weapons makes their relinquishment near impossible. As Cottey (2006, 19) points out, no NPT state has reversed their nuclearisation to date, and it is such strategic considerations which affirm that, particularly in the current political climate, the world will have to live with some NWs for now.

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On the Possibility of Nuclear Disarmament

Written by Sam Ling Gibson

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[1] See Sauer, 2004.

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