

DISARMAMENT: EVOLUTION OR REVOLUTION

The theoretical debate on disarmament and its linked approaches, arms control and non-proliferation is an important permanent topic in international security studies. The exploration of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, has exacerbated the debate, leading to the formulation of numerous theories under different schools of thought, notably realism, liberalism and constructivism. Both arms control and non-proliferation could evolve into disarmament, as and when arms-related activities are discontinued and existing stockpiles are dismantled. This paper develops a theoretical framework on disarmament by critically reviewing relevant contemporary theories on the topic. It also examines whether disarmament could be achieved through a clear-cut shift or gradually through the progress of vertical arms control and non-proliferation.

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ARMS-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Apart from the main utilisation of arms as means of murder and destruction, there are three other main arms-related activities—production (including testing, development and manufacturing), stockpiling (through acquisition as a result of production, receiving or importation) and transfer (through giving, export, smuggling or allowing passage). The state is the only international actor with a legal monopolistic right to use force and it may practice the three activities either explicitly or at times implicitly by providing or

seeking assistance or encouragement. Based on the three arms-related activities, two categories of states emerge in terms of armament—armed states with the capacity and capability to produce and stockpile arms and non-armed states, which lack such capacity and capability.

Non-state actors (such as international organisations, multinational corporations, private military companies and terrorist groups), sub-state actors (like political parties and sectarian militias) and individuals do not have the right to use force in international relations. The only exception so far has been for freedom fighters seeking independence for their countries. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 2621 adopted on 12 October 1970 (*Programme of Action for the Full Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*, online at <https://www.un.org>), “reaffirms the inherent right of colonial peoples to struggle by all necessary means at their disposal against colonial powers which suppress their aspiration for freedom and independence”.

CONCEPTUAL ADJUSTMENT

There are neither universally agreed definitions for the concepts of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control nor exhaustive identification for their connotations. However, arms control may be simply defined as arms regulation and reduction. That is constraining the use of arms and imposing limitations on armaments, both quantitatively and qualitatively, through restrictions on arms production, stockpiling and transfer upon the voluntary decision of a state or by the coercion of international actor(s). This definition includes two dimensions—vertical and horizontal. While vertical arms control refers to restrictions on arms production and stockpiling in armed states, horizontal arms control is the prevention of arms transfer to non-armed states. The latter dimension is also referred to as

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non-proliferation. Thus, while successful arms control should include a non-proliferation dimension, non-proliferation need not be necessarily associated with arms control, although the boundaries between the two concepts have eroded (Zachary S Davis, “The Convergence of Arms Control and Non-proliferation: Vive La Difference”, *The Non-Proliferation Review*, Spring–Summer 1999, pp98–107). Both arms control and non-proliferation could optimistically evolve into disarmament, whereby a state or a group of states voluntarily discontinue practicing the three arms-related activities of production, stockpiling and transfer and dismantle their own stockpiles. In addition, demilitarisation refers to the reduction of military power as a whole according to a peace treaty between belligerent parties. For example, the Treaty of Versailles in the aftermath of the First World War established a demilitarised zone in the Rhineland. Article IV of the 1979 Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty (online at <http://www.operationspaix.net>) established limited force zones on both sides. The ultimate goal of disarmament and demilitarisation is to achieve peace through the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The concepts of arms control, non-proliferation, disarmament and demilitarisation apply to all types of weapons, whether weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons or small arms and light weapons. Nevertheless, the terms of disarmament and demilitarisation are not usually used in reference to the latter two except in certain contexts such as peace treaties ending wars. The rationale is that while states could practice arms control and/or non-proliferation, due to the survival instinct in anarchic international politics that prioritises national security on every nation’s agenda, states do not undertake complete disarmament or demilitarisation. There are however 22 states that do not have regular military forces (Kathy Gilsinan, “Countries without Militaries”, *The Atlantic*, 11 November 2014, online at <http://www.theatlantic.com>). Integrating the above definitions at the regional level, regional arms control may be described as the regulation and reduction of regional armament, through restrictions on arms production and stockpiling within the region and on arms transfer within and across the region, upon mutually agreed frameworks by regional states or as a result of national arms control schemes including non-proliferation. Regional arms control is based on national arms control and regional non-proliferation. Serving the first purpose of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security, disarmament is an important part of international peace building regimes and security arrangements at both regional and global levels.

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF DISARMAMENT

The elimination of weapons of mass destruction has been an elusive target of the international community since the UNGA adopted its first resolution on 24 January 1946 to establish an Atomic Energy Commission to deal with the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy (online at <https://www.un.org>). The globally acknowledged treaty on weapons of mass destruction—the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT, online at <http://disarmament.un.org>)—is discriminatory based mainly on two features. The first is the clear-cut distinction between two categories of states—nuclear weapon states, which manufactured and exploded nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices prior to 1 January 1967 (Article IX) and non-nuclear weapon states, which did not develop nuclear weapons prior to that date. This distinction is not legally based but rather politically oriented, imposing unequal duties on state parties. The other feature of the discriminatory character of the NPT is the disparity in the obligatory powers of its terms. Although the treaty imposes firm commitments with respect to non-proliferation, it uses vague phrasings with regard to disarmament through Article VI, which calls for negotiating a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The treaty clearly favours nuclear weapon states. In addition, disarmament negotiations have never been initiated. Instead, arms control negotiations took place between the United States of America (US) and the Soviet Union during the course of the Cold War and have continued between the US and Russia, after the latter inherited the Soviet nuclear arsenal. Moreover, nuclear weapons free zones have been declared as regional approaches towards complete disarmament.

The relative success achieved by arms control treaties and the NPT on the one hand and regional disarmament arrangements on the other for almost

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half a century have been manifestations of two extreme approaches towards disarmament. The first is an evolutionary approach based on the likelihood of disarmament as an evolution of the combination of both arms control and non-proliferation, which gained momentum with the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) on 10 September 1996, freezing the arms race in a serious though belated step towards disarmament. The other is a revolutionary approach adopted by two opposing parties—one calls for abandoning the notion of disarmament entirely as an unrealistic alternative for the already applicable arms control and non-proliferation, while the other calls for an immediate shift to disarmament as a wide umbrella to address the international security dilemma, arguing that partial disarmament through arms control and non-proliferation arrangements would result in an uneven distribution of power and hence make war more likely. With regard to nuclear disarmament in particular, the proponents of the revolutionary approach of disarmament put forward two extreme visions—the first is for rendering disarmament efforts credible by committing all nuclear powers to an unambiguous reduction in warheads and materials within a fixed time frame, developing a regime of universal inspections to ensure compliance and committing the international community to militarily punish defaulters. The other vision is for legitimising the double-standard commitments of the NPT by offering a one-time “amnesty” in exchange for full disclosure. This implies that states be given a chance to declare themselves legitimate nuclear powers, provided they fully disclose the mechanisms by which they circumvented the NPT regime (Nitin Pai, “A Disarming Argument: Non-Proliferation isn’t Working too well, Will Disarmament Fare better”, *Pragati: The Indian National Interest Review*, no11, February 2008, pp5–7).

The two approaches stem from the continuous ideological debate between various schools of thought with regard to disarmament. The dispute over this major topic of international security is expected and attributed to the divergence between the foundations of normative and empirical theories of international relations. While normative theories prescribe disarmament based on norms and values or what “should be” the ideal action to eradicate the arms race, empirical theories describe the arms race based on experimentation and facts or what “is” the practical action to avoid the negative consequences of the arms race. Normative theories of disarmament are dismissed by empiricalists as utopian, while empirical theories of non-proliferation are criticised by normativists as unjust. Based on this divide, the conceptions of the two main schools of thought

in international relations—realism and liberalism—towards disarmament have been founded on empirical and normative theories respectively, with updated versions in both schools, such as structural realism and neoliberalism. In addition, challenging schools of thought such as social constructivism have emerged that propose distinct views on disarmament.

The Realist Conception of Disarmament

Realism regards the international community as naturally anarchic, in which states are the only actors and every actor is responsible for its own security to maintain its sovereignty and insure its survival. The three Ss—security, sovereignty and survival are respectively the tool, concept and goal of the state. Accordingly, there is an eternal struggle for power among states, which are power seeking entities, continuously searching for increasing quantities and better quality of arms. They ignore disarmament measures reached in agreement with other states that are potential adversaries or within international institutionalism, which lacks the status of an international actor as viewed by classical realism. There is however a division among realists themselves on whether nuclear weapons contribute to international security. The realist school of thought entertains numerous theories that reflect on disarmament. Apart from the traditional ones such as the deterrence theory and mutual assured destruction, there are various socially based political theories with significant disarmament offshoots, among which are the law of nuclear fatalism and the iron law of oligarchy.

Liberals acknowledge the right of states to maintain their own sovereignty and defend their survival. Nevertheless, they argue that security could be achieved through collective frameworks in the form of multilateral institutions. Liberals believe that seeking security by amassing power is self-defeating, since it provokes the arms race—the absolute security of one state is perceived as an absolute threat by others.

Murphy's Law of Fatalism: In 1949, American aerospace engineer Edward A Murphy, Junior (1918–90) stated, “If anything can go wrong, it will” (Paul

Schroeder, “Does Murphy’s Law Apply to History”, Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington DC, *The Wilson Quarterly*, vol9, 1985, pp84–93). Apparently, Murphy’s law of fatalism is a classical realist theory based on the assumption that humans are inherently evil and therefore will do wrong provided they are able to do so. This law may be regarded as an attempt at formulating the strategic concept of considering the worst-case scenario while designing the defensive structure of a state. It is a capability oriented statement, focusing on the materialistic ability to go wrong, that is, the ability of the enemy to pose a threat to a state, while neglecting the role of intentions and the social value system of that enemy. In brief, neorealists believe that the distribution of a state’s capability is the primary determinant of its international goal and behaviour. Consequently considering this law, a state ought to disable its adversary or potential enemy from doing wrong by committing an act seen as a “preventive measure”, alternatively considered as an “act of hostility” or “wrong doing” by the adversary. The adoption of this law could lead to the pursuance of an aggressive foreign policy based on coercion rather than persuasion or at least the adoption of the deterrence theory with the arms race as one of its manifestations. The ultimate fate would most likely be war or a balance of horror. The nuclear articulation of Murphy’s law of fatalism would read as, “If a country has the knowhow to produce nuclear weapons, it will certainly produce them” (Jayita Sarkar, “India’s Nuclear Limbo and the Fatalism of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime, 1974–83”, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, *Strategic Analysis*, vol37, no3, 2013, pp322–37). This law may be viewed as one of the principles of classical realism concerning the nuclear cause specifically, disarmament in general and international security more generally. The law of nuclear fatalism laid the seeds for the notion that a state should develop nuclear weapons to deter other states, while preventing those same states from developing such weapons. This approach thus favours non-proliferation while ruling out disarmament. Accordingly, this notion as reflected in the realist perspective of the NPT shows that the treaty has been an instrument used by dominant states to safeguard and legitimise their hold over nuclear weapons, while denying other states access to such weapons and protecting their allies through extended nuclear deterrence (Bradley C Petersen, “The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: A Comparison of Realist, Liberal and Constructivist Views”, Master’s Thesis, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa, 2012, piv, online at <http://etd.uwc.ac.za>). This notion is the core flaw of the non-proliferation approach as criticised by liberalism.

Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy: German sociologist Robert Michels (1876–1936) in *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (Translated by Eden Paul and Cedar Paul, Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001, p241) concluded that all groups and organisations over time develop a hierarchical structure of authority with a small elite at the head. Although this law was coined to explain a sociopolitical context, especially the party system, the law is realistically valid in the international context, where few states have become the international elite in the form of the five permanent member states (P5) of the United Nations Security Council. In the international disarmament scenario as well, the P5 group has been accorded the status of “international elite”, as all have been globally recognised as nuclear weapon states in the NPT. From the realistic perspective, the legitimised actual nuclear supremacy of the P5 has made the international nuclear non-proliferation regime an oligarchic one, where these five states monopolise nuclear weapons, negatively affecting the credibility of the regime as a whole. Therefore, proponents of the oligarchy law have adopted a revolutionary approach towards disarmament, arguing that it cannot be achieved through non-proliferation arrangements.

Nuclear taboo refutes the realist theories of nuclear deterrence and mutual assured destruction. While these two theories attribute the non-use of nuclear weapons to the concern to avoid nuclear retaliation, nuclear taboo accounts for refraining from the use of nuclear weapons in the post-Second World War world even against a non-nuclear state lacking the nuclear second strike capability.

The Liberal Conception of Disarmament

The liberal school of thought considers non-state actors, especially international organisations, as important international actors in addition to states, since they are multilateral fora and sometimes supranational authorities, regulating international politics to overcome and exterminate anarchy in the international community. Liberals acknowledge the right of states to maintain their own sovereignty and defend their survival. Nevertheless, they argue

that security could be achieved through collective frameworks in the form of multilateral institutions. Liberals believe that seeking security by amassing power is self-defeating, since it provokes the arms race—the absolute security of one state is perceived as an absolute threat by others. Liberals also argue that the sovereignty of a state is not absolute and international organisations should take over the regulatory aspects of international relations, such as the globality of non-proliferation. Liberals do believe in disarmament and consider arms control and non-proliferation as steps towards that end. According to the liberal account, disarmament would save financial and social assets by accelerating economic growth and human development with restrained military expenditure.

In the aftermath of the First World War, the liberal movement for disarmament gained momentum with Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points aimed at reforming the international order by considering disarmament as crucial to avoiding war. The ultimate goal of the efforts for complete disarmament was to reduce international tensions and such efforts were illustrated between 1921 and 1922 by the Washington Naval Conference, which tried to curtail maritime competition among Britain, France, Italy, Japan and the US by limiting their battleships and the Geneva Disarmament Conference held in 1932. Although realists criticise liberals as being idealists, there is a theoretical interlink between realism and liberalism in the realistic notion that humans—and therefore the states they govern—are inherently evil. Thus, the end is an idealistic goal to fight evil even though the methods of that fight may be more evil but realistically justified as per Niccolò Machiavelli's statement, "the end justifies the means". Ironically, liberals have been accused by realists of turning foreign policy into a moral crusade through so-called humanitarian interventions, which involve arms projection instead of disarmament. In the following sections two liberal theories (democratic peace and nuclear ethics) of sociopolitical origin are briefly explained from the perspective of their influence over disarmament.

The Democratic Peace Theory: Liberals view democracy as the most important guarantee of international peace. German philosopher Immanuel Kant argued that the likelihood of democracies fighting one another was less than any other governmental modality. As former American President Woodrow Wilson stated, "Democratic governments will make wars less likely"—the unlikelihood of war between democracies is attributed to the fact that each accepts the legitimacy of others. Moreover in democratic states, the social and materialistic costs of

war are accountable to the people. As per this theory, democratisation may be considered a confidence building measure or even a prerequisite of disarmament. That is, disarmament would not only have a military impact but would have sociopolitical outcomes as well. Nevertheless, the statement is controversial and could render disarmament an endless process, as it conflicts with one of the main principles of the United Nations—non-intervention in the domestic matters of any state. In addition, there is no standard version of democracy adopted as a postulate by all modern nations although there are some common theoretical democratic values, often breached in practices by almost all democratic states.

Nuclear Ethics: Neoliberal theorist Joseph S Nye (*Nuclear Ethics*, New York: The Free Press, 1986, pp99–131) suggested five maxims of nuclear ethics:

1. On motives: “self-defence is a just but limited cause”
2. On means: “never treat nuclear weapons as normal weapons”
3. On scope: “minimise harm to innocent people”
4. On consequences: “reduce risks of nuclear war in the near term”
5. On armament: “reduce reliance on nuclear weapons over time”

The fourth and fifth maxims depict Nye’s evolutionary vision of nuclear disarmament through both short and long-term strategies aimed at dismantling the causal structure of the use of nuclear weapons, paving the way to rule it out. In contrast, Shiro Sato (*Nuclear Ethics as Normative and Cultural Restraints in International Politics*, Afrasian Research Centre, Ryukoku University, Shiga, 2013, p14) adopted a revolutionary approach to nuclear weapons, stating that the use of nuclear weapons was unethical and accordingly the social norm of nuclear taboo was developed. He concluded that for a world without nuclear weapons, the ethics of the use/threat of nuclear weapons in addition to security issues must be considered.

The Constructivist Account of Disarmament

Challenging both realism and liberalism due to their conceptual rigidity, constructivism considers that the identities of states, including their collective social perception and value system, influence their social conception of world

politics, which in return shapes their interest and leads to convergence or divergence among states. This is what created the split between the Western and Eastern blocs during the Cold War and explains why the nuclear weapons of the United Kingdom (UK) are less threatening to the US than the same weapons in the hands of Russia, China or North Korea—the UK and the US share main features of identity and interest. Hence, humans are not inherently evil but rather believe in various values, defend them and work to ensure their supremacy. As a result, international politics has an anarchical character. Arms control may thus be regarded as a socially constructed approach of armed states to regulate the arms race. In such cases, social agents exercise pressure on policymakers, while negotiating mutual arms control. In addition, non-proliferation may be interpreted by social constructivism as a war by armed states to monopolise arms by preventing their transfer to non-armed states. From the constructivist point of view, disarmament is seen by non-armed states as a safe though long way to maintain international peace and security. One of the most important constructivist theories on disarmament is nuclear taboo.

The Weapons of Mass Destruction Taboo: The concept of nuclear and chemical taboo was coined by Richard Price and Nina Tannenwald (“Norms and Deterrence: The Nuclear and Chemical Weapons Taboos” in Peter J Katzenstein (Ed), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, pp114–52). Nuclear taboo refutes the realist theories of nuclear deterrence and mutual assured destruction. While these two theories attribute the non-use of nuclear weapons to the concern to avoid nuclear retaliation, nuclear taboo accounts for refraining from the use of nuclear weapons in the post-Second World War world even against a non-nuclear state lacking the nuclear second strike capability. Nina Tannenwald (*The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p10) has defined nuclear taboo as a “powerful *de facto* prohibition against the first use of nuclear weapons ... not the behaviour (of non-use) itself but rather the normative belief about the behaviour”. The stigma attached to nuclear weapons resulted in the worldwide unacceptability of the use of such weapons. Later, Nye (*Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*, New York: Longman, 2009, p148) implicitly endorsed Tannenwald’s account by referring to the immorality of nuclear weapons. The tradition of non-use also depicts the social constructivist account

for avoiding the use of nuclear weapons. TV Paul (*The Tradition of Non-use of Nuclear Weapons*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, p5) has argued that the non-use of nuclear weapons was not a taboo, which is a prohibitive norm, but rather a tradition, which is an informal social norm. Although the concept of nuclear energy generation is essentially peaceful, the problem that has raised concerns has been the first use of nuclear fission energy for military ends through the use of nuclear bombs, as were dropped in Japan in 1945 (Mohamed Abdel-Salam, “The Grey Areas between the Peaceful and Military Utilisations of Atomic Energy”, Cairo: Al-Ahram Establishment, *Al-Siyassa Al-Dawliyyal International Politics Journal*, vol41, no165, July 2006, pp172–7).

WHICH APPROACH?

No single perspective fully interprets the gamut of concepts and interactions related to disarmament. Despite the relative validity of realism, it fails to explain various aspects of disarmament. Murphy’s law of nuclear fatalism has proven to be more virtual than practical, as there is no direct relation between the acquisition of nuclear power and the production of nuclear weapons. In other words, the production of nuclear weapons is not an immediate result of acquiring nuclear power but rather is related to international and internal contexts. In the early 1970s, the ratio between nuclear weapon states and states with nuclear capability was 1:8. In the 1980s, the gap had narrowed to nearly 1:5 (Abdel-Salam, *ibid*,

p174). The emergence of *de facto* nuclear weapon states marked a failure of the law of nuclear oligarchy. The idealistic trends of classical liberalism render it dogmatic rather than pragmatic. The interpretation of the democratic peace theory links democracy and disarmament and therefore provides a pretext to escape disarmament arrangements pending democratisation. The neoliberal theory of nuclear ethics, while putting forward a pragmatic approach to nuclear disarmament, legitimises the use of unethical weapons with provenly

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disproportional destructive consequences. Besides, the founder of the theory later referred to a general sense of immorality of nuclear weapons. In addition, the unethical nature of nuclear weapons has been highlighted by the International Court of Justice, The Hague, in an advisory opinion (*Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, 8 July 1996, p266, online at <http://www.icj-cij.org>) which states, “the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law”. The social basis of constructivism by considering the role of intentions and value systems among other social influences and not relying only on material capabilities or idealistic concepts makes that school of thought the closest to a comprehensive interpretation of disarmament related issues, albeit, the perspective has not gained influence in academic circles. In addition, the social rather than materialistic nature of its theses may prevent precise articulation of disarmament theories, visibly manifest in debates on nuclear taboo versus the non-use tradition.

The large-scale adherence to the NPT has made it the second largest international treaty on arms control in terms of the number of state parties. This global long-term acknowledgement could promote the NPT as a limb of customary international law and further elevate its terms, especially its three pillars—non-proliferation, peaceful use of nuclear energy and disarmament—into peremptory norms of the general international law (*jus cogens*). Customary international law is defined by Article 38 (1b) of the statute of the International Court of Justice as “evidence of a general practice accepted as law”. Hence, the international custom is composed of two elements:

1. A materialistic element manifest by the general practice of the international community represented by both the frequency and generality of a certain precedent
2. A psychological element expressed by the acceptance of this practice as law

Sometimes international customs become *jus cogens* provided that the international community accepts and recognises them as non-derogable norms according to Article 53 of the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. The opposition of a single state or a few states does not prevent the evolution of *jus cogens* since the Vienna Conference rejected a proposed amendment presented by the US in this regard.

CONCLUSION


While disarmament is a just concept and considered the ideal solution for to the problems posed by an arms race, non-proliferation is a discriminatory concept widely considered as the optimal solution as it supposedly limits arms distribution to certain states and paves the way to discuss the gradual disarmament of those states. In this regard, international institutions play an important role. For instance, general and complete disarmament was the subject of UNGA Resolution 1378 (XIV) of 20 November 1959. Prior to it, achieving global nuclear disarmament had been the subject of the UNGA's first resolution in 1946 and has been a prominent theme of NPT review conferences since 1975. The UNGA's first special session on disarmament in 1978 attached priority to nuclear disarmament in particular. In 2014, the United Nations declared 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons to reaffirm international commitment to global nuclear disarmament.

Based on the three arms-related activities—production, stockpiling and transfer—Anna Stavrianakis (*Taking Aim at the Arms Trade: Nongovernmental Organisations, Global Civil Society and the World Military Order*, London: Zed Books, 2010) has classified arms control into three spheres—*intra-Northern production and trade, North–South transfers and small arms proliferation*. In fact, both arms control and non-proliferation are implemented by armed states, where they apply the first doctrine among themselves, while applying the other to their relations with non-armed states. On the other side, non-armed states have no arms to control nor can they prevent proliferation. In addition, they have no means to resist non-proliferation rules decided on by armed states. Therefore, while arms control is usually, but not necessarily, implemented through mutually agreed frameworks, such as treaties, organisations, monitoring and verification

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mechanisms, non-proliferation is achieved through mutually agreed as well as disagreed regimes.

Axiomatically, armed states advocate greater non-proliferation and less arms control, while non-armed states seek either disarmament or proliferation in a continuous conceptual conflict between the notions of equity and equality. The most evident example is the extended debate between *de jure* and *de facto* nuclear weapon states. While nuclear weapon states—coincidentally the UNSC's P5 with exclusive veto rights—discard the expansion of the nuclear club as upsetting the balance of international order, non-nuclear weapon states aver that the nuclear arsenals of the P5 have resulted in an unbalanced, outdated international order that does not reflect contemporary realities. In addition, the nuclear arsenals of both *de jure* and *de facto* nuclear weapon states are regarded by non-nuclear weapon states as justifications to acquire nuclear weapons.

Fortunately, two factors could help in the evolution of disarmament from the non-proliferation regime. The first are NPT review conferences held every five years and the other the fact that non-nuclear weapon states represent the majority of NPT states parties. Orchestrated action by non-nuclear weapon states could be crucial in launching disarmament negotiations without disturbing the standing non-proliferation regime and arms control arrangements enshrined mainly in the NPT and the CTBT (that has yet to come into force). The success of such negotiations could be leveraged for greater comprehensive security arrangements, including conventional arms control. 

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