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Putting disarmament back in the frame

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Abstract. This article begins by deconstructing the dominant discourse on arms control and disarmament, and argues that it works to dismiss disarmament as an idea whilst simultaneously coopting really existing disarmament into a perspective that imagines a world long on dangers and short on peaceful strategies to confront them. In contrast, it is argued, not only is the traditional distinction between arms control and disarmament problematic but, in certain respects, the world is experiencing quite a lot of disarmament. Partly however, this is because both disarmament and broader arms limitation activities are taking place as part of an asymmetrical arms limitation system underpinned, in particular, by the US in its role as a 'disarmament Empire'. Nevertheless, there are a number of factors immanent in the contemporary international system that suggest a more radical form of emancipatory disarmament might be both realisable and indeed necessary.

Introduction

This article aims to examine both arms control theory and practice from a critical security studies perspective. It is therefore concerned to deconstruct the mainstream discourse on arms control in order to illuminate the interests that underpin received wisdom on the issue; to outline the structures of power established by current practice; to highlight the emancipatory potential immanent in contemporary approaches to arms limitation and to consider how these might be extended to build a system of 'disarmament from below'.[1]

First, I will suggest that the supposed distinctions between arms control and disarmament that lie at the heart of arms control theory represent the mirage-creation of a dominant disciplinary discourse. I will also argue that Stuart Croft's attempt to reinvent arms control for the post-Cold War era has produced a teleological history that ignores the extent to which the development of arms limitation has been non-linear and which downplays the role of power in shaping discourse and practice.

Second, I suggest that – in contrast to the impression created by an increasingly pessimistic literature on the topic – the world is not only experiencing a lot of arms limitation, but that it is also experiencing a significant amount of disarmament,

* I am grateful to Malcolm Chalmers, David Mutimer, Mark Lacy, Michael Pugh, Joanna Spear, Maria Sultan and the anonymous reviewers of the article for their comments and insights.

[1] For discussions on critical security studies, see Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics* (Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner, 2005); Richard Wyn Jones, *Security, Strategy and Critical Theory* (Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner 1999); Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (eds.), *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (London: University College Press, 1997).

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particularly when judged against the goals elucidated in the disarmament negotiations of the 1950s and 60s. Furthermore, I will suggest that this point is largely ignored in the mainstream literature on arms control, which still persists in 'imagining' disarmament as a failure. Such a framing acts as a powerful tool of delegitimisation that means proposals for more far-reaching and emancipatory forms of disarmament arrive still-born into the zeitgeist of IR academia and global society more generally. Whilst in some ways depressing, such an analysis nevertheless implies that disarmament utopias may well be realisable.

However, I will also suggest that the current disarmament and broader arms limitation system is, to a significant extent, an asymmetric one, designed to preserve the military hegemony of the US in particular and the West in general. On the one hand therefore, we can now be said to live in a disarmament system of sorts, but its configuration is one primarily shaped in the interests of a disarmament empire – the USA. Ironically therefore, the current disarmament system is one that nevertheless legitimises significant levels of global – and particularly US – military expenditure and which serves to further embed both the military supremacy of the USA and the stark disparities that exist between spending on armaments compared with spending on human security. Moreover, the very asymmetry in military power that the current arms limitation system is designed to shore up actually creates an incentive for weaker nations to pursue non-conventional military technologies or strategies (NBC weapons/terrorism) as a way of offsetting their marked inferiority in conventional weaponry.

Finally, I will suggest that whilst the influences maintaining this system are certainly very strong, practices immanent in the contemporary arms limitation system and the challenges presented to it by emerging military technologies suggest that a more emancipatory system of 'disarmament from below' – one geared less to the preservation of hegemony and more to the promotion of human security – may be realisable.

This article will begin, then, by first detailing how disarmament is both captured and dismissed by arms control theory, before moving on to outline a typology of disarmament. The implications of this typology for the validity of arms control theory will then be explored, as will the problems associated with disarmament under conditions of asymmetry. The article will then use a critique of Croft's *Strategies of Arms Control* as a vehicle for highlighting the problems inherent in even the best examples of mainstream arms control thinking. Following on from this, it will be suggested that a more useful distinction than that between arms control and disarmament is one between strategies of forcible disarmament, traditional arms limitation and new limitation. The article will then delineate the various asymmetries in the current architecture of arms limitation before concluding with some brief comments outlining how and why a more emancipatory system of disarmament from below might be both necessary and achievable.

Capture and dismissal: arms control theory and the marginalisation of disarmament

Arms control, if not quite dead, is widely reported to be in crisis.[2] Instead, the arms control scepticism of offensive realists is deemed to hold sway amongst the

[2] Deborah A. Ozga, 'The Reluctant Giant of Arms Control', *Security Dialogue*, 34:1 (2003), pp. 87–102; See also: Avis Bohlem, 'The Rise and Fall of Arms Control', *Survival*, 45:3 (2003), pp. 7–34; Sean Howard, 'A Receding Disarmament Horizon? Lessons from an Era of Retreat and

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neo-conservatives who influence policy in the US. For such sceptics, both arms control and disarmament are deemed to be profoundly problematic given the condition of anarchy that states exist in, and the difficulties inherent in forging effective agreements with rogue or revisionist states when neither their motives nor their word can be trusted (or indeed verified with any reasonable degree of assurance).[3]

Traditional arms control thus appears to have been rejected both in rhetoric and policy – at least by the Bush White House. Despite this, I want to suggest that the persistence of arms control theory in academic and policymaking circles continues to perform important functions – not least in the way it serves to delegitimise more radical proposals for disarmament. Moreover, current concerns over the death of arms control also mask the strong elements of continuity between past approaches to arms limitation and those of the present Bush White House – both of which have been profoundly unequal in their impact on actors and have thus fostered contemporary insecurities rather than resolved them. What is the basis for such assertions?

There is an established body of arms control theory that forms the basis of most textbooks on arms control and security or strategic studies. This is despite the fact that much of the subsequent discussion of contemporary arms control practice in the very same books often demonstrates the essential inadequacy of these principles. There are a number of key points that are normally recited. In particular, the development of arms control theory is presented as a reaction to the perceived failure of successive initiatives on general and complete disarmament (GCD).[4] Indeed, this scepticism about the real world relevance of disarmament has been a recurring theme in the traditional literature on arms control that students of IR and security studies are still weaned on.[5] Typical of such scepticism is Buzan's conclusion that:

> within anarchy, the logic of disarmament is so obviously flawed that except for propaganda purposes, and for limited reductions in the context of arms control the idea is, as the historical record indicates, a non-starter.[6]

Thus, the claim to superiority made by arms control theory has consistently rested on its real-world relevance and practicability compared to the failed utopianism of

Defeat', *Disarmament Diplomacy*, 73 (October/November 2003), pp. 3–14; Mark Bromley, David Grahame and Christina Kucia, *Bunker Busters: Washington's Drive for New Nuclear Weapons*, BASIC Research Report, 2002.2 (Washington and London: BASIC, July 2002), p. 10.

[3] Colin S. Gray, *House of Cards: Why Arms Control Must Fail (*Ithaca, NY and London, Cornell University Press, 1992); Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); David Frum and Richard Perle, *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror* (New York: Random House, 2003), esp. pp. 201–3.

[4] Barry Buzan, *Introduction to Strategic Studies*: *Military Technology and International Relations* (London: Macmillan with the ISS, 1987), p. 237; Trevor Taylor, 'The Arms Control Process: The International Context', in Jeffrey A Larsen and Gregory J. Rattray (eds.), *Arms Control Toward the 21st Century* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), p. 35; Barry Buzan and Eric Herring, *The Arms Dynamic in World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), p. 213; Emanuel Adler, 'Arms Control, Disarmament and National Security: A Thirty Year Retrospective and a New Set of Anticipations', in Emanuel Adler (ed.), *The International Practice of Arms Control* (Baltimore, MD and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 1–2.

[5] For instance, see Hedley Bull, *The Control of the Arms Race: Disarmament and Arms Control in the Missile Age* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson for the IISS, 1961), pp. 135 and 155; Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (London: Cassel, 1974), p. 324; Laurence Martin, *Arms and Strategy: An International Survey of Modern Defence* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1973), p. 242; Ken Booth, 'Disarmament and Arms Control', in John Baylis, Ken Booth, John Garnett and Phil Williams, *Contemporary Strategy: Theories and Policies* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), p. 91.

[6] Buzan, *Introduction to Strategic Studies*, p. 250.

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disarmament. Moreover, arms control is understood to be philosophically distinct from disarmament.[7] In particular, it is based on different assumptions about the relationship between arms and the inception of war. For disarmers, all arms are destabilising and thus likely to increase the risk of war, while for arms controllers certain arms and arms relationships can be stabilising and can thus serve to mitigate the insecurity inherent in an anarchic international system. Consequently, as in the case of SALT 1 and II, arms control may even permit an increase in certain categories of arms. This difference is often characterised by reference to Bull's distinction between disarmament, understood as the reduction or abolition of arms, and arms control understood as restraint internationally exercised upon armaments policy – not only in terms of the number of arms but also their character, deployment or use.[8]

Thus, arms control and disarmament are deemed to be philosophically distinct. At the same time though, there is a blurring that occurs in the discourse – between arms control expressed as an alternative to disarmament understood solely as GCD (which has been a failure and thus discredited) and arms control as a practice, of which disarmament initiatives such as the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) or the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) are represented as a subset. Indeed, there is often a double blurring at work, because disarmament's link with GCD is often used to damn disarmament as utopian in principle and unachievable in practice, whilst arms control's association with really existing disarmament treaties is used to demonstrate its greater realism and (potential) relevance. We can see these processes at work in the quote from Buzan above, but a more recent example is from Larsen who notes that:

> . . . arms control should be distinguished from general and complete disarmament. Proponents of disarmament [note the move from GCD to disarmament] see the goal as simply [so naive, so crude] reducing the size of military forces, budgets, explosives power and other aggregate measures. . . . Disarmament has a longer legacy than arms control..[but] 1960s international security specialists believed [disarmament] lacked precision and smacked of utopianism.[9]

Despite the above conclusion from Larsen, just a few lines later on, the second kind of blurring occurs: 'advocacy of disarmament [can also be] part of a state's arms control policy'. As evidence of this, Larsen cites US negotiation of conventions on biological and chemical weapons, noting (not incorrectly) that 'The US decided in both cases that maintaining such weapons would not enhance its security'.[10]

Thus, for mainstream strategic and security studies, disarmament is simultaneously distinct from arms control and a utopian project characterised by failure whilst also a subset of arms control that has produced concrete results. The effect is

[7] Joseph Kruzel, 'Arms Control, Disarmament and the Stability of the Postwar Era', in Charles W. Kegley, *The Long Postwar Peace: Contending Explanation and Projection* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), p. 249.

[8] Bull, *Control of the Arms Race*, p. vii; John Baylis, 'Arms Control and Disarmament', in John Balylis, James Wirtz, Eliot Cohen, and Colin S. Gray, *Strategy in the Contemporary World: An Introduction to Strategic Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 184.; Jeffrey A. Larsen, 'Introduction', in Jeffrey A. Larsen (ed.), *Arms Control: Cooperative Security in a Changing Environment* (Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner, 2002), p. 4; Buzan, *Introduction to Strategic Studies*, p. 253.

[9] Larsen, 'Introduction', p. 3.

[10] Ibid., p. 3–4.

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to neatly condemn 'disarmament' as both an activity with a long record of failure and as a project suitable only for naive idealists.

However, as I intend to demonstrate below, if GCD is understood as merely one kind of disarmament activity (some of which has a decidedly non-utopian flavour to it) then it becomes clear that, at least when judged against the kind of criteria set by the disarmament negotiators of the 1950s and 60s, a great deal of disarmament can be said to have occurred – much of it quite successful. What are the different kinds of disarmament activity that can be identified?

Towards a typology of disarmament activity

Pure disarmament

This is the proposal that all arms everywhere should be abolished. It is this idea that has gained little ground but it is also the case that the majority of disarmament proposals do not envisage such scenarios.

General and complete disarmament

This is often associated with pure disarmament in the popular imagination, and even dismissed as such in some of the academic literature on the topic. For instance, Laurence Martin simultaneously critiques GCD proposals for failing to envisage complete disarmament because of their provision for internal security forces and also to depict GCD proposals as 'defining an equitable level of armaments as zero'.[11] However, whilst the negotiations on GCD centred around the abolition of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and substantial cuts in conventional forces – the proposals put forward generally envisaged the retention of significant conventional forces (see below). This was also the position in the disarmament negotiations of the interwar years. For instance, Article VIII of The Covenant of the League of Nations – the basis on which interwar disarmament negotiations took place – advocated 'the reduction of armaments *to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations*' (my italics).[12] Similarly, the world disarmament conference of 1932 was labelled a conference for the reduction and limitation of armaments' not the total elimination. Indeed, this view of disarmament was even accepted by prominent advocates of GCD such as Philip Noel Baker.[13]

Structural disarmament[14]

This occurs where autonomous factors – for example, a change in the political logic of the Cold War or the impact of inflation in defence costs – brings about unilateral

[11] Martin, *Arms and Strategy*, p. 241.
[12] Jozef Goldblatt, *Arms Control: A Guide to Negotiations and Agreements* (London: Sage, 1996), p. 269.
[13] Philip Noel-Baker, *The Arms Race: A Programme for World Disarmament* (London: Atlantic Books, 1958).
[14] This is a different use of the term 'structural' than is the case in arms control theory when the term 'structural arms control' is often used in contrast to 'operational arms control'. The former being

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Table 1. *Comparison of armed forces with disarmament proposals of 1952*.

Country	Disarmament proposals 1952	Actual armed forces 1954	Armed forces 2002
USA	1–1.5 m	2.9 m	1.4 m
Russia	1–1.5 m	4.5 m	988,000
China	1–1.5 m	—	2.3 m
France	7–800,000	803,000	260,000
UK	7–800,000	950,000	210,000
Total	4.4–6.1 m		5. 16 m

Source: Philip Noel-Baker, *The Arms Race: A Programme for World Disarmament* (London: Atlantic Books, 1958), pp. 14 and 48; International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2003–2004* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the IISS, 2004), Table 33, pp. 335–40.

arms reductions. In other words this is disarmament by default, as opposed to disarmament by diplomacy. Perhaps the best example is the reduction in manpower and equipment numbers brought about by rising unit defence costs, the concentration on technology as a force multiplier and the end of the Cold War. For instance, with the exception of China, the manpower numbers of the major military powers are either at, or below, the force levels proposed to the UN Disarmament Commission in 1952 by the US, Britain and France (see table above). Nor were the numbers proposed in 1952 unusually high in the context of the disarmament negotiations of the period.[15]

Even in the rest of the world the majority of states possess force numbers that lie within the disarmament proposals of the 1950s and 60s. For instance, in 1957 Russia proposed manpower limits of 200,000 for all states other than the major powers, whilst a year earlier the US had proposed a limit of 500,000.[16] As of 2002 just 20 states (excluding China, Russia, the US, France and the UK) had forces numbering more than 200,000 and just six (India, Iran, North Korea, Turkey, South Korea, and Pakistan) exceeded the 500,000 limit proposed by the US in 1956.[17]

A similar picture is evident when we examine the massive *quantitative* reductions that have occurred in the armaments held by national defence forces, a process that has been spurred by the quite substantial rise in unit defence equipment costs from one generation of weapon to the next. Indeed, since 1950, the unit cost of arms has risen at an annual average rate of 9–11 per cent, such that weapons costs double every 7–8 years.[18] This has led Thomas Scheetz to coin the phrase 'military Malthusianism' to describe the gap between the exponential growth in the unit costs of major weapons systems and the (at best) linear growth in fiscal income. As he notes, faced with this contradiction militaries have either had to purchase obsolescent weapons systems, emphasise manpower in their defence plans and/or reduce equipment

agreements concerned with the quantity and quality of armaments and the latter with the behaviour of armed forces (for example, crisis management or confidence building measures).

[15] Bull, *Control of the Arms Race*, p. 117.

[16] Ibid., p. 120.

[17] International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2003–2004* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the IISS, 2004), Table 33, p. 335–40.

[18] D Kirkpatrick, 'The Rising Costs of Defence Equipment – The Reasons and the Results', *Defence and Peace Economics*, 6:4 (1995), pp. 263–88; P. G. Pugh. 'The Procurement Nexus', *Defence Economics*, 4:2 (1993), pp. 50–61.

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numbers.[19] In consequence, the fall in equipment numbers has been quite startling. For instance, in 1950 the UK had 276 frigates and destroyers and 62 submarines,[20] today it has just 32 frigates and destroyers and 16 submarines[21] with further cuts scheduled.[22]

This is not to suggest the world is free from violence and arms. After a post-Cold War fall, global military expenditure, mainly driven by rises in US defence spending, has increased by an average of 6 per cent in real terms over the period 2002–04. Global military expenditure was over $1 trillion in 2004 accounting for 2.6 per cent of world GDP and amounting to $162 per capita.[23] Nor is it to dismiss the fact that changes in force numbers are, in part, a function of conscious decisions to invest in technology as a force multiplier. Quantitative disarmament has occurred side-by-side with very significant qualitative improvements in military technology. Nevertheless, the fact is that, partly by design and partly by default, certain forms of quite radical conventional disarmament have occurred.

Limited negotiated disarmament

There have been a whole variety of multilateral and bilateral initiatives that have produced limited or partial disarmament[24] either in the form of agreements that ban whole categories of weapons – the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), the Ottawa Convention banning landmines – or agreements that ban particular weapons from specific regions. These include the Antarctic Treaty, the Outer Space Treaty, the Seabed Treaty and a number of regional nuclear-weapons-free zones (NWFZ) that together have now made most of the Southern hemisphere a nuclear-free zone.[25] As already mentioned, however, what is notable about such agreements is the way in which they are generally coopted in the literature as an example of realistic arms control.

There have even been cuts in nuclear weaponry, although the scale of global nuclear arsenals still remains vast. Global nuclear arsenals reached their peak in 1986 when there were some 70,000 nuclear warheads in the armouries of the five states defined by the NPT as nuclear weapons states (China, France, Russia, the UK and the USA).[26] Today, SIPRI estimates the total number of nuclear warheads held by

[19] Thomas Scheetz, 'The Argentine Defense Industry: An Evaluation', in Jurgen Brauer and J. Paul Dunne, *Arms Trade and Economic Development: Theory, Policy and Cases in Arms Trade Offsets* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 205–16.

[20] Speech by Secretary of State for Defence, John Nott at the IISS (excerpts), *Survival*, 24:2 (1982), pp. 89–90.

[21] Gavin Berman, *Defence Statistics: July 2002*, House of Commons Library Research Paper 02/48, 19 July 2002, p. 20, Table 11.

[22] BBC News, 'Forces Chief Backs Defence Cuts', 22 July 2004; see: ⟨http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3915747.stm⟩.

[23] Elisabeth Sköns, Wuyu Omitoogun, Catalina Perdomo and Petter Stålenheim, 'Military Expenditure', in SIPRI, *SIPRI Yearbook 2005: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 307.

[24] Buzan and Herring, *The Arms Dynamic in World Politics*, p. 246.

[25] Joanna Spear, 'Arms and Arms Control', in *Issues in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, forthcoming).

[26] Paul Rogers, *Losing Control: Global Security in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p. 15.

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these countries at 32,300.[27] Partly in response to the non-proliferation norm established by the NPT, states such as Argentina, Brazil, Taiwan, South Korea, Sweden, Australia, Switzerland and now Libya have all abandoned nuclear weapons programmes. A number of states (South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Belarus) have even acquired nuclear weapons only to subsequently renounce them. Consequently, by 2004, ten countries were believed to have nuclear weapons or well-advanced programmes compared with 21 in the 1960s.[28] Moreover, the SORT Treaty (Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty) whilst flawed in a number of respects, nevertheless envisages substantial cuts in deployed US/Soviet warheads, permitting each state to hold between 1,700–2,200.[29]

Of course, not all states in the international system have signed up to such partial disarmament agreements. For instance, as of December 2004, whilst 169 states had signed the BWC, 16 of these had not yet ratified it and a further 25 non-signatory states remained totally outside its purview.[30] Similarly, although 184 states have signed the CWC, 15 of these have yet to ratify and a further ten states are listed as non-signatories.[31] Moreover, even where states have made commitments to such agreements these have not always been implemented. Nevertheless, despite such problems, when considered together with the radical changes brought about by structural disarmament, these initiatives have established a form of global disarmament that is remarkably extensive – particularly given the pessimism about disarmament in the mainstream literature.

Post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR)

This has emerged as a key element of the international community's approach to ending civil wars. As a strategy, the internationally supervised disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants (DDR) has had mixed success in contributing to peace. In places like Angola for instance, flaws in the DDR processes have contributed to the resurrection of conflict. In other instances, Mozambique or El Salvador for example, the process, whilst not perfect, has been relatively more successful and has contributed to the establishment of viable peace.[32]

Forcible disarmament

The issue of forcible disarmament will be examined in detail below. At this juncture therefore, it is sufficient to note that forcible disarmament represents the use of

[27] *SIPRI Yearbook 2005*.
[28] George Perkovitch et al., *Universal Compliance: A Strategy for Nuclear Security* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2004), p. 11.
[29] Shannon N. Kile, 'Nuclear Arms Control, Non-Proliferation and Ballistic Missile Defence', in *SIPRI Yearbook 2003*, p. 600.
[30] See: ⟨http://www.opbw.org/⟩.
[31] See: ⟨http://www.opcw.org/index.html⟩.
[32] Joanna Spear, 'Disarmament and Demobilisation', in Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild and Elisabeth M. Cousens (eds.), *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 141–82; Mats R. Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation after Civil Wars: Arms Soldiers and the Termination of Armed Conflicts*, Adelphi Paper, no. 303 (Oxford: IISS and Oxford University Press, 1996); Stephen Hill, 'Creating an Analytical Framework for United Nations Disarmament in Civil Wars', *Civil Wars*, 2:4 (Winter 1999), pp. 57–82; Stephen Hill, *United Nations Disarmament in Intra-State Conflict* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003); UNIDIR, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: The Issues* (New York and Geneva, United Nations, 1996).

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military force or other forms of coercion to bring about disarmament or prevent arms build-ups, and that the most vivid example of its implementation in recent times has been the invasion of Iraq.

Rescuing disarmament from capture and dismissal

This categorisation of disarmament highlights part of the problem with the way in which arms control theory frames both arms control and disarmament. First, in framing disarmament as failed and utopian it downplays the progress made in realising the disarmament agenda of the 1950s and 60s that structural disarmament combined with a series of partial disarmament treaties has brought, and thus the extent to which even utopia might be realistic for future generations. Second, in enveloping a succession of really existing disarmament initiatives within the essentially realist/neorealist framework of the arms control perspective it undermines the claim of disarmament as a practice and set of goals with real-world relevance. In combination this amounts to a very powerful discursive strategy that works to maintain the intellectual hegemony of arms control theory in particular and realist academia and policymaking more generally. To invert Ken Booth, what is at work here is what might be termed realist utopianism[33] – the capture and suborning of utopian achievements in ways that work to shore up the realist view of a world long on dangers and short on peaceful strategies to confront them. In contrast, when the various types of disarmament (some of which have a decidedly non-utopian flavour to them) are reclaimed under the disarmament rubric, then it becomes clear that the world has, and is, experiencing a tremendous amount of disarmament – some of it relatively successful.

This also has profound implications for the supposed distinction between arms control and disarmament around which arms control theory is based. Once we move from framing (successful) partial disarmament as merely one variant of arms control, and instead frame both GCD and partial disarmament as variants of disarmament practice; once we understand disarmament as an activity that is advocated by both utopians and hyper-realists alike (albeit in different ways) then both the empirical and philosophical distinctions between arms control and disarmament fall away. As will be noted below, this implies that we need to develop an alternative way of conceptualising the different strategies of arms limitation and the structure of the contemporary arms limitation system.

However, whilst it is important (if only to counter the pessimistic discourse surrounding this issue) to recognise the various disarmament outcomes that have been generated under the current arms limitation system, it is also important to recognise the context in which these have occurred. In particular, both disarmament and broader arms limitation initiatives are now taking place as part of an *asymmetrical arms limitation system* that has replaced the emphasis on balance between the superpowers that dominated Cold War practice.[34]

[33] Ken Booth, 'Security in Anarchy: Utopian Realism in Theory and Practice', *International Affairs*, 63:3 (July 1991), pp. 527–45.

[34] Keith Krause and Andrew Latham, 'Constructing Non-Proliferation and Arms Control: The Norms of Western Practice', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 19:1 (1998), p. 24–5.

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It is sufficient at this juncture to note that what characterises this system of arms limitation is the way in which it is structured to consolidate and preserve the military superiority of the US in particular and the West in general. Moreover, rather than reinforcing security this profound military imbalance promotes insecurity – both by creating incentives for other actors to pursue asymmetric technologies (NBC) or strategies (terrorism) that offset the US's conventional superiority,[35] and by diverting resources that could be expended on human security to militarism. At best, the contemporary arms limitation system aims to keep the lid on such contradictions by setting in place a variety of disciplinary mechanisms that attempt to constrain asymmetric military responses whilst simultaneously preserving the asymmetrical advantages of the West. At worst, in attempting to contain pressures that may ultimately be uncontainable, the contemporary arms limitation system may promote an illusion of relative security whilst positively fostering a variety of insecurities. However, a few more comments are in order before we proceed to consider this system of asymmetrical arms limitation in more detail.

Stuart Croft and arms control as threat construction

The corollary of the preceding critique of arms control theory is of course a requirement to develop conceptual frameworks (and framings) that are capable of simultaneously challenging the hegemonic discourse within the discipline and of producing greater explanatory value. To date this attempt has been most convincingly pursued by critical theorists and postmodernists such as Mutimer,[36] and Krause and Latham.[37] Even within the mainstream literature on arms limitation however, there has been some attempt to reconceptualise arms limitation practice. Most notably, Stuart Croft in *Strategies of Arms Control* explicitly rejects the distinction between arms control and disarmament as a basis for framing discussions of arms limitation.[38] Instead he develops a typology based around five different strategies of arms control: arms control at the conclusion of major conflicts, arms control to strengthen strategic stability, arms control to create norms of behaviour, arms control to manage the proliferation of weapons and arms control by international organisation.

This certainly represents an improvement on more traditional discussions of arms limitation. However, there are also a number of problems with his analysis. First, Croft locates his typology in a broader analysis that emphasises the idea that arms control as an activity has been constantly widening (in the sense that there has been a gradual accretion of strategies deployed to achieve it) and that arms control agreements have become ever 'deeper' (in the sense that agreements have become

[35] Paul Dunne, Mariá del Carmen García-Alonso and Paul Levine, 'Managing Asymmetric Conflict'. See: ⟨http://carecon.org.uk/Armsproduction/Annex0204.htm⟩; Dan Plesch, *The Beauty Queen's Guide to World Peace: Money, Power and Mayhem in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Politicos, 2004), p. 292.

[36] David Mutimer, *The Weapons State: Proliferation and the Framing of Security* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner), 2000; David Mutimer, 'Reimagining Security: The Metaphors of Proliferation', in Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and* Cases (London: University College London Press, 1997), pp. 187–221.

[37] Krause and Latham, 'Constructing Non-Proliferation and Arms Control'.

[38] Stuart Croft, *Strategies of Arms Control: A History and Typology* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 11–12.

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more detailed, arrangements for verification have become both more common and more sophisticated, and the likelihood of agreements taking on the qualities of a regime have increased). Consequently, although Croft states that he is determined to avoid making judgements on the success or failure of arms control both as theory and practice, he nevertheless manages to produce a profoundly teleological (and indeed optimistic) account of the history of arms control/arms limitation.

However, there has not been a straightforward accretion of arms limitation activity. Partly this is because the relevance of many arms control agreements has simply declined with the advent of new military technology. But even where this has not been the case, politics and power have constantly intruded both to kill off arms limitation initiatives and to influence their depth. Examples include Japanese and German disarmament after the Second World War, and the US decision to renounce the ABM Treaty. Similarly, the two page SORT Treaty highlights how the inexorable increase in depth described by Croft in 1996 was, at best, a function of historically contingent Cold War practices rather than some evolutionary manifest destiny.[39]

Second, Croft states that investigation of the *motivation* for arms limitation is outside the remit of his book. Despite noting the influence of politics and power on arms limitation then, what Croft presents is a largely mechanistic and apolitical analysis of the subject. Indeed, the development of arms limitation practice is depicted as an essentially autonomous process – as if, to paraphrase Cox, arms limitation were not always for some purpose *and for someone*.[40] This is not untypical of the majority of the literature in this field which tends to focus on the technical minutiae of military strategy, diplomatic texts or policy battles. The problems that arms limitation deals with are generally taken as given and the purpose of such activity (just like arms control theory itself) is to engage in producing 'problem-solving' solutions to these issues. What Croft, and mainstream arms controllers in general ignore, is the role that arms limitation activity plays in both reflecting broader constructions of threat and in reinforcing them. Moreover, whilst the idea that arms limitation represents an arena where political power is exercised is taken as axiomatic, power is generally understood to be expressed in the relations between states (or internal bureaucracies) negotiating (or sometimes imposing) specific treaties, and measured in terms of who wins or loses in these negotiations. The myriad ways in which hegemonic power is expressed through developments in the dominant modes of arms limitation thinking and practice rarely intrude. For example, the power expressed as a result of the role played by discourse and action over arms limitation in affirming hegemonic projects of securitisation; the power manifested in the specific ways in which the system of arms limitation contributes to maintaining particular military and social hierarchies whether internally, within the state, or throughout the global system; and the relationship between the interests of power and the ways in which arms limitation reflects and reinforces powerful political, economic and cultural tools of legitimation/delegitimation surrounding military technology.

In other words (from a critical security studies perspective at least), the key questions surrounding arms limitation are not so much who wins or loses in

[39] 'Letter of Transmittal and Article-by-Article Analysis of the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions', *Arms Control Today*, 32:6 (July/August 2002), pp. 28–30.
[40] Croft, *Strategies of Arms Control.*

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negotiations over a specific treaty or how effective/ineffective that treaty turns out to be. Rather, the principal concern is with how the dominant discourse and practice of arms limitation (not always the same thing) contributes to processes of securitisation and othering as well as military and broader hegemonic practices.

Good examples of these processes at work are in fact cited by Croft himself, but their implications are not followed through in his overall analysis. For instance, the prohibition imposed by the Second Lateran Council in 1139 on using crossbows against Christians and Catholics reflected powerful processes of othering against non-christians who remained exempt from a ban against what was otherwise depicted as 'that deadly and God-detested art of slingers and archers'.[41] At the same time, the ban itself not only reflected the political power of the church at the time, but its main purpose was actually to protect the nobility, whose armour could be pierced by the crossbows wielded by the lower class soldiery.[42]

The discourse on arms as objects of control is also intrinsically linked to the shifting and symbiotic relationship between threat construction and the legitimation of military technology and strategy. This does not simply occur at the macro level – for example, in the ways that the discourses surrounding the birth and then death of the ABM Treaty have reflected and reinforced alternative constructions of threat (or indeed, of the utility of nuclear deterrence when faced with thousands of Soviet nuclear weapons compared with its utility when faced with nascent nuclear programmes in North Korea and Iran).[43] Even apparently minor disputes over language reflect shifting areas of contention between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses. Thus, the use of the appellation 'WMD' as a catch-all term to describe nuclear, biological and chemical weapons (NBC) is often contested. In particular, commentators have noted how this entails a particular categorisation (and representation) of NBC weapons as equally (and uniquely) horrifying, a categorisation that is either deemed too broad or too restrictive depending on the observer. What is interesting about this debate is not so much who is right and who is wrong but the way in which the parties in this debate have changed over time and what this signifies about the link between representations of military technology, the framing of the arms limitation agenda, and the interests of power. Thus, in the 1950s and early 1960s a number of mainstream institutions and academics were concerned to challenge the veracity of the term WMD, whereas peace academics/activists were concerned to preserve it. Consequently, the academic and peace activist Philip Noel-Baker could bemoan US and NATO attempts to erode the link between nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and to portray the latter two as 'normal and legitimate means of war'.[44] In contrast, Hedley Bull could note the attempts of the US Chemical Corps to make chemical biological and radiological (CBR) warfare respectable and could argue that when it came to such weapons: 'it is misleading to regard them as forming, along with nuclear weapons, a category of ''weapons of

[41] Canon 29 of the Second Lateran Council of 1139, reproduced in Richard D. Burns (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Arms Control and Disarmament* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1992), p. 1409, cited in Croft, *Strategies of Arms Control*, p. 24.

[42] Ibid., p. 24.

[43] On the link between changing US conceptions of deterrence and the ABM issue, see Tom Sauer, 'Back to Arms Control: Limiting US National Missile Defence', in *Contemporary Security Policy*, 24:3 (2003), pp. 91–128.

[44] Noel-Baker, *The Arms Race: A Programme for World Disarmament*, pp. 315–19.

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mass destruction'' . . . the depiction of them as all alike peculiarly evil and terrifying is not unquestionable'.[45]

Thus, in a period when the major powers retained an interest in chemical and biological weapons their framing as 'WMD', as opposed to weapons with military utility, was under interrogation from establishment outlets. Similar attempts were also made to distinguish more usable tactical nuclear weapons from strategic ones.[46] In contrast, in a context where CB weapons have now been formally renounced by these same powers – in part, at least because of their role as force equalisers[47] or 'the poor man's atom bomb', there has been a reorientation of positions in this debate. The 'WMD' label now lies at the very heart of the dominant discourse on proliferation to others (horizontal proliferation). Indeed, as early as 1992 Krauthammer could characterise the post-Cold War period as 'the era of weapons of mass destruction'.[48] In contrast, the discourse on domestic nuclear armouries is less likely to be burdened with this kind of sobriquet. Indeed, current arguments for a new generation of mini-nukes directly echo Cold War attempts to distinguish between different kinds of 'WMD', whether it be those between nuclear and CB weapons or more particularly in this case, between tactical and strategic nuclear weapons.

In many respects, this does not make for a particularly consistent and coherent contemporary discourse on 'WMD'/NBC. Nevertheless, the combined effect of such linguistic devices is to ensure that 'our' WMDs are framed as nuclear whilst 'their' nuclear technologies are framed as 'WMDs', thus de-linking discussion of 'our' technology from the acute moral opprobrium and heightened images of threat and danger that are currently constructed around the term 'WMD' in popular culture and the mainstream of academia.

In contrast, those concerned to challenge the dominant discourse now highlight the way in which the depiction of NBC as 'all alike' in discussions of horizontal proliferation is not only questionable but now functions to legitimise the exclusive possession of nuclear weapons by the NWS states, to obfuscate the inequality in the NPT and to legitimise other 'conventional' technologies (such as fuel-air bombs) or political strategies (such as sanctions against Iraq) that produce 'mass destruction'.[49]

What these examples illustrate is the way in which discourse and action surrounding military technology and arms limitation has precisely not proceeded in an autonomous and evolutionary straight line as suggested by Croft. Rather, it shifts

[45] Bull, *Control of the Arms Race*, p. 123.

[46] A. J. Bacevich, *The Pentomic Era: The US Army between Korea and Vietnam* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1986).

[47] Daniel Feakes, 'Global Civil Society and Biological and Chemical Weapons', in Mary Kaldor, Helmut Anheier and Marlies Glasius (eds.), *Global Civil Society 2003* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 90 and 96.

[48] Charles Krauthammer, 'The Unipolar Moment', *Foreign Affairs*, 70:1 (1991), pp. 32–3. Also see: Wolfgang K. H. Panofsky, 'Dismantling the Concept of Weapons of Mass Destruction', *Arms Control Today*, 28:3 (April 1988), available at: ⟨http://www.armscontrol.org/⟩; *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Assessment of the British Government* (London: HMSO, 2002); Robert Hutchinson, *Weapons of Mass Destruction: The No-Nonsense Guide to Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Weapons Today* (London: Cassell, 2004); *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, December 2002. See: ⟨http://www.state.gov/t/np/wmd/⟩.

[49] Mutimer, *The Weapons State*; Eric Herring, 'Rogue Rage: Can We Prevent Mass Destruction?', in Eric Herring (ed.), *Preventing the Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 189–212; Daniel Feakes, 'Global Civil Society and Biological and Chemical Weapons', pp. 87–117; Geoffrey Wheatcroft, 'Weapons of Mass Distortion', *The Guardian*, May 2003.

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to reflect the competing discourses and interests of hegemonic power and its challengers.

This brings me neatly to the final problem with Croft's analysis. Croft's solution to the problematic nature of the distinction between arms control and disarmament is to label all arms limitation as arms control. Whilst Croft's text is rich and informative – a contemporary classic indeed – in terms of the dominance of the disciplinary discourse surrounding arms control and disarmament it is still problematic. In setting out to defend 'arms control' from arms control sceptics such as Colin Gray,[50] Croft becomes a participant in the various projects by which the asymmetric post-Cold War system of arms limitation has been legitimised. Indeed, he manages to simultaneously dismiss disarmament and reinvent arms control under a new guise, whilst adopting a historical determinism that effectively obscures the mechanisms of power and interest at work in contemporary arms limitation.

The question remains then – if the distinction between 'arms control' and disarmament is problematic and if Croft's typology of 'arms control' is equally flawed, how might the contemporary (albeit historically contingent) system of arms limitation best be conceptualised? I would like to suggest that a particularly useful way to conceptualise contemporary arms limitation practice is to characterise it as a spectrum along which three different approaches can be discerned: forcible disarmament, traditional arms limitation and the new arms limitation agenda and practice. These are not hard and fast categories. In particular, some arms limitation agreements share elements of both traditional and new arms limitation. Nevertheless, this represents a useful analytical device that helps us conceptualise the features and variety of contemporary arms limitation practice. It also permits analysis of the asymmetric control agenda that lies at heart of the contemporary discourse and action on arms limitation. Indeed, the following analysis will not only attempt to outline the three kinds of arms limitation but will then go on to map the key asymmetries embodied in each approach.

Forcible disarmament

Forcible disarmament represents the use of military force or other forms of coercion (sanctions, physical interdiction) either to bring about significant reductions in military forces or to prevent military build-ups and/or the acquisition of military technology perceived as particularly threatening. Forcible disarmament is by no means a new phenomenon – an early example being the Treaty of Zama imposed on Carthage by the Romans in 202 BC.[51]

More relevant to the discussion here, however, is the Bush administration's adoption of pre-emptive attack as a strategy of forcible disarmament.[52] The emphasis on forcible disarmament is also reflected in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), a loose multilateral initiative which aims to prevent trafficking in 'WMD' and related

[50] Gray, *House of Cards*.
[51] Croft, *Strategies of Arms Control*, p. 42.
[52] The National Security Strategy of the United States (Washington DC, September 2002), p. 15.

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technology through improved intelligence sharing and enhanced efforts at interdiction.[53]

This adoption of pre-emption does not represent quite the radical break with past practice that is sometimes suggested. Charles Kegley has cited the Third Punic War between Rome and Carthage as an early example of pre-emption (or what he more accurately terms prevention).[54] Other examples include the Israeli raid on Iraq's Osiraq reactor nuclear reactor in June 1981, the bombing of the Iranian Bushir reactor by Iraq in the mid-1980s,[55] and the Clinton Administration's use of cruise missiles in 1998 to destroy a Sudanese pharmaceutical plant claimed to be producing a precursor chemical for VX nerve gas. Furthermore, the first moves towards articulation of a formal US policy on pre-emption came not with the Bush Administration but with the enunciation of the Clinton Administration's 1993 Defence Counterproliferation Initiative, generally understood to incorporate what Virginia Foran has described as 'active pre-emption or interdiction of proliferation activities'.[56]

This emerged at the same time as a growing discourse on the threats from so-called rogue states and the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention. These various factors combined together, constantly reflecting and reaffirming each other, producing a representation of threat and action that provided a powerful rationale both for the maintenance of US defence expenditure in the midst of a dissipating Soviet menace[57] and the legitimation of military action.[58] Moreover, it is also the case that the EU has given serious consideration to such an approach. For instance, although ultimately dropped from the final version, a draft EU security strategy envisaged the use of force (albeit with UN authority) for non-proliferation purposes.[59]

Thus, the adoption of strategies of forcible disarmament by the Bush administration does not so much represent a sudden break with past practice but rather the crystallisation of emerging trends in US (and wider) discourse and policy that have become particularly powerful since the end of the Cold War. Indeed, such strategies are a corollary of the ensemble of threat discourses and practices that serve to legitimise relatively high levels of US defence expenditure and the expeditionary interventions they permit. The US has ineluctably become what Jonathan Schell has

[53] Jofi Joseph, 'The Proliferation Security Initiative: Can Interdiction Stop Proliferation', *Arms Control Today*, 34:5, June 2004. See: ⟨http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2004_06/Joseph.asp⟩; Wade Boese, 'The Proliferation Security Initiative: An Interview with John Bolton', *Arms Control Today*, 33:10 (December 2003). See: ⟨http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2003_12/PSI.asp⟩.

[54] Charles Kegley, 'Preventive War and Permissive Normative Order', *International Studies Perspectives*, 4 (2003), p. 388; Robert S. Littwak, 'Nonproliferation and the Use of Force', in Janne E. Nolan, Bernard I. Finel and Brian D. Finlay (eds.), *Ultimate Security: Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction* (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2003), p. 78.

[55] Tom Sauer, 'The ''Americanization'' of EU Nuclear Non-Proliferation Policy', *Defense and Security Analysis*, 20:2, p. 120.

[56] Virgina I. Foran, 'Preventing the Spread of Arms: Nuclear Weapons', in Larsen and Rattray (eds), *Arms Control Toward the 21st Century*, p. 191; Robert S. Littwak, 'Nonproliferation and the Use of Force', in Nolan et al. (eds.), *Ultimate Security*, p. 82; Joanna Spear, 'Organizing for International Counterproliferation: NATO and US Nonproliferation Policy', in Nolan et al. (eds.), *Ultimate Security*, pp. 216–17.

[57] Michael Klare, *Rogue States and Nuclear Outlaws: America's Search for A New Foreign Policy* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); Mutimer, *The Weapons State*, pp. 92–5 and 135; Krause and Latham, 'Constructing Non-Proliferation and Arms Control', pp. 34–9.

[58] Naom Chomsky, *The New Military Humanism: Lessons From Kosovo* (London: Pluto, 1999).

[59] Sauer, 'The ''Americanization'' of EU Nuclear Non-Proliferation Policy', p. 127.

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described as a 'disarmament empire',[60] but this did not simply occur with the election of Bush and the neo-conservatives (or in the bloody aftermath of 9/11) – and there are strong (if not insurmountable) pressures for it to remain that way after they are gone.

Traditional arms limitation and new arms limitation

Traditional arms limitation refers primarily to the arms limitation agreements that typified Cold War arms limitation practice. This is not to suggest however, that such agreements and practices have completely disappeared with the end of the Cold War – they have not. It is however, a useful term with which to distinguish these kinds of arms limitation practices from the new arms limitation agenda that has emerged primarily in the post-Cold War era. The two approaches can be distinguished in the following ways:

1. In traditional arms limitation the agenda, and actual negotiation, is primarily driven by states and/or the bureaucracies of multilateral institutions. Discussion and policy is dominated by diplomats, the military and narrow groups of academic experts all holding a monopoly on both technical knowledge and the details of negotiations. For example, Feakes could note in 2003 that 'the most recent CWC and BWC meetings were attended by, respectively, only six and 16 civil society organisations'.[61] In comparison, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) involved a coalition of more than a thousand nongovernmental organisations.[62] Although civil society groups are not without influence in traditional arms limitation,[63] this influence is constrained by their role as outsider groups. At worst, such groups may even be viewed as an enemy within which has to be monitored and discredited (CND in the 1980s) or even attacked (the sinking of the Greenpeace boat, *Rainbow Warrior*, by French intelligence). In contrast, new arms limitation practices are marked by the key role played by NGOs in setting the agenda, most notably in the case of the Ottawa Convention banning landmines. Indeed, they may even become party to negotiations, as was the case in the negotiations over the Kimberley certification scheme for conflict diamonds or incorporated in official state delegations as occurred in the case of some states involved in the Ottawa process.[64]
2. In traditional arms limitation, the problem of arms restraint is framed in terms of addressing the threats to states and to state security. Moreover, the focus is on military security, the agenda is primarily set by the developed world and largely reflects its security concerns. In new arms limitation the problem of military

[60] Jonathan Schell, *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence and the Will of the People* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), p. 341.
[61] Daniel Feakes, 'Global Civil Society and Biological and Chemical Weapons', in Mary Kaldor et al., *Global Civil Society 2003* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003), pp. 99–100.
[62] Richard A. Mathew and Kenneth R. Rutherford, 'The Evolutionary Dynamics of the Movement to Ban Landmines', *Alternatives*, 28 (2003), p. 30.
[63] Jeffrey W. Knopf, *Domestic Society and International Cooperation: the Impact of Protest on US Arms Control Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
[64] Richard Price, 'Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines', *International Organization*, 52:3 (Summer 1998), pp. 613–44.

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technology is framed in terms of human rather than state security and/or in terms of economic rather than military security – the issue of small arms proliferation being a case in point. Moreover, the core of the new arms limitation agenda has been directed towards addressing the problem of arms and civil conflict in the poorest parts of the developing world – new arms limitation for the new wars if you like. Consequently, although not arms control in the traditional sense of the term, indirect initiatives such as commodity sanctions that target the financial resources of insurgents in order to limit their ability to purchase arms have become a more central element in contemporary arms limitation practice.[65]

3. In traditional arms limitation the negotiation of agreements is often a highly bureaucratic and cumbersome process. For instance, the negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction in Europe during the Cold War era dragged on for over fifteen years with no agreement.[66] In contrast, new arms limitation is characterised by speed and adaptive flexibility. For instance, the successful conclusion of the landmines treaty represented a speedy and adaptive reaction to the failure to adequately revise the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) to ban landmines and the concern that proposals for a ban would be mired in endless wrangling in the Conference on Disarmament.[67] The issue of conflict diamonds provides an even more dramatic example. The role of conflict diamonds in fuelling civil conflicts first came to prominence in 1998 with the publication of a *Global Witness* report on the role played by the illicit diamond trade in sustaining the conflict in Angola.[68] Just four years later agreement was reached on a global scheme aimed at preventing the trade in conflict diamonds.
4. Traditional arms limitation agreements are more likely to give rise to substantial verification commitments and/or institutions and bureaucracies designed to implement them, although this is not always the case. For example, START 1 and its various protocols ran to 250 pages and stipulated details such as the number of times a year each party could request the other to display the weapons covered in the agreement.[69] Similarly, the NPT and the CWC are underpinned by the work of the IAEA and the OPCW respectively. The latter, for example, had a budget of $92 m in 2004 and has conducted 1,800 inspections of military and industrial sites of the states parties.[70] In contrast, no comparable organisation was established under the Ottawa treaty, a gap that has been filled by *Landmines Monitor*, a civil society network that scrutinizes implementation of the Treaty.

Classic examples of traditional arms limitation practice includes treaties such as START I and the NPT. It also covers the sclerotic, bureaucratic and mostly tokenistic activities of the Conference on Disarmament. Archetypal examples of new arms limitation include the Ottawa Treaty on landmines, the Kimberley certification regime for conflict diamonds and, to a significant extent, the ongoing campaign on

[65] Michael A. Levi and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *The Future of Arms Control* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), pp. 115–17.
[66] Renée de Nevers, *Regimes and Mechanisms for Global Governance*. Project on World Security (New York: Rockefellers Brothers Fund, 1999), note 20, p. 7.
[67] Price, 'Reversing the Gun Sights'.
[68] Global Witness, *A Rough Trade: The Role of Companies and Governments in the Angolan Conflict* (1998). See: ⟨http://www.globalwitness.org/⟩.
[69] Croft, *Strategies of Arms Control*, pp. 73–5.
[70] See *SIPRI Yearbook 2004*, p. 670. Also see: ⟨http://www.opcw.org/⟩.

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small arms. Other agreements contain elements of both traditional and new arms limitation. For example, the CWC emerged after a long process of negotiation and was framed in terms of preserving state security. However, whilst civil society influence on WMD issues is certainly constrained, the development of the CWC did at least feature notable input from industry.[71] Similarly, the SORT agreement was an archetypal bilateral Cold War style agreement between states. However, it was also negotiated quite speedily, has not resulted in additional verification commitments and has most definitely avoided creating a large bureaucracy to implement it. It thus encompasses some of the speed and adaptivity characteristic of new arms limitation.

As already noted, this mix of traditional and new arms limitation has produced some quite significant developments that should not be ignored. However, it is also the case that the three approaches to arms limitation outlined above make up a contemporary arms limitation system that is characterised by a number of asymmetries that ultimately *create insecurity* rather than reduce it. It is not my intention to provide a detailed review of them all here but some brief comments on the key aspects of asymmetries, and why they create insecurity, are necessary.

Asymmetric arms limitation

The first asymmetry

The Bush Administration has fused forcible disarmament with the rogue state doctrine to produce not a generic policy of pre-emption but one selectively applied. The purported NBC programmes of 'rogues' such as Libya, Iraq, Iran and North Korea have become the targets of rhetoric, invasion and PSI initiatives. In contrast, the NBC activities of states such as Pakistan or Israel, states that could equally be tagged with the rogue label, are essentially treated as legitimate.[72] Although there are problems with the use of the term, one might say that two classes of 'rogues' have been created – the 'illegitimate rogues' and the 'legitimate rogues'.[73]

As with the move to forcible disarmament, this is not a particularly new development, but the advent of the Bush administration, and particularly the policies pursued after 9/11, have made the asymmetry in approach between the 'legitimate rogues' and the 'illegitimate rogues' even starker. Moreover, membership of these two camps is not fixed and permanent. Pakistan, for instance, has managed to move from illegitimate to 'legitimate rogue' as the politics of post 9/11 created new imperatives in US policy – a process that demonstrates the extent to which the rogue label has less to do with the particular characteristics of individual states and their NBC programmes, and more to do with the way in which these are framed. Indeed, despite emerging as the centre of a clandestine global proliferation network the country has, in the wake of 9/11, been the recipient of military aid, IFI funds and political legitimacy.

[71] de Nevers, *Regimes and Mechanisms for Global Governance*, p. 8.
[72] See for instance, David Frum and Richard Perle, *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror* (New York: Random House, 2003), pp. 257–63.
[73] For an example of the distinctions made by the Bush administration, see Wade Boese, 'The Proliferation Security Initiative: An Interview with John Bolton'.

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Of course, whilst such discrimination between the legitimate and illegitimate 'rogues' may undermine the goals of arms limitation this is arguably not the point. The discourse around 'illegitimate rogues' is, ultimately, not one that can simply be understood in terms of any existential threats posed by North Korean, Iranian or Pakistani 'WMD' programmes. Rather, it can be understood as the product of the interrelationship between the process of identity construction within the US and other states, the construction of external interests and the legitimation of overwhelming military superiority.

The second asymmetry

The second asymmetry is that established in traditional arms limitation agreements on NBC technology – the asymmetry between the 'WMD' haves (those states whose nuclear weapons are deemed legitimate under the terms of the NPT) and the 'WMD' have-nots. This enshrines a profoundly discriminatory system of 'WMD' apartheid, under which a small category of states are permitted to possess a class of 'WMD' denied to all others.[74] Indeed, even in the case of the CWC which is supposedly universal, the US Senate made its ratification conditional on a set of provisions that contravene the letter and spirit of the CWC. For example, inspection of US facilities may be refused and, if allowed, collected laboratory samples may not be transferred for analysis to a lab outside the US.[75]

When combined with the first asymmetry, this essentially creates three classes of 'WMD' states – those formally permitted to hold WMD, those informally permitted to hold 'WMD' (the 'legitimate rogues') and those demonised for holding or attempting to develop 'WMD'. In addition, there is also an asymmetry of approach towards failure to abide by the commitments implied by the various NBC treaties. The 'illegitimate rogues' face sanctions of various kinds, the 'legitimate rogues' experience a discourse of criticism but little concrete action, and the failure of the formal 'WMD' states to abide by their commitment to nuclear disarmament under the terms of the NPT is merely met with a faint descant from critics off-stage.

The third asymmetry

The third asymmetry is that between the disciplinary mechanisms deployed to enforce restrictions on NBC technologies and the disciplinary mechanisms surrounding conventional military expenditure, arms transfers and the conflict goods covered by the new arms limitation agenda. In the case of NBC technologies the mechanisms deployed are severe, ranging through pre-emptive attack, sanctions, loss of trade and diplomatic isolation.[76] At the level of conventional arms exports and expenditure the

[74] Jaswat Singh, 'Against Nuclear Apartheid', *Foreign Affairs*, 77:5 (1998), pp. 41–52.
[75] Goldblatt, *Arms Control: A Guide to Negotiations*, p. 152.
[76] Joshua Lederberg (ed.), *Biological Weapons: Limiting the Threat* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1999); Malcolm R. Dando, *Preventing Biological Warfare: The Failure of American Leadership* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); Richard M. Price, *The Chemical Weapons Taboo* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Hans Blix, *Disarming Iraq: The Search for Weapons of Mass Destruction* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004).

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disciplinary mechanisms deployed are either non-existent or are weak and tokenistic. Thus, the notable successes of civil society in successfully pushing for the creation of novel arms limitation regimes in this arena has been mitigated by the reality of the limits to either their effectiveness or their scope. For instance, with the notable exception of IFI/donor initiatives aimed at restricting the military expenditures of supplicant states,[77] direct initiatives to restrict defence spending are notable by their absence. Similarly, initiatives to curb arms exports are either voluntary and/or focus on transparency (the UN arms register), weak regulatory mechanisms that have marginal impact on the volume of arms sales (the UK and EU arms export codes, current initiatives on small arms)[78] or symbolic acts of tokenism that have little impact on the overall direction of the arms dynamic. Examples of the latter include the landmines treaty and UN arms embargoes. For example, UN embargoes usefully express diplomatic disapproval and may also raise the cost of arms acquisition by forcing states to source from the global networks of the black market. However, the record of such embargoes in actually preventing arms reaching targeted states is abysmal and the sanction for states that breach such embargoes rarely amounts to little more than an exercise in diplomatic finger-wagging.[79]

The fourth asymmetry

The combined effect of the preceding asymmetries has been to produce a contemporary system of arms limitation that acts to preserve the profound military supremacy of the US in particular and the West in general. Thus, the NBC disarmament system now in place legitimises and – through the deployment of a range of disciplinary mechanisms – imposes both a 'WMD' supremacy for the US and its allies and the 'WMD' disarmament of other states. This is especially the case, of course, with respect to that imagined and shifting category of states constructed as 'rogue'. In contrast, the mechanisms of control developed to cover military expenditure, conventional arms exports or conflict trade are weak or non-existent. It is, of course, precisely in these areas of conventional military expenditure and trade that the US and the developed world has a profound advantage. For instance:

- The US now accounts for virtually half (47 per cent) of global military expenditure, NATO countries for 70 per cent and OECD states 78 per cent.[80]

[77] Nicole Ball, Jordanna D, Friedman and Caleb S. Rossiter, 'The Role of International Financial Institutions in Preventing and Resolving Conflict', in David Cortright (ed.), *The Price of Peace: Incentives and International Cooperation* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), pp. 243–64; *Security Sector Reform and the Management of Military Expenditure: High Risk for Donors, High Returns for Development*. Report on an International Symposium Sponsored by the UK Department for International Development (London: DFID, 2000).

[78] Various European Union Non-Governmental Organisations, *Taking Control: the Case for a more Effective European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports* (London: Saferworld, 2004); Jane Chanaa, Debbie Hillier, Kiristiana Powell and Ken Epps, *Guns or Growth: Assessing the Impact of Arms Sales on Sustainable Development* (June 2004). See ⟨www.controlarms.org⟩. Neil Cooper, 'Arms Exports, New Labour and the Pariah Agenda', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 21:3 (December 2000), pp. 54–77.

[79] *SIPRI Yearbook 2003*, pp. 448–51; David Cortright and George A. Lopez, *Sanctions and the Search for Security: Challenges to UN Action* (Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 153–79.

[80] *SIPRI Yearbook 2005*, Table 8A.1, pp. 346–71.

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- Eighty of the top 100 defence companies reside in North America or Europe.[81]
- The US accounts for 35 per cent of all small arms companies in the world, with authorised exports of $741.4 million in 2001.[82] Europe/CIS and North America/Central America accounts for 79 per cent of all small arms companies in the world.
- In the period 2000–04 the US accounted for 31 per cent of global supplies of major conventional weapons and NATO countries for 57 per cent.[83]

In other words, the current disarmament and broader arms limitation system is structured to preserve and reinforce both the 'WMD' and conventional military hegemony of the US and its allies. To be sure, this same system also creates a permissive environment for other actors who may actively support specific aspects. Russia and China for instance, clearly benefit from the legitimisation of their nuclear weapons status enshrined in the NPT, although their conventional forces remain dwarfed by those of NATO. Similarly, rogues, guerrillas and warlords are all beneficiaries of the far more permissive regulatory frameworks that are applied to conventional weapons. This means that even the current asymmetric arms limitation system is not without its contradictions. For example, whilst the US has consistently opposed any substantive action on the problem of small arms and light weapons (SALW), its forces in Iraq and Afghanistan are facing insurgents mostly armed with these same weapons.[84] However, for such actors, these kinds of tension in policy represent the collateral benefit from a legal and normative order that nevertheless broadly works to sustain and legitimise the kind of overwhelming military-technological superiority of the US and its allies that was demonstrated in the recent invasion of Iraq.

The fifth asymmetry

The final asymmetry is that which exists between the level of resources expended on the military sector, compared with those devoted to development and human security. The contrast is startling. For instance, in 2001 the 32 richest countries (those classified as high income countries by the World Bank) allocated ten times more resources to the military ($555 bn) than to official development assistance. Indeed, in 2001 the combined annual military expenditure of the 32 richest states was roughly equal to the aggregate debt of all low income countries and US defence expenditure alone amounted to 60 per cent of the total.[85] In a world of postmodern irony this is perhaps the biggest irony of all – we have, to a large degree, achieved the general and complete disarmament agenda of the 1950s and 60s, we are living in the disarmament system of a disarmament empire, but the funds expended on defence remain gross in absolute terms and both immoral and abhorrent relative to the funds spent on human security.

[81] *SIPRI Yearbook 2004*, Table 11.1, p. 390.
[82] *Small Arms Survey 2004* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Table 4.1, pp. 103–6.
[83] *SIPRI Yearbook 2005*, Table 10A2, pp. 453–4.
[84] Spear, 'Arms and Arms Control'.
[85] *SIPRI Yearbook*, 2004, p. 308–9.

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Conclusion: towards disarmament from below

The preceding analysis has attempted to demonstrate how, contrary to the impression given in the mainstream literature on arms limitation, there has in fact been a great deal of disarmament – at least in the terms understood in the disarmament negotiations of the 1950s and 60s. Yet these very successes have been coopted by arms controllers in ways that function to delegitimise disarmament as utopian and appear to confirm realist representations of a world system with limited potential for transformation. This article has also demonstrated the way in which global civil society has been able to set an apparently more radical, new arms limitation agenda for the new wars – one in particular which has emphasised human and economic security rather than state and military security. These factors then, represent a basis for optimism about the future prospects for further disarmament.

However, it is also the case that the contemporary disarmament and broader arms limitation system is a highly asymmetric one geared to preserving the military hegemony of the US and its allies. Moreover, even the new arms limitation agenda is characterised by its own asymmetries. In particular, civil society has manifestly failed to gain the same level of influence over core military security issues – for example, NBC or the trade in major conventional weapons that keeps Western defence industries viable. In some respects then, this analysis shares certain commonalities with offensive realist critiques that emphasise the problematic nature of arms control theory (albeit from a different standpoint) and the supremacy of politics and power in determining the possibilities for the control of arms.[86] One response, therefore, might be to adopt a similar attitude of resigned cynicism in the face of the overwhelming influence of power and interest in shaping discourse and practice – and to conclude that a truly emancipatory, as opposed to asymmetric, disarmament agenda is unrealisable.

However, there are both material and ideational factors immanent in the contemporary international system that suggest a politics of radical emancipatory disarmament can be constituted. First, the success of existing disarmament initiatives – albeit under asymmetry – highlights the real-world relevance of disarmament proposals still dismissed as failed and utopian. This illustrates the potential for a more radical disarmament agenda to be realised by simultaneously deconstructing hegemonic framings of the arms limitation problem and developing alternative narratives that contain inherently transformatory meanings – a powerful political act in itself. Second, the influential role of global civil society in new arms limitation suggests the possibility of a truly progressive practice of arms limitation – a kind of disarmament from below.[87] In particular, campaigns such as those on landmines or conflict diamonds demonstrate the (as yet unfulfilled) potential for networked and adaptive rhizomatic movements to envision and realise radical alternative security futures. This is not to deny the significant power differentials that exist between states and civil society movements that may themselves have different goals. However, the flexibility of such movements contrasts sharply with the rigid and sclerotic statist institutions most immediately geared to dealing with the diplomacy of arms limitation. Moreover, at their optimal, such swarming resistances to hegemony have

[86] Gray, *House of Cards;* Gray, *Modern Strategy*, pp. 193–7.
[87] Mary Kaldor (ed.), *Europe From Below: An East-West Dialogue* (London: Verso, 1991).

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the potential to exploit the uncontrollable spaces and flows of a networked information age[88] to generate focused policy goals and shared understandings; to generate political and cultural power by exploiting global media tropes (Princess Diana as beatified saint opposed to landmines) or creating their own (diamonds as blood diamonds);[89] to challenge both the threat discourses that underpin the arms dynamic and the counsels of despair in the face of anarchy and a supposed military technological imperative that lie at the heart of arms control theory; and to thus effect change by eroding the legitimacy of institutions and actors upholding militarism.[90]

Moreover, such movements have the potential to resolve the perennial debate over what has to come first before disarmament is realised – radical reduction of armaments or radical political change. The inevitable corollary of the emergence of such rhizomatic social movements is that the very act of campaigning for a radical disarmament agenda presages radical change in the nature of local-global politics – the one brings the other into being, and *vice versa*.

Third, it might also be argued that this is precisely the wrong time to articulate a new disarmament agenda, particularly given the imperatives of the 'war on terror'. However, to the extent that the threat of 'WMD' terrorism is rooted in material conditions, the safest response is to eliminate the very weaponry that might be utilised – to move, if you like, from a policy that aims to prevent loose nukes to a policy that aims simply to lose nukes. Furthermore, rather than being an inopportune moment to pursue a radical disarmament agenda, it is clear that we are now facing a range of new and old arms limitation challenges that will require a radically different kind of arms regulation. These include challenges such as the growing pressure to weaponise space, the military potential of the new biology, the weaponisation of nanotechnology and the challenge of controlling the military uses of cyberspace. A further challenge is that presented by the growing importance of dual-use technology for the military. This has been compounded by the simultaneous concentration and globalised integration of the defence industry in a largely Western-dominated hub and spoke model characterised by the erosion of defence industrial national identities and increased intra-firm movement of technology and knowledge.[91] Finally, there is the problem presented by the extension and intensification of illicit global arms networks that exploit porous borders, corrupt officials, lax regulation and the mechanisms of globalisation to move arms to conflict zones.[92]

The corollary of all this is that traditional, supply-side non-proliferation initiatives based around the ability of hermetic nation-states to supervise the physical movement of military technology will inevitably be subject to declining utility. Such developments then, are likely to require a qualitative step-shift in the application of end-use monitoring and the kind of intrusive verification of civil industries dealing

[88] Athina Karatzogianni and Andrew Robinson, 'With or Without You: US Foreign Policy, Domination, Hegemony and Rhizomes of Resistance' (Draft), 2004; Price, 'Reversing the Gun Sights'.

[89] Mathew and Rutherford, 'The Evolutionary Dynamics of the Movement to Ban Landmines', pp. 29–30.

[90] David Cortright, 'Civil Society: The 'Other Superpower', *Disarmament Diplomacy*, 76 (March/April 2004), pp. 40–42.

[91] Richard A. Bitzinger, *Towards a Brave New Arms Industry*, Adelphi Paper no. 356 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies and Oxford University Press, 2003).

[92] Michael Pugh and Neil Cooper with Jonathan Goodhand, *War Economies in a Regional Context: Challenges of Transformation* (Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner, 2004).

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with dual-use technologies presaged in the CWC; the innovative adaptation of existing arms limitation methodologies adopted by recipients and the peripheries – such as the extension of nuclear weapons-free zones to incorporate bans on other military technologies, or the greater use of moratoria/bans on arms imports; and an enhanced role for local-global civil society as presaged by the role of NGOs in monitoring implementation of the landmines treaty.

In sum, if the challenge of controlling contemporary military technology is to be addressed effectively (and it may not be, of course), then the new arms limitation agenda of the current era is likely to represent merely a half-way house towards a radically novel practice of arms limitation. This will entail a move away from control primarily based on physical management of objects (finished weapons, national militaries) and their accumulation and movement within or across borders. Instead, current trends will require a shift to a form of oversight and limitation characterised by swarming.[93] Such an approach will focus far more on dual-use technologies and thus intrude into the very warp and weft of socioeconomic life. It will be marked by a move from the asymmetry of hegemon/supplier-dominated control and non-proliferation instruments and imply a far greater role for recipients and the peripheries. It will require such a qualitative intensification and expansion of the network of arms limitation practices that this in itself will constitute a radically novel approach to arms limitation. And it will require the interactive, interpenetrated agency of multiple institutions and actors from states, multilateral institutions, NGOs, industry, media, epistemic communities and society generally.

[93] Michael Dillon and Julian Reid, 'Global Liberal Governance: Biopolitics, Security and War', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 30:1, p. 63.

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