DISARMAMENT DIPLOMACY: YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW

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Abstract

The article addresses the problems of disarmament and their interplay with the global security environment. Disarmament has a long history and remains a crucial tool for maintaining international stability. The article discusses the achievements and lessons of disarmament diplomacy, including the experience of the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations. These lessons remain relevant in the current geopolitical context. The United Nations strives to maintain international peace and security. However, its disarmament efforts have been declining due to geopolitical circumstances. The collective security system, based on the United Nations Charter, was founded on the moral and ideological interpretations of the Second World War. Still, the eroding shared historical memory about the danger of Nazism is weakening the ideological consensus that underpins the UN system. Nuclear arms control forms an integral part of the multilateral disarmament efforts, and concerns about the erosion of nuclear arms control architecture remain acute. Achievements in multilateral disarmament should be appropriately recognised and should not be devalued. The Global Majority may contribute to preserving the fundamental norms and principles of multilateral disarmament.

Keywords: Arms Control, Disarmament, Global Strategic Stability, International Security.

Introduction

This article is inspired by what was discussed at the seminar “Urgent problems of international security in the context of the development and

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regulation of biological and space technologies" and expands on the ideas presented there.[1] The event was organised by the Cross-Disciplinary Centre for Global Biosecurity Studies at Saint Petersburg State University and the Department of Military and Economic Security Research at the Centre for International Security of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences.[2] Having built the seminar agenda around two of the most breakthrough technologies — space and biological — the organisers proposed a model of an expert discussion for reviewing such technical and economic shifts that are significant for global security.

The discussion allowed us to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the risks arising from the active exploration of outer space and the rapid introduction of biological and other technologies. The participants achieved a more comprehensive understanding of the necessity for regulating biological and space technologies. Additionally, they identified the reasons that complicate the regulation of scientific and technical activities at both national and intergovernmental levels. The article starts by reviewing the achievements of multilateral disarmament diplomacy and then proceeds to discuss critical lessons that remain relevant in the 21st century. It concludes with an analysis of the current state of affairs in disarmament and identifies some possible future directions.

The Achievements and Insights of Disarmament Diplomacy

The history of disarmament diplomacy has crossed a century-old milestone. A hundred years is a long time for one person, but for all humanity it is only a moment. The inception of disarmament diplomacy in its contemporary shape predates the UN collective security framework by approximately two decades. March 2025 marked the centennial anniversary of the Geneva Protocol, the eightieth anniversary of the United Nations organisation, and the half-century anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological and Toxin Weapons (BWC). The Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (the Outer Space Treaty) will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 2027. And the Chemical Weapons Convention will celebrate in 2027 its thirtieth anniversary of entering into force.

References to the experience of the Treaty of Versailles (1919)[3] can be found in the discussions surrounding the development of the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and in relation to the multilateral negotiations of the 1970s and 1990s, which led to the development of the BWC (1972), as well as the Chemical Weapons Convention (1993, CWC). The Versailles Treaty laid the foundation for the concept of universal disarmament. After the Second World War, this concept was further developed and integrated into international agreements on the restriction or prohibition of various types of armaments. During the development and implementation of the military provisions of the Versailles Treaty, valuable experience was gained in monitoring compliance with arms control agreements and enforcing obligations under disarmament or arms reduction treaties. The consideration of that experience was integral to the formulation of the United Nations Charter and the design of multilateral legal instruments aimed at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

The Versailles Treaty contained provisions that imposed significant restrictions on the German armed forces. Certain principles formulated during the drafting of the Treaty of Versailles were subsequently applied to disarm Germany's former allies in the context of peace negotiations with other states that had suffered defeat in World War I. The victors imposed severe restrictions on the offensive capabilities of the defeated, and four promising types of weapons — submarines, military aircraft, heavy artillery, and chemical weapons — were banned entirely. While developing the conditions for the disarmament of the defeated Germany, the winning countries, although they held different positions on how to achieve the desired result, were nevertheless united in understanding the common goals of the peace treaty with Germany. Firstly, the Entente allies wanted to deprive Germany of the means for a possible revenge and thereby eliminate the threat of a new war. Secondly, the victorious powers wanted to reduce their military spending and provide an opportunity for the demobilisation of their own armies and national industry. These ideas were implemented in the Treaty of Versailles: the preamble of the fifth part of the peace treaty with Germany stated that the disarmament of Germany was the starting point for the subsequent “general limitation of armaments of all nations”.

Germany was forbidden to have military aircraft, tanks, submarines and chemical weapons. The prohibition was not primarily grounded in lessons derived from the First World War experience, but rather on evaluations of the potential

capabilities of new types of military hardware. At the time of the Paris Peace Conference, there was no consensus among the victorious powers about the possible strategic importance of new types of weapons. The military articles of the Versailles Treaty were developed based on the perception of these types of weapons as quite promising in terms of their predicted importance as offensive weapons. The Treaty of Versailles obliged Germany to destroy technological facilities for the production of prohibited types of weapons. The import and export of weapons, military equipment and other military products was also banned for Germany. As a result, the German armed forces were not only reduced in size but also deprived of the opportunity to use and improve those types of weapons that were considered the most promising at the time of the end of the First World War. Disarmament diplomacy of the League of Nations has set up a political tradition of multilateral regulation of inhumane weapons (later defined as WMD), as well as conventional weapons of humanitarian concern,[4] which currently are addressed under the so-called humanitarian disarmament agenda.

Little attention has been paid in the historical literature to the fact that the Geneva Protocol of June 17, 1925, of which France was the depositary, was actually part of a broader agreement known as the Geneva Arms Trade Convention, developed by the League of Nations. Conferences on the Supervision of International Trade in Arms, Ammunition and Weapons of War. During this conference, the United States proposed banning the trade in chemical weapons. Still, other negotiators raised several objections because such a ban would discriminate against nations that do not have the capacity to produce chemical weapons. Poland has put forward a counterproposal that the ban should be set on bacteriological warfare, together with chemical warfare. The negotiations resulted in the Protocol on the Prohibition of the Use of Asphyxiating, Poisonous and Other Gases and Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, which entered into force in 1928. The Geneva Protocol prohibited the belligerent nations from using chemical and biological weapons against each other, but did not prohibit the production and storage of such means of warfare.

Forty-four States, including France (1926), the USSR (1928), Italy (1928), Japan (1929), Germany (1929), Great Britain (1930), signed the Geneva Protocol during the interwar period. The United States, which in 1926 signed but did not ratify the Geneva Protocol, did so due to a strong domestic political lobby which strongly opposed limiting chemical weapons. During the interwar period, some states, including France, Great Britain and the USSR, as well as several states after

the end of World War II, including China, India and Israel, have ratified the Geneva Protocol with reservations. As a rule, the essence of reservations to the Geneva Protocol is that the State undertakes not to use toxic substances on the battlefield against those powers that comply with the Geneva Protocol. In other words, the reservations were a declaration on the non-use of chemical weapons first and thus turned chemical warfare agents into means of retaliation. Obviously, states that have not yet ratified the BWC or the CWC will need to formally withdraw any reservations they may have to the Geneva Protocol to become fully-fledged parties to those conventions.

In 1969, American President Richard Nixon initiated a review of the US policy on chemical and biological weapons. President Nixon's request raised the issue of ratification of the Geneva Protocol of 1925, which the United States signed in 1926 but did not ratify until 1975. The ratification of the Geneva Protocol could have serious political consequences, which experts warned about. Washington was under severe pressure both from its own civil society and in the international arena — mainly from Eastern European countries and the countries of the Non—Aligned Movement — in connection with the Vietnam War, where, among other things, the US military used pesticides, defoliants and tear gas. Since Washington planned to join the Geneva Protocol almost half a century after its creation, the United States should have adopted the established interpretation of the term "poisonous gases".

By 1970, this term was mentioned not only in the Treaty of Versailles and the Geneva Protocol, but also in the Washington Treaty (1922), and in a number of draft agreements and other working documents of the League of Nations. In other words, there was a particular tradition, and the international community has made significant progress in understanding the essence of such concepts as “chemical warfare”, “chemical weapons”, and “toxic substances”. Nevertheless, as the discussion in American academic circles has shown, the concept of chemical weapons in the form in which it was designed on the margins of the League of Nations had several gaps. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, these gaps were insignificant. Still, the rapid scientific and technological development of the second half of the twentieth century created conditions in which the United States could not afford to leave unanswered the questions that experts had about whether the term "toxic" should be interpreted in a restrictive or expansive sense.

As a result of a lengthy discussion based on an analysis of negotiation practice, historical precedents and the positions of other States parties to the Geneva Protocol, the American side developed the following interpretation of the provisions of the Geneva Protocol: toxic substances include only substances obtained as a result of chemical synthesis and having a lethal effect on humans. The exclusion of organic products from the interpretation of toxic substances, as well as riot control products and products harmful to plants or animals, was such a narrow interpretation of the concept of "poisonous gases" that best served short-term American interests. Washington wanted to protect itself from criticism for its methods of waging the Vietnam War. The discussion in connection with the preparation of the United States for the ratification of the Geneva Protocol contributed to the development of international law regarding the definition of what should be considered chemical weapons. Another critical stage, when the international expert community clarified its understanding of how the term "chemical weapons" should be interpreted, was the Soviet-American consultations that took place intermittently from 1974 to 1979. According to experts who participated in the negotiations, this was a helpful experience that greatly contributed to the definition of chemical weapons. Subsequently, it was included in the text of the CWC.

The result of these consultations was, among other things, that the American interpretation of the definition of chemical weapons was seriously adjusted. The text of the CWC, opened for signature in 1993 in Paris, reflected not the original American understanding of the term. Still, the interpretation developed as a result of lengthy bilateral Soviet-American consultations. The results of these consultations were recorded in the reports submitted by the USSR and the USA to the Conference on Disarmament for consideration in Geneva in 1979 and 1980. One of the main achievements of the bilateral Soviet-American consultations was that the following formula was developed: toxic chemicals, as well as ammunition and devices specifically designed to cause fatal injury or other harm due to the toxic properties of such chemicals released as a result of their use, should be considered chemical weapons.

Later, these considerations were taken into account in the preparation of the text of Article 2 of the CWC, which defines such concepts as chemical weapons, old chemical weapons, weapons and abandoned chemical weapons. Thus, the definition of chemical weapons in the CWC does not include riot control equipment, as well as toxic substances that may have harmful effects on

plants. In the 2000s, the interpretation of the concept of "chemical weapons" was clarified when ricin and saxitoxin, which are of organic origin, were included in the list of highly toxic substances of Category 1. In addition, according to the practice of the CWC, any substance can be recognised as a chemical weapon if it is used as a means of lethal destruction of people or as a means capable of causing irreparable harm to human or animal health. As the parties to the CWC continue developing riot control agents, including those that impact the human central nervous system, some experts within the CWC community are currently advocating for the expansion of the Category 1 list of chemicals to restrict related biochemical research and development.

The BWC was the first legally binding document that established a ban on an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. During the development of the BWC, the text of the agreement did not incorporate the definition of biological weapons. Additionally, the BWC does not explicitly prohibit the use of biological and toxin weapons. Given that such a prohibition is articulated in the Geneva Protocol, the preamble of the BWC refers to the text of the Geneva Protocol. The attainment of a truly universal prohibition on biological weapons requires the fulfilment of certain conditions. Firstly, all states worldwide must accede to and ratify the BWC. Secondly, all states should join and ratify the Geneva Protocol without reservations, and those states that are already parties to the Geneva Protocol should rescind any existing reservations they may have. At present, the issue of the universal application of the BWC in all its aspects remains a significant and pressing concern.

Strengthening the BWC remains a pressing issue. The rapid advancements in life sciences and the growing number of private players in the global biotechnology landscape pose numerous challenges in monitoring and preventing biological threats at both the national and global levels. In the half-century since the BWC was opened for signature, the nature of the biosecurity problem has become more intricate than what the architects of the Convention envisioned. The Working Group on the strengthening of the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (the BWC Working Group) was established by the decision of the BWC States Parties at the Ninth BWC Review Conference.[5] The agenda of the BWC Working Group meetings for the period between 2023 and 2026 includes seven items: (a) Measures on international cooperation and assistance under Article X; (b) Measures on scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention; (c) Measures on confidence-building

and transparency; (d) Measures on compliance and verification; (e) Measures on national implementation of the Convention; (f)Measures on assistance, response and preparedness under Article VII; (g) Measures on organizational, institutional and financial arrangements. In the current geopolitical climate, mistrust has escalated, leading to the politicisation of issues related to national implementation of the BWC. The issue of national compliance with the BWC has significantly complicated the intersessional program and the work of the Ninth BWC Review Conference. Against this backdrop, efforts by non-state actors to strengthen the BWC regime by developing mechanisms of so-called enhanced transparency alongside the Convention have intensified.

In international practice, there is a noticeable trend towards coalitions of like-minded countries forming informal structures supported by voluntary contributions of states and philanthropists. These formats are seen as an alternative to the slow-paced classical multilateral disarmament diplomacy, which innovators believe is unable to achieve consensus in times of acute geopolitical confrontation. These activities resulted in a conviction expressed by the Chair of the BWC Working Group in December 2024: "The BWC is at a crossroads. It can either solidify its role as the cornerstone of international biosecurity or risk being overshadowed by more agile actors".[6] Voicing a vision of such dynamics from Russia, the then Chief of the Radiation, chemical and biological protection Troops of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, Lieutenant General Kirillov, stated at one of the briefings that the United States was trying to replace the BWC and other international legal norms with "its own rules, which were developed in American interests, supported by the collective West and imposed on third countries".

As stated in statements and presentations by the Russian Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as in the final report of the Parliamentary Commission presented in April 2023, the US Department of Defense and related organizations, including private firms, carried out a military biological program in Ukraine up until February 2022, directed, among other things, against Russia. At the initiative of Moscow, a Consultative Meeting on Article V of the BTWC was held in early September 2022. In late October and early November 2022, Russia also initiated meetings of the UN Security Council to address concerns raised by Russia and submitted a proposal to conduct an international investigation under the auspices of the UN Security Council in accordance with Article VI of the BWC.

The Russian Federation has repeatedly expressed concern about the military biological activities of Western countries in the post-Soviet space. In a number of states in the Eurasian space, Russia's statements were and continue to be perceived sensitively. The pendulum of reactions swings between a categorical denial of any claims in the context of upholding the sovereign right of the country to carry out scientific and technical cooperation in the spirit of Article X of the BWC, and categorical statements by concerned civil activists in these states demanding that immediate measures should be taken against medical and biological work supervised and sponsored by the Americans. While the Russian side continued to present more and more new facts, US and Ukrainian officials rejected accusations of violating the Convention, insisting that the cooperation was aimed at strengthening the potential to combat epidemics.

What the BWC States Parties will choose: the search for consensus on all seven items on the agenda of the BWC Working Group, the dictate of the majority while ignoring the position of the minority and legitimizing this dictate through the decisions of a Special Conference, the building of regional biosafety and biosecurity systems[7] to compensate for the weakness of the BWC regime – will become clear in August 2025, when The BWC Working Group will meet for its Sixth session.

Scientific and technological progress has a significant and often drastic impact on global processes and on the entire range of international relations, including their economic, political, military, and ideological dimensions. The development of space technology and biological technology calls into question the effectiveness of traditional methods of strengthening international arms control and non-proliferation regimes, as they were formed in the last third of the 20th century. For example, there is a problem of the lack of adequate verification mechanisms in the BWC.

There are many reasons why the BWC States Parties have not yet been able to develop the verification component for the BWC regime. While some states are afraid of losing technological superiority by revealing the secrets of advanced developments, others are afraid that enhanced openness regarding national biosafety and biosecurity policies will damage them in the defensive field or create various reputational risks. Moreover, many security experts believe that terrorists can use the issues discussed in an enhanced transparency mode as a guide to action. Similarly, the problem of verifying the non-deployment of

weapons in outer space is one of the key obstacles in the context of preventing an arms race in outer space.

In addition, both the BWC regime and the Outer Space Treaty regime face severe challenges due to the ambiguous policies of the United States. Russia has repeatedly complained about military bio-medical activities carried out by the United States beyond its national borders. Washington's approach to global health governance, which has already resulted in two attempts to withdraw from the World Health Organisation, raises many questions. In the space sphere, the United States' desire to consolidate and maintain the superiority and dominance of its military space forces, as well as the formation of non-universal or selectively applied norms of space activities based on, for example, the so-called "Artemis Accords", may have a long-lasting negative impact.

As the leading Russian expert on nuclear arms control and strategic stability, Aleksey Arbatov convincingly proved that there are many cases in history where "attempts by a party to secure for itself loopholes" in arms control treaties so as to develop advanced military technologies later turned against its security interests. Even more often, whenever one power focused on shooting ahead in the development of specific weapons systems and refusing to limit them, such systems ultimately gave military advantages to another".

A Century-Long Journey towards General and Complete Disarmament

The League of Nations has become a platform for the development of a series of international agreements in the field of arms limitation and disarmament. An objective assessment of the legacy of the League of Nations is impossible without mentioning the work of the World Conference on Disarmament (1932-1934) and its preparatory commission (which began in 1925), which the Soviet delegation joined in the late 1920s. It was the only conference of the interwar period at which the delegations from more than 60 countries discussed universal reduction measures and restrictions on all types of armaments. The decision of all the States participating in the negotiations to suspend the buildup of their own weapons for a year was timed to coincide with the beginning of the conference.

After a year, this moratorium was extended for several more months in 1933. Special commissions and committees of the World Conference on

Disarmament considered the following issues: creation of a collective security system; limitation of the capacity of the armed forces; limitation of land, sea and air forces; limitation of national defense spending; prohibition of chemical, bacteriological and incendiary weapons; control over the production of weapons and the arms trade; supervision and guarantees of the fulfillment of obligations by the countries participating in the agreements; "moral disarmament" to create an atmosphere conducive to the peaceful resolution of international problems. The League of Nations pioneered the methodology and expertise of a collective search for security solutions through disarmament initiatives.

In the 1990s and 2000s, scholars specialising in policy studies in the English-speaking world adopted the concept of "moral disarmament" from the discourse of the Versailles Conference and the League of Nations. Eura-Atlantic intellectuals tended to draw an analogy between the military provisions of the Versailles Treaty and the conditions of disarmament of Iraq. Referring to the experience of the Paris Peace Treaty, the authors of such publications did not pay enough attention to the fact that the foundation of the Versailles Treaty was based on two aspects. Firstly, the disarmament of Germany was supposed to go hand in hand with disarmament measures aimed at limiting the military capabilities of the leading international players of that time. Secondly, the overall disarmament architecture was designed to ensure the stability of the entire structure of post-war international relations. And, as we know, the intentions to limit the military capabilities of the leading victorious powers have not been fully realised.

Measures to unilaterally limit Germany's military potential during the interwar period proved to be unviable, among other things, because essential elements included in the draft Paris Peace Treaty were not implemented: comprehensive arms limitation and the creation of conditions under which states in international relations refrain from using military force to solve foreign policy problems. As the events of the second decade of the 21st century show, the leading world powers, when building their policies towards States such as Libya, Iran, or North Korea, are not paying enough attention to the lessons of Versailles. At the same time, the fact that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (2017) has received overwhelming support from the Non-Aligned Movement and a number of major European nations indicates that the idea of “moral disarmament” remains popular.

The Versailles Peace Treaty was an important milestone in the development of the concept of general and complete disarmament. The military articles of the Versailles Treaty stopped working in 1936. Several international disarmament agreements drafted by the League of Nations proved short-lived, while others never entered into force. However, this does not detract from their importance in terms of the institutional experience that disarmament diplomacy accumulated in the 1920s and the 1930s, striving to realise the idea of universal disarmament, expressed in Article 8 of the first part and in the preamble of the fifth part of the Treaty of Versailles. In 1959. The UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 1378 on "general and complete disarmament", which, among other measures, mentioned chemical and biological disarmament. In the preamble to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT, 1968), the BWC and the CWC refer to the goal of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

The concept of universal disarmament, clarified in the late 1970s with the formulation "equal and indivisible security for all," has acquired particular relevance in the light of the crisis of the nuclear nonproliferation regime in the 21st century. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was opened for signature in 2017, entered into force in 2021. The TPNW has become a serious challenge for the nuclear-weapon States of the NPT.[8] Neither Russia nor the United States participated in the negotiations on the development of the TPNW. However, as depositaries of the NPT, Moscow and Washington were forced to identify their positions on the issue of nuclear weapons. Both Russian and American officials turned to the history of general disarmament. Suppose Russian diplomats continued to appeal to the concept of "strategic stability" in conjunction with the goals of general disarmament and the principle of equal and indivisible security. For everyone, American diplomacy preferred to talk about the viability of the agreements reached and that limiting or prohibiting specific types of weapons should not become an end in itself, but should be focused on a comprehensive solution to international security problems.

Is There a Spot for Disarmament in a Changing World?

Despite the United Nations' overarching objective of preserving international peace and security, the effectiveness of its disarmament efforts has repeatedly weakened under the influence of geopolitical realities. The organisation's efforts to mitigate the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and curtail arms races have been significantly undermined by complex

geopolitical dynamics, strategic rivalries, and the evolving nature of security threats.

The collective security system, based on the principles of the UN Charter, rested on a commonly shared moral and ideological interpretation of the Second World War. After its end, this war was universally understood as a struggle against the undeniably anti-human and criminal Nazi regime. This struggle required the unity of former geopolitical rivals. The threat posed by the aggressive and inhumane Hitler regime created circumstances against which deep, ideologically existential differences between the communist USSR and the capitalist United States and European countries became of secondary importance. That ideological and moral consensus was, according to prominent Russian intellectual Fyodor Lukyanov, the main result of the Second World War.[9] The erosion of shared historical memory about the unacceptable and inhumane nature of Nazism is fading, which leads to a fatal decline of the ideological and moral consensus which formed the core of the UN system. The memory of the essence of WWII and understanding of what was at stake provided a gravitational field around the UN. Currently, we are observing the weakening of that gravitational field.

The leading Russian international relations theorist, Andrey Tsygankov, notes that the emergence of the Global South (or the Global Majority, as many Russian intellectuals refer to them) presents opportunities for creating a new ideology for global development. He observes that, unlike the Cold War, such an ideology no longer spreads from a single centre of opposition to so-called Western imperialism.[10] Over the past two decades, the key ideas wrapped in the concept of global strategic stability, including the importance of multipolarity, inter-civilizational dialogue and resistance to Western "colonialism", have been heard in the political declarations of the BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and other interstate associations. At the same time, the development agenda quite closely intertwines with the disarmament agenda. The States Parties of the NPT among the Global Majority are interested in pushing forward more substantive discussions regarding the third pillar of the nuclear nonproliferation regime (peaceful uses of nuclear energy). Fair and equal access to technologies and materials is a topical issue at the meetings of States Parties to the BWC. Such discussions, no matter whether they occur at the NPT, the BWC or the CWC meetings, go beyond the problems of export control regulations and refer to the broader spectrum of issues.

The recognition of the relationship between disarmament and development is a fundamental element of the moral and ideological consensus on which the functioning of the UN system is based.[11] The disarmament-development relationship was articulated rather catchily but vaguely through the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted in 2015. The UN member states regularly confirm their intentions to keep the interplay between disarmament and development in sight.[12]

By 2025, centralised governance based on fixed rules in many areas of international affairs will have been replaced by ad-hoc self-organisation to survive. [13] Time will show whether this trend continues in the field of multilateral disarmament. Signs of the trend may include continued withdrawals from the Landmine Ban Convention, failure of the BWC Working Group to produce substantive results and establishment of extensive regional chemical and biological defence mechanisms without investing in further strengthening of the CWC and BWC regimes. The creeping erosion of the UN system may manifest itself in the further deformation of principles and institutions for multilateral cooperation. In a worst-case scenario, declarations about the relationship between disarmament and development would remain at the level of resolutions of the General Assembly, serving only a ceremonial function. However, in practice, states would prefer to find situational solutions and adopt a pragmatic, short-sighted approach to problem-solving without long-term strategies. At the same time, each state would seek to secure certain benefits for itself that would guarantee short-term gains.

Starting from 2002, the United States' withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty led to a gradual erosion of nuclear arms control. This erosion was a symptom of the deepening crisis between the US and Russia. Russia took a series of steps in response, including withdrawing from the INF Treaty in 2019. In February 2023, Russia suspended the New START. In October 2023, Russia called back its ratification of the CTBT to restore parity of obligations with respect to the treaty while maintaining the legal basis for practical international cooperation in the field of nuclear arms control. The Russian message to the West was that in order to discuss significant matters pertaining to global security and stability, a comprehensive approach is required, encompassing all factors that impact Russia's national interests and security. Nuclear arms control is an essential part of the disarmament ecosystem. Indeed, the corns of such conventional arms

control agreements as the Outer Space Treaty, the BWC, the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, the CWC, and the UN Register on Conventional Arms rest on the cob of nuclear arms control. But it is probably not accurate to assert that the entire modern machinery of disarmament grew out of nuclear arms control measures. It is imperative to acknowledge the current erosion of nuclear arms control. But to say that the entire multilateral disarmament system has finally collapsed due to the dramatic decline of nuclear arms control, in my opinion, is the kind of exaggeration that leaves no space for hope.

Developing countries among the Global Majority are seeking improvements to their national domestic mechanisms for implementing their obligations under WMD non-proliferation treaties, seeing long-term benefits from improving both national laws and developing appropriate oversight and control mechanisms. So, the process of national implementation of multilateral disarmament agreements has begun and is likely to continue, driven by inherent inertia. In this regard, since the entry into force of the NPT, BWC, CWC, Land Mine Ban Convention and Arms Trade Treaty, many results have been achieved which must be acknowledged, and in no case can they be devalued. To ensure that disarmament diplomacy retains its relevance and sufficiency in the context of an evolving global landscape, middle powers from the Global Majority will have to enhance their efforts to articulate transparent and independent sovereign positions on disarmament issues. Additionally, they will need to develop and cultivate robust and specialised expertise in pertinent areas to contribute effectively to international disarmament initiatives.

Currently, Russia talks a lot about a multipolar world order. In a multipolar world order, disarmament initiatives may not necessarily be initiated by the leading nuclear powers. So far, the prevailing trend in all spheres of international relations, including multilateral disarmament, is that Russia and the so-called collective West are competing for the support of their initiatives from the Global Majority. In the future, disarmament diplomacy will obviously continue its life. But it certainly won't resemble a one-way street. In a multipolar world, Russia will have to listen more attentively to initiatives put forward by regional groups or middle powers.

In the field of international security, more specifically international arms control and WMD non-proliferation regimes, the introduction of qualitatively new technologies in the space and biological fields has far-reaching consequences,

due to both the relative weakness of the respective regimes and the rapidly growing role of non-governmental commercial players. The growing number of non-governmental players in corresponding economic sectors presents new challenges that demand attention from national regulatory bodies and supervisory and control authorities. The use of artificial intelligence can significantly simplify and accelerate research and development activities for the purpose of creating new means of biological warfare. In this context, the task of developing an international convention aimed at combating acts of biological and chemical terrorism is more urgent than ever.

Accelerated development of additive technologies creates new risks related to both biological security and space security. With the help of additive technologies, objects originally intended for civilian purposes can be transformed into weapons or integrated into systems of armed confrontation in space, in the air and on the ground. It is not always feasible to directly apply the experience gained from Soviet and Russo-American nuclear arms control, the CWC regime, or the nuclear non-proliferation regime due to the unique characteristics of biological and space technologies, which necessitate distinct approaches. The expert community should seek non-trivial solutions that can effectively safeguard international security without impeding global technological advancement or compromising the technological sovereignty of individual nations. Creative problem-solving and innovative thinking are essential not only in addressing the inherent complexities of the issues but also in shaping negotiation processes.

Conclusion

After the First World War, disarmament diplomacy was driven by the will of the victorious nations. After the Second World War, the victorious powers began to build a system of collective security. During the Cold War, disarmament agreements were built around a package of bilateral and multilateral arms control agreements initiated by the USSR and the USA, which were the leaders of the two opposing military-political blocs. After the end of the Cold War, several agreements were developed, initiated by coalitions of states that included neither Russia nor the United States. However, until the early 2020s, the energy of disarmament in general was fueled by the enthusiasm and leadership of global powers. Since 2022, the disarmament ecosystem has been under stress test due to the fact that the great powers are focused on their rivals with each other.

For Russia, the fate of multilateral disarmament is linked to solving the entire complex of problems that have accumulated in relations between Russia and the United States and, more broadly, between Russia and NATO. Russia understands arms control as an integral part of a set of measures aimed at maintaining strategic stability. At the same time, Russia has not weakened its involvement in efforts to strengthen existing and develop new mechanisms in the field of multilateral disarmament.

Current disarmament mechanisms, being part of the UN system, have their own inertia. If the UN continues to exist, such elements as the First Committee, the Disarmament Committee, and the Conference on Disarmament will continue to operate. In future, international arms control and non-proliferation regimes established in the 20th century are likely to persist. Breaking up an international regime is more complex than building one. That is to say, it is unlikely anyone will dare announce the end of existing multilateral formats. As long as the BWC, CWC, Arms Trade Treaty, Land Mine Ban Convention, Cluster Munitions Convention, or the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons exist, participating states will meet regularly as provided for in relevant provisions of corresponding multilateral agreements. How effective, productive, and sufficient these processes will be remains an open question.

The relatively stable peace that followed the Second World War was based on the understanding that nothing similar must happen again. To achieve this goal, the great powers introduced a set of constraints ranging from international legal norms to nuclear deterrence. However, many of the instruments from the old toolkit are currently in crisis and demand an upgrade. So, the question is how to renovate the critical structural elements of global security architecture without ruining the whole building? The answer to this question hides among the basics of international theory. The rules, processes and decision-making procedures of international security regimes can and should be adapted, but the principles and norms need to remain unchanged. Without preserving the moral and ideological consensus that rests on the memory of the essence of the Second World War, no military-technical measures will ensure international stability.

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