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Mutually Assured Survival: A Constructivist Analysis of Transnational Cultural Interactions and Their Influence on Nuclear Disarmament Initiatives

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Mutually Assured Survival:

A Constructivist Analysis of Transnational Cultural Interactions and Their Influence on
Nuclear Disarmament Initiatives

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Abstract

Nuclear arms have revolutionized the ways by which human beings are able to harm one another. Omnipresent in the status quo is a nuclear tension, and whether subtly or more overtly, this tension underlies a great many international relationships. While Westphalian paranoia and neorealist power perceptions encourage populations to continue placing their faith in nuclear umbrellas and deterrence strategies, scholars and activists increasingly claim that without the realization of universal disarmament, humanity concedes to the inevitability of future nuclear detonation.

New disarmament initiatives concentrate heavily on the implications of nuclear weaponry in a sense that supersedes the security of only particular sovereign populations. Rooted in constructivist theory that stresses the importance of processes and relationships to the international system, these new initiatives seem to be gaining momentum. As the world continues to globalize, transnational cultural interactions may be stimulating the development of increasingly worldly identities more prone to support disarmament campaigns. Not only are we witnessing a pivot toward a more holistic devotion to the *global* good and *global* identities, but we are also seeing increasingly frequent normative attacks on nuclear legitimacy and a transition toward international collective security architecture, both of which seem to manifest as a result of the identity shifts themselves.

The following research utilizes a qualitative, interview-based model and will discuss the future feasibility of disarmament initiatives with a particular concentration on constructivist perceptions of the international system.

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I wish to express my sincerest thanks for the unwavering support of mentors, friends, and family throughout this undergraduate research undertaking. Whether they resided in Switzerland, the United States, or elsewhere during this international research process, they were close at hand in spirit!

The immense academic, moral, and financial support that culminated in the realization of this undergraduate honors thesis has not gone unappreciated.

Author's Note

This work is a continuation of a project that began in Geneva, Switzerland under the immediate guidance of the School for International Training. Since my return to the United States, my advisors and mentors at the University of Colorado at Boulder have guided me through a refinement and refocusing effort that lends more analysis to the theories that govern international interactions, as well as to the implications of transnational cultural interactions within these theoretical contexts.

Table of Contents

<u>Abstract</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Acknowledgments and Author's Note</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Table of Contents</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Introduction</u>	<u>5-9</u>
<u>Literature Review</u>	<u>9-12</u>
<u>Research Methodology</u>	<u>12-14</u>
<u>Definitions</u>	<u>14-15</u>
<u>Analysis</u>	
<u>Theoretical Foundation and Empirical Support</u>	<u>15-19</u>
<u>Identity</u>	<u>19-25</u>
<u>International Norm Development</u>	<u>25-28</u>
<u>Cooperative Security Architecture</u>	<u>28-31</u>
<u>Conclusion</u>	<u>31-32</u>
<u>Abbreviations List</u>	<u>33</u>
<u>Bibliography</u>	<u>34-37</u>

Introduction

“Safety will be the sturdy child of terror, and survival the twin brother of annihilation.” – Winston Churchill¹

We no longer live in the immediate wake of World War II, nor is the Red Scare any longer at the forefront of our minds. However, the implications of nuclear weapon technologies are just as vitally important today as they were in the world’s not-so-distant past. As nuclear weapon technologies have evolved over the past seventy or so years, so have the justifications for their continued possession. Little Boy and Fat Man laid the cornerstone on which perceptions of nuclear technologies would forever be built. They were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively, under very particular circumstances that American leadership at the time deemed necessitated such devastation. Likewise, the colossal arms race between the United States and U.S.S.R. was hinged on strategic circumstance. Threat perceptions born of the devastating nature of these weapons motivated decades of paranoia, subsequently resulting in massive armament campaigns. While these weapons have remained more or less dormant in their silos, submarines, and elsewhere for quite some time, the paradox of their continued existence is still at the heart of international security policy.

Deterrence theory, to which Winston Churchill referred in 1955, continues to dominate international security strategies. It is contingent on the comparability of nuclear strike capabilities between states. In other words, so long as any nuclear first strike would receive a response of equal or greater magnitude, there is no strategic

¹ Winston Churchill’s “*Never Despair*” speech to the House of Commons on March 1, 1955.

incentive for the initial strike to occur. Of course, this is a gross simplification of the theory itself, but it helps to illustrate the origin of the paradigm of “mutually assured destruction” (MAD) that deterrence theorists tout as being responsible for the lack of direct, major power conflict since World War II. Nuclear weapon proponents tool deterrence theory to “manipulate the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons for public diplomacy, while falling back on ‘realist sense’ that ‘we can’t put the genie back into the bottle’ to justify keeping and modernizing their arsenals from one generation to the next. By dint of constant repetition of ‘truisms’ like this, they foster the belief that nuclear disarmament is impossible”² and undesirable.

However, increasingly in the status quo is deterrence theory coming under fire. Scholars and activists are scrutinizing the theory, attempting to discern whether it has any scientific backing whatsoever. Of course, the answers to this question are mixed. The majority of neorealist advocates of nuclear weapon possession reference the empirics of recent history as proof enough that the technologies are stable and that deterrence theory is functioning properly. Those of the neorealist school also claim that, efficacy aside, the theory will continue to motivate perpetual armament and counterbalancing campaigns because of the anarchic, power-centric nature of the international system. Nuclear-armed states gravitate toward these claims, and continue to modernize and develop current technologies based on such warrants.³ However, as the world continues to civilize, anti-nuclear weapon activists claim that there are a multitude of alternative causalities to the lack of major power conflict that we have witnessed since World War II. They also posit that disarmament is not an impossibility in a world in which the nature of our

² Johnson, “*The NPT in 2010-2012: A Control Regime Trapped in Time.*”

³ Acheson, “*Modernization of Nuclear Weapons: Aspiring to ‘Indefinite Retention’?*”

international system is not perceived as locked in place. They proceed to argue that, in reference to Winston Churchill's 1955 remarks, it is the ultimate irresponsibility to remain hostages of terror and annihilation, and that "the threat posed by nuclear weapons today remains at least as great as it was before 1989."⁴

While disarmament advocates and civil societies are in tireless pursuit of a nuclear weapon-free world, progress is at a standstill. This standstill largely results from the very paradox of deterrence theory itself. Peace is only "guaranteed" by deterrence theory when all nuclear-armed sides possess comparable strike and defense capabilities. Thus, if one player's capabilities are ever disadvantaged, a first strike against said player would no longer be disincentivized. The security policies of nuclear weapon states still stubbornly adhere to this neorealist, relative-power calculus. Because these states are not willing to risk such a breach in relative security, they refuse to disarm. This barrier remains a "critical, underdeveloped issue."⁵

Simply put, neorealists and nuclear advocates would adamantly have us believe that the paradoxical nature of the technology, deterrence theory, and disarmament requirements ensure that disarmament itself is genuinely impossible. As explained by Dr. Vautravers of the Swiss Military Review, "A global zero initiative is a joke."⁶ They argue that the system under which we currently live is of a structural and inevitable nature.

Sure, gridlock and standstill remain dominant characteristics of the current nuclear disarmament debate, but is disarmament as an end state truly as impossible as naysayers would have the world believe? Opponents of disarmament root their arguments

⁴ Williams, "*Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament.*"

⁵ Koplw, "You're Gonna Need a Bigger Boat: Alternatives to the U.N. Security Council for Enforcing Nuclear Disarmament and Human Rights."

⁶ Interview with Dr. Alexandre Vautravers of the Swiss Military Review, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, and University of Geneva, *Thursday, November 5, 2015.*

exclusively in neorealist worldviews. However, alternative international theories and their perceptions of international relations are becoming more relevant as the actions of individuals and societies are diverging from neorealist assumptions with increasing frequency.

As the world continues to globalize, we may begin to witness an unprecedented shift away from traditional neorealist framing of international relations and social structures in an exclusively power-centric way. While neorealists explain that these systems are naturally and inevitably fixed in their current orientations, “social configurations are not 'objective' like mountains or forests, but neither are they 'subjective' like dreams or flights of speculative fancy. They are [...] at the theoretical level, intersubjective constructions”⁷ capable of being molded by those whom they govern. Rather, the nature of the international system is fluid, not fixed. The constructivist school explains that the international system that we perceive is ever-evolving based on the evolution of social relationships and processes.⁸

The analyses herein will adopt a constructivist lens of international relations to shed light on the ongoing process of transnational identity evolution that is beginning to subvert the perceived necessity of nuclear weapon technologies. In the recent past, we have witnessed this process result in tangible and substantive changes to armament policy; the Ottawa Treaty and Convention on Cluster Munitions being two prime examples. In other words, I argue that transnational cultural interactions and subsequent individual and societal identity transitions sidestep neorealist worldviews and depose the perceived necessity of nuclear weapon technologies. As commonalities between

⁷ Wendt, “Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics.”

⁸ Wendt, “Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics.”

individuals grow in number and depth, enemy rhetoric diminishes, new commonly held norms are established, and once-distinct societies converge, universal nuclear disarmament will assuredly occur. The relative power concerns and “self-help” analyses that have dominated disarmament debates in the past are losing relevance, and transnational cultural interactions will become the new, grassroots driving force behind future nuclear disarmament initiatives.

Literature Review

Relevant publications to the nuclear disarmament debate are innumerable. The topic itself is expansive, and often cannot be comprehensively understood without evaluating a whole slew of literature on intimately related and interconnected debates.

The neorealist school of thought from which contemporary power politics are generally borne saw its genesis in the writings of Kenneth Waltz, particularly “Theory of International Politics.” The fundamental characteristics of power-centric international political strategies outlined by the Kenneth Waltz are foundational to phenomena of arms races, and to explaining why disarmament is perceived as so strategically suicidal.

Deterrence theory has developed as complimentary to the neorealist framing of international relations. While not necessarily the first to discuss deterrence theory, Thomas Schelling’s works “The Strategy of Conflict” in 1960 and “Arms and Influence” in 1966 are foundational to North American deterrence strategy, and subsequently promote the continued possession of nuclear weapons out of strategic necessity.

In competition with these works (and others coming from predominantly North American security institutions like the RAND Institute) are works of the constructivist

school of international relations. Among others, Alexander Wendt's "Social Theory of International Politics" and Nicholas Onuf's "Constructivism: A User's Manual" do well to express the core tenants of constructivist theory.

John Gerard Ruggie's "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge" is complimentary to the writings of Alexander Wendt and others because it discusses side-by-side constructivism and other international theories so as to highlight many nuanced differences between them. In particular, Ruggie discusses how neorealists and neoliberals "treat the identity and interests of actors as exogenous and given" while constructivists maintain that these are products of social interaction and ever-changing perspectives.⁹

This clarification is particularly relevant to the nuclear disarmament debate because identity is so intrinsically tied to weaponization policy. In a world in which identity and interests are "exogenous" and hinged on the intrinsically "self-help" and anarchic international system, as argued by neorealists, transnational interactions would have no influence on identity, thus infinitely propping up paranoia of the "other." However, as Ruggie and his constructivist counterparts explain, identity is a product of "social interaction" and evolving worldviews. Thus, the fundamental difference between neorealism and constructivism in regard to nuclear weapon policy is this: The neorealist school argues that the international system is set and disarmament is impossible, while the constructivist school argues that the process is feasible because the system is fluid.

The work, "The International Politics of Nuclear Weapons: A Constructivist Analysis" published by the South African Journal of Military Studies also provides

⁹ Ruggie, J.G., "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge."

terrific insight in regard to the construction and history of the nuclear identities that exist today. This work explains that, even today, “nuclear weapons continue to evoke images of destruction, power and security (or the absence of these).”¹⁰ It analyzes the relationship between identity and nuclear armament, making it exceedingly relevant to the discussion of national versus transnational identities and how these, in particular, influence armament campaigns.

Numerous organizations around the world also contribute to the disarmament discussion; among them is the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. This organization helped to bring to fruition successes on the disarmament of both cluster munitions and landmines (with the aid of many other actors). The Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Acronym Institute, Foundation for Strategic Research, Center for Security Studies, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, and International Peace Bureau are but a few of many other international and nongovernmental organizations and think tanks that lend a voice to disarmament analysis, sometimes on both sides of the debate.

While globalization and identity, much like disarmament, are massively loaded terms, intricately related to other fields of discussion, John Tomlinson’s “Globalization and Culture,” and Cees J. Hamelink’s “The Elusive Concept of Globalisation” are important points of reference on questions of globalization holistically, as well as on more refined curiosities related to cultural homogenization and transnational cultural identity.

¹⁰ Wyk, J., Kinghorn, L., Hepburn, H., Payne, C., and Sham, C., “*The International Politics of Nuclear Weapons: A Constructivist Analysis.*”

The Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) are important points of reference regarding the efficacy of constructivist initiatives when vying to bring about change in policy areas dominated by the neorealist school. Additionally important to this discussion is a work by Adam Hochschild titled: “Bury the Chains.” This work draws parallels between the evolution of international slave trade legitimacy, and disarmament movements. Hochschild discusses the establishment of “logics of appropriateness” necessary to realizing social successes in up-hill political battles. Hochschild’s work and his discussion of the processual development of these “logics of appropriateness” are intimately rooted in constructivist ideology.

Finally, Dr. Marc Finaud’s work on cooperative security, “Cooperative Security: A New Paradigm for a World Without Nuclear Weapons,” outlines many foundational necessities to the ushering in of a new era of security architecture that is guided by collective identities and aspirations.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research shall comprise the core of this work. While quantitative data analysis is important to understandings of nuclear arsenals, capabilities, and many of the implications of globalization on global markets and international relations more generally, the primary focus herein is on attitudinal and behavioral aspects of the disarmament discussion. The belief systems on which status quo societies base the necessity of nuclear weapons are key aspects of this discussion. Additionally important are the cultural threads within the relational web of this technology. Quantification of an intangible idea like culture is exceedingly difficult and, particularly in a world

globalizing with increasing rapidity, the future compositions and orientations of cultures are exceptionally difficult to predict. Much like the norms and questions of appropriateness that shall soon be discussed herein, it is nigh impossible to study these entities and processes on a tangible level; only their effects are visible.¹¹ Thus, qualitative research and predictions are the only tools available for conducting research along these particular veins.

Primary data (interviews) shall provide a substantial basis for the conclusions found herein. Interviewees have been chosen from varied sides of the disarmament debate, bringing with them a diversity of opinions that shall soon be discussed. Primarily representing international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, think tanks, and other scholarly and educational institutions, the interviewees both individually and collectively possess immense academic prestige.

While the interviewees selected do not overtly belong to sensitive populations, ethical considerations played a substantial role in both the recruitment and interview processes. The well-being of these individuals has been an absolute priority throughout research and writing. Steps were taken to ensure ethical treatment of scholars, including a full disclosure of interview use and requests to use stated information (quotations) in the various ways seen in this work. In some cases, quotation review prior to use was requested, and, of course, granted. Scholars were contacted on an individual basis, with no external influence that could compromise the freewill of the scholar his/herself. Selection of scholars was largely based on field of study and relevant expertise. No forms of compensation were provided to the interviewees, nor were any of their respective

¹¹ Interview with Dr. John Borrie of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, *Thursday, November 5, 2015.*

colleagues, organizations, or other third parties involved in the process. Thus, no inappropriate external factors acted coercively in motivating participation. Lack of anonymity did not concern any interviewees, thus identities have not been withheld from the discussions herein.

Definitions

Cooperative Security: Cooperative security shall be defined as “a process whereby countries with common interests work jointly through agreed mechanisms to reduce tensions and suspicion, resolve or mitigate disputes, build confidence, enhance economic development prospects, and maintain stability in their regions.”¹²

Cultural Homogenization: Cultural homogenization shall be defined as a process by which traditional conceptions of nationalism and citizenship become less relevant. Transnational identity or citizenship is included within this homogenization. The theoretical end state of this homogenization is universally realized “global” or “world citizenship.”¹³

Disarmament: For the purposes of this paper, disarmament shall be used to describe an end state, and shall be used in reference to nuclear weapon technologies. “As an end state, disarmament involves eventually establishing a [completely] disarmed world.”¹⁴

Globalization: Globalization shall be defined as: “economic integration; the transfer of policies across borders; the transmission of knowledge; cultural stability; the reproduction, relations, and discourses of power; it is a global process, a concept, a

¹² Finaud, “*Cooperative Security: A New Paradigm for a World Without Nuclear Weapons?*”

¹³ Gellner, “*Nations and Nationalism: New Perspectives on the Past.*”

¹⁴ Borrie and Caughley, “*How are Humanitarian Approaches Relevant to Achieving Progress on Nuclear Disarmament?*”

revolution, and ‘an establishment of the global market free from sociopolitical control.’¹⁵¹⁶

International Norm: An international norm shall be defined as a majority acceptance of a particular tangible or intangible behavior. The unit of analysis contributing to the “majority” and “minority” evaluations herein shall focus primarily on internationally recognized states, but may also include individuals, and transnational populations.

Analysis

Theoretical Foundation and Empirical Support

While the neorealist school discusses the systemic and natural inevitability of weaponization based on relative power competition, the constructivist school describes international relations in a much more malleable way. Rather than claiming that malevolent and volatile power competition is the root of all inter-state interactions, constructivism instead posits that the international system is based on perpetually evolving social processes. Much like a double hermeneutic, constructivists view social relationships as ever-changing, and as able to bring about change in themselves. Rather, according to constructivism, social and relational processes are self-iterating and evolving based on introspective observations. Particularly in regard to nuclear weapon technologies, “constructed *identities* and interests further define mutually constructed

¹⁵ Nikitin, Elliott, “*Freedom and the Market (An Analysis of the Anti-globalisation Movement from the Perspective of the Theoretical Foundation of the Evaluation of the Dynamics of Capitalism by Palanyi, Hayek and Keynes)*.”

¹⁶ Al-Rodhan, Stoudmann “*Definitions of Globalization: A Comprehensive Overview and a Proposed Definition.*”

rules, norms, and institutions, which enable states and other actors [to treat each other] accordingly.”¹⁷

To neorealists, the system is structurally set. It is rooted in inescapable human nature, and the kinds of interactions that manifest today as a result of this system are the kinds of interactions that will manifest in hundreds of years as a result of the *same, unchanged* system. This framework of relations supports the idea that possession and modernization of weapon arsenals will never cease because states will always be in relative, hard-power competition and the world order will always be one of a “self-help” nature.

However, more so today than in recent history, constructivism more accurately depicts the global culture than does neorealism and power politics. As the world continues to globalize it is giving rise to new identities and relational processes that exist outside of the restrictions declared by neorealist thought. Successes have already been made in the realm of (non-nuclear) disarmament that neorealism cannot explain. These successes prove that the “natural” and “destined” system of international relations that is presented by the neorealist school is not so inherent as was originally thought. We are witnessing a shift. Influence no longer resides exclusively with the physically powerful, but also with the socially and culturally aware.

The Ottawa Treaty illustrates one contemporary failure of neorealist predictions. The treaty sought, and continues to seek, a universal prohibition of anti-personnel landmine use in violent conflict. While there are a handful of exceptionally powerful states that have not yet ratified the treaty, the U.S. being among them, 162 states have successfully done so. Included within that number are many nuclear weapon-armed

¹⁷ Wyk, J., et al, “*The International Politics of Nuclear Weapons: A Constructivist Analysis.*”

states. The fact that a handful of states are not yet party to the treaty makes the relative power sacrifice of those bound by it all the more significant; again, many of them being nuclear weapon states. The sacrifice of the member states cannot be explained by power politics while maintaining the assumption that they are all rational actors. While those speaking on behalf of the neorealist school would likely say that the intrinsic “self-help” nature of the world order ensures that states will never disadvantage themselves relative to others by giving up power and capabilities willingly, it seems to have happened anyway.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) is a second empirical example of a constructivist victory that, more or less, mirrors the Ottawa Treaty. The Convention aspires to prohibit the manufacturing, distribution, and use of cluster munitions because of their inaccuracy and likelihood to result in gross civilian casualties; an undisputed violation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Again, as with the Ottawa Treaty, a handful of states are not yet signatories nor parties to the CCM. And again, this highlights a sacrifice of relative power that cannot be explained by traditional neorealist rationale.

Those whom signed and ratified either the Ottawa Treaty or CCM (or both) have placed themselves at a strategic disadvantage by limiting their weapon arsenals in ways that some of their potential competitors have not. They have disadvantaged themselves relative to non-signatories. The logic behind these decisions is rooted in constructivism. Collectively, the vast majority of states in today’s world order collaborated to pursue shared values. Regardless of unanimous disarmament of these weapons, and regardless of militaristic limitations that they would suffer and others would not, they persevered.

Their respective identities broke free of the nation-centric framework that neorealism claims must be adhered to within our dangerous, “self-help” world.

Today, member states and interest organizations continue to lobby for universal ratification of both the Ottawa Treaty and the CCM. The social pressures generated by these contracts are immense and are influential on even the munitions policies of non-party states, including the United States. Comprehensive adherence to agreements like the Ottawa Treaty and CCM is not necessary to motivate effectual change. They establish international stigmas by which even non-party states are influenced. For example, despite the fact that the United States is not bound by the Ottawa Treaty, it is one of the largest international funders of de-mining operations worldwide.¹⁸ Eventually, the hope is that this stigmatization will grow stronger until non-party states are no longer willing to submit themselves to the international scrutiny associated with non-conformity. The condemnation of slavery and anti-colonization campaigns are two terrific success stories of international pressures and stigmas¹⁹ growing to the point at which no state could afford to be the “odd man out.”

The Ottawa Treaty and CCM are victories that certainly did not come easy. The simple fact that these victories came at all, however, is testament to the efficacy of dedicated processes even in the face of neorealist barriers. Noncombatants were being slaughtered by both kinds of weapon on a regular basis. International Humanitarian Law condemned these technologies with increased frequency as a result of these innocent casualties. Once an organization devoted to IHL or a whistle-blower of some kind takes notice of an issue, a chain reaction of sorts begins to occur. Organizations like the

¹⁸ Lecture by Dr. Borrie of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, SIT Offices, August 28, 2015.

¹⁹ Hochschild, “*Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves.*”

International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, and the International Peace Bureau (among many others) set themselves about establishing rigorous awareness campaigns. Eventually, empathy continues to build. Not only do more organizations join the movements, but state populations and electorates as well. Finally, when international and domestic pressures boil over, leaders of sovereign states must make decisions that are socially demanded. Power concerns fall by the wayside and humanistic concerns take precedent.²⁰

Certainly, the argument could be made that these weapons are entirely incomparable to those of a nuclear nature. The devastation of nuclear weaponry is second to none, thus putting a much higher strategic price on nuclear disarmament. However, these empirical successes of mutual social values and identities bringing diverse state actors together for effectual dialogue at the cost of relative power advantages proves that neorealist framings of international relations are not necessarily on point. Victories have been achieved that go against the grain of power politics assumptions, and, while the stakes will be higher, identities will continue to evolve and align in such a way as to bring the world's attention to the necessary condemnation of nuclear weapon technologies.

Identity

Systems of sovereignty born of the Westphalian order provide the basis for inter-state interaction in the status quo and the “national identities” that result play “an under-acknowledged part in nuclear decision-making.”²¹ In fact, national identities that dictate a

²⁰ Interview with Secretary General Archer of the International Peace Bureau, *September 1, 2015*.

²¹ Johnson, “*The NPT in 2010-2012: A Control Regime Trapped in Time*.”

state's posturing toward nuclear weapon policy are in a state of flux,²² today more than ever.

National identity and transnational identity are in many ways mutually exclusive. Individuals with solely nationalistic identities are prone to be most concerned about issues proximate to themselves. In other words, an individual whose identity is very nationalistic is likely to be more concerned about prosperity and safety within his/her territory than about issues external to the territory. Transnational identities, on the other hand, foster universal and boundless empathy. It is these identities that are less susceptible to the paranoia out of which neorealists declare the necessity of armament.²³

The obligation of sovereign states to secure their respective citizenries exists today in much the same way that it has passively existed since the advent of sovereignty. Today, however, appropriate state and citizen priorities are becoming less clear than they were in the realism-dominated past. Should people look to the sovereign state of which they are citizens solely for the protection of themselves and their fellows, or should they expect and demand global protections that know no geopolitical boundary? More so in the status quo than ever before in history, transnational interactions are prompting this extrospective inquiry and nationalistic cultural identities are becoming less explicit and one-directional in terms of interests.

While "Globalization is often considered in economic terms [...] it also encompasses technological, political and cultural change."²⁴ The cultural and political aspects of this globalization-prompted change are exceedingly important to the future of

²² Wyk, J., et al, "*The International Politics of Nuclear Weapons: A Constructivist Analysis.*"

²³ Interview with Dr. Goran Jovanovic of the International Institute of Geneva, *Friday, September 18, 2015.*

²⁴ Coulby, Zambeta, "*Globalization and Nationalism in Education.*"

nuclear disarmament initiatives. Neorealism power perceptions perpetuate the “us” versus “them” nationalistic and cultural rhetoric on which weaponization has always been based. Stone, spear, sword, bow, gun, tank, nuclear bomb; despite variation in complexity, these are all means to the same end.

The creation of these weapons, as many realist theorists will explain, is unidirectional. “We, scientists, humanity, know the destructiveness of nuclear weapons and how to produce them. They cannot be un-invented.”²⁵ Disarmament naysayers will persistently cite this uni-directionality as proof enough that disarmament can never be achieved. They claim that there will always be a cheater; there will always be someone who threatens development, thus locking the world into a perpetual paranoia that ensures continued investment in deterrence infrastructure. The nuclear box has been opened, they say, and it will never close.

However, these arguments against the feasibility of disarmament assume not only uni-directionality of invention, but also culture as a constant rather than a variable. This is where constructivist arguments on processual social evolution and become oh so relevant to the discussion. According to Dr. Goran Jovanovic of the International Institute of Geneva, “if you start to manufacture a stick, a sword, a rifle, or a nuclear device it is because you have an image of the enemy in your mind. What if you did not have this image? The weapons we have created are not so much the problem, but this ‘otherness’.”²⁶ Attitudinal perceptions of other human beings based on cultural variation and geopolitical factors that we *perceive* culminate in the fear mongering that causes the first stone to be cast. “What if in your own mind you do not define the other as your

²⁵ Interview with Dr. Jovanovic, *September 18, 2015*.

²⁶ Interview with Dr. Jovanovic, *September 18, 2015*.

‘hostis’, but your ‘frater’ or ‘soror’?”²⁷ What if a more cosmopolitan culture²⁸ could grow in place of the territorialized one in which we currently live?

Of course disarmament critics would likely scoff at this idea, dismissing it as a utopian fantasy. To some extent, they would be absolutely right. There is no way to simply fiat the cultural and psychological shifts that would be necessary for some fantastical version of global peace to be achieved. Luckily, there is no need to for ludicrous fiat when status quo identity shifts are already cultivating a political and social climate the likes of which is slowly merging populations culturally. Increased transnational interactions are a means by which constructivism claims societies may change attitudinally. “A collective identity manifests in expressions of solidarity, identification with the other’s loyalty, and concern for the other’s welfare.”²⁹ As national identities blur and international humanitarian interests gain support, international collective identities are more likely to urge populations to support disarmament initiatives.

Youth growth and development is of particular importance to this process, as we see a general trend in liberalization as new generations mature and older generations fade. Youth citizenship today, more than historically seen, is of a transnational nature.³⁰ In fact, “the notion of youth as unformed citizens is embedded in developmental assumptions about youth that actually tie youth culture [...] to globalization.”³¹ As explained by Dr. Jovanovic, “globalization is a matrix of ideas” and these ideas socialize and educate

²⁷ Interview with Dr. Jovanovic, *September 18, 2015*.

²⁸ Tomlinson, “Globalization and Culture.”

²⁹ Wyk, J., et al, “*The International Politics of Nuclear Weapons: A Constructivist Analysis*.”

³⁰ Hörschelmann, “*Transnational Citizenship, Dissent and the Political Geographies of Youth*.”

³¹ Orozco, “*Globalization: Culture and Education in the New Millennium*.”

populations in a generally constant direction.³² He specifically cited information technologies and communication as leading to the establishment of the first realm defined by global citizenship, particularly among youth: the internet. On the internet, there are no passports, no visas, nor travel restrictions. It is a realm of equal opportunity and communication. When one connects to the internet, his or her geopolitical culture and nationality are temporarily suspended, and he or she is assimilated into a singular, world culture.³³ While this muting of national identity and birth of a more homogenous world identity takes place in a largely intangible realm, “a spillover effect from one dimension to the other” has already been seen.³⁴ In the intangible realm, national identities are not often the strongest defining identities of individuals. On the internet, a Russian and an American do not have to be set apart from one another if they do not wish to be. As familiarity continues to grow between individuals via platforms and interactions that dampen the importance of nationality, a transnational empathy could emerge that unifies populations in much the same way as populations were unified prior to the Ottawa Treaty and the CCM.

It is important to note that this process is not one that will likely yield results in years or decades, rather it is trans-generational.³⁵ Even still, this homogenization of identity is beginning to re-categorize foreign nationals in our minds. At an almost unrecognizably slow pace (such is the nature of worldwide cultural reformation) we are beginning to witness a unification, a homogenization of cultures that will combat traditional and historical conceptions of words like “foreign,” “other,” and “enemy.”

³² Interview with Dr. Jovanovic, *September 18, 2015*.

³³ Kirby, “*Sociology in Perspective*,” p. 407-408.

³⁴ Interview with Dr. Jovanovic, *September 18, 2015*.

³⁵ Interview with Dr. Jovanovic, *September 18, 2015*.

These are the first steps toward the globalized, singular culture³⁶ that homogenization promotes.

Granted, the digital aspect of this process meets challenges in censorship-prone states, and when there exists little access to free and unadulterated information technologies. Very necessary players to the nuclear disarmament process are among the states lagging behind in the allowance of free-flowing information, North Korea being a prime example. However, if recent history is any indicator, we can see that radical grassroots movements can transform a state and result in spontaneous leaps in communication openness, thus promoting access to the transnational melting pot of identity and values that the internet has become. The Arab Spring illustrated this process when negligible participation and access suddenly bloomed into geopolitical transformations as a result of massive digital campaigns.

“It takes time for global citizenship or consciousness to emerge, but it is happening.”³⁷ Once cultures have homogenized to such an extent that nationalistic great-power paranoia and hostilities are no longer majority perceptions, we may socially evolve into the circumstances necessary for nuclear disarmament to become less of a fantasy, and more a demand of every voice. Particularly as younger, more transnationally exposed generations begin to cycle into positions of power, the otherization of extranationals that feeds conceptions of militaristic necessity will likely begin to fade.

Identity played a pivotal role in the successes of the Ottawa Treaty and CCM. As transnational identities develop, so do international organizations and activist campaigns

³⁶ Jennings, “*Globalizations and the Ancient World*,” p. 132.

³⁷ Interview with Dr. Marc Finaud of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, *Thursday, October 28, 2015*.

grow stronger.³⁸ International and nongovernmental organizations are generally founded on principals of global equality, and hardly ever subscribe to neorealist frameworks of power distribution. They are staffed by individuals whom possess weakened national identities; not nonexistent, but certainly weakened. It is for this reason that said individuals look to enact change beyond their borders. More so today than ever in history, interest in “global good” seeking organizations is on the rise, particularly among youth.³⁹

International Norm Development

Somewhat related to the discussion of identity and cultural homogenization, but distinct in an important way, is the spread of norms and the diffusion of beliefs encouraged by transnational interactions. I am no longer referencing the blurring of national identity or psychological reformation of the “us versus them” paradigms under which we currently live. Rather than discussing a homogenization of identity, I will now concentrate on the process of homogenizing norms, even in a world in which national identities and “enemy” rhetoric still exist.

Even within distinct societies with distinct cultural identities, exposure to foreign cultures helps to facilitate the spread of norms and the establishment of “universally held” beliefs. Sovereign security obligations and the continuation of hostile foreign perceptions are not mutually exclusive to international norm building efforts that could delegitimize nuclear weapons to such an extent as to persuade disarmament. As explained by Dr. John Borrie of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), “a lot of the behavior of states seems not to be driven by this Melian dialogue style,

³⁸ Interview with Dr. Finaud, *Thursday, October 28, 2015.*

³⁹ Interview with Dr. Finaud, *Thursday, October 28, 2015.*

rationalist-materialist logic that the powerful do what they want and the rest of us do what we must. A logic of appropriateness actually applies to a lot of behavior and often states act in ways that reflect a belief that the opinions of others matter. That's the leverage that the nuclear disarmament movement has."⁴⁰

Despite the circular debate that justifies continued and necessary possession of nuclear weapons by states, disarmament as a terminal condition is certainly not impossible so long as those in power are susceptible to normative social pressures. The success of the Ottawa Treaty in the banning of anti-personnel mines and of the CCM in the banning of cluster munitions represent great victories for campaigners utilizing norm-building strategies to motivate changes in great power behavior. These prove "that we can affect the actions of even the most powerful by establishing a clear standard for what's considered acceptable and unacceptable."⁴¹ When transnational culture-sharing results in these kinds of majority advocacies, the powerful oppositions are still strapped with international scrutiny, thus necessitating that additional evaluation and thought be put into the continued possession and use of these arms.

The Ottawa Treaty and CCM each prove that there is a certain empathy shared by the majority of peoples in the world. Gross and unnecessary loss of human life is almost universally opposed and as nuclear weapons continue to be condemned by International Humanitarian Law, scholars, and activists for their volatility and dangerousness, an anti-weapon of mass destruction (WMD) norm will begin to materialize. The constructivist processes that facilitated the successes of the Ottawa Treaty and CCM restructure

⁴⁰ Interview with Dr. Borrie, *Thursday, November 5, 2015*.

⁴¹ Interview with Dr. Borrie, *Thursday, November 5, 2015*.

“power politics,’ in terms of shared norms rather than relative power,”⁴² thus mobilizing populations to err on the side of empathy rather than the fear that is preached by neorealists and deterrence advocates.

Norm building is not restricted by the sorts of trans-generational evolutionary timelines as are processes of identity homogenization. In fact, Dr. Borrie of UNIDIR explained that he certainly has not “seen the emergence of some global class of people who consider themselves global citizens” (the hopeful, yet ambitious end-goal of transnational identity shifts and cultural homogenization). However, “if you look at the evolution of [norm building] campaigns, new technologies that we associate with globalization have made them more agile,”⁴³ and we now have empirical success stories including those previously discussed.

While Dr. Borrie, among others, does not believe that globalization “necessarily make[s] a decisive difference to disarmament,”⁴⁴ it seems evident that at least some indirect relationship exists between increased international interactions and disarmament initiatives. If only for its ameliorating of the coordination and collective action problems that plague social movements and campaigns, transnational interactions are influencing the efficacy of disarmament efforts. Non-nuclear actors by definition are less powerful than nuclear weapon-armed actors. A pro-disarmament collective voice is necessary to narrow the power disparity, and an empathetic unification is essential to this collectivization. Transnational interactions via travel, the internet, or some other value-sharing medium will help to facilitate this collectivization. In a similar fashion as the process of identity homogenization, if a bit faster, with time will come unification, and

⁴² Wendt, “Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics.”

⁴³ Interview with Dr. Borrie, *Thursday, November 5, 2015*.

⁴⁴ Interview with Dr. Borrie, *Thursday, November 5, 2015*.

with unification will come the delegitimization movements necessary to prompt similar outcomes as were seen in the wake of the CCM and Ottawa Treaty.

Cooperative Security Architecture

Traditionally, sovereign state security frameworks are first and foremost centered about nationalistic and domestic priorities. These narrow priorities ascribe to threat perceptions embedded in neorealist worldviews, and prevent states from actively considering world-wide priorities. A cyclical relationship exists between nationalism and “go it alone,” “self-help” security frameworks. Intense nationalism demands a government that insulates against the outside world, while an insulating government simultaneously cultivates more nationalism (via rhetoric and action) that exacerbates the divide between nationals and foreigners. In the end, a state’s support for nuclear weapon technologies is inexorably linked to its *own* national security interests and national identity; one props up the other and vice versa. In reference to identity’s previously mentioned importance to the nuclear disarmament discussion: only with more collective international identities may collectivized security succeed, and only with collectivized security strategies will the neorealist necessity of nuclear arms be subverted.

Despite narrowly focused security objectives, in truth, “there is no such thing as national security, there is only international or collective security. The alternative is collective insecurity.”⁴⁵ Because a nuclear detonation would threaten the entire world, even sovereign states’ nuclear policies are of a collective and global concern; much like global warming. Even still, WMD policy is generally treated as a domestic decision insulated from external influence.

⁴⁵ Doyle, “*Why Eliminate Nuclear Weapons?*” p. 25.

In order for disarmament initiatives to be successful “we will have to see a transition to collective and globalized power,”⁴⁶ both during and after the disarmament process occurs. Dr. Marc Finaud of the Geneva Centre for Security policy explained that “a new paradigm should [...] reconcile nuclear powers’ security doctrines with global aspirations for a safer world and ensure that nuclear powers derive their security less from others’ insecurity, but from mutually beneficial cooperative security.”⁴⁷ In whisperingly subtle ways this transition has already begun and is being built on the foundations of international organizations that operate today.

The previously presented sections are very important to the pursuit of the “global aspirations” referenced by Dr. Finaud. The evolution of a more unified, world identity that is not slave to the staunch demands of nationality would be more empathetic toward the idea of a security system intended to indiscriminately protect the good of all. Similarly, at the core of international norm building is collective agreement. Actualizing collective security architecture would require a greater degree of international cooperation than it takes to collectively draft and ratify less complex international treaties and conventions. However, it “is [already] happening in a creeping way that we don’t necessarily realize.” According to Dr. Finaud, “if you compare the current US strategy with the previous one, already we see some change.” The strategies (multilateral sanctions, joint pressures, etc.) that helped to pave the way for the Iran Nuclear Deal, as well as the deal itself, illustrate ways in which security architecture in the status quo has begun to shift away from the more violent and unilateral architectures of the past. In reference to the deal, Dr. Finaud said, “it may be minute, but if the most powerful nuclear

⁴⁶ Interview with Dr. Finaud, *Thursday, October 28, 2015*.

⁴⁷ Interview with Dr. Finaud, *Thursday, October 28, 2015*.

state in the world is increasing reliance on alternative instruments and responses to conflict, you have a shift⁴⁸ and that shift illustrates a slight weakening of nationalistic tunnel-vision in regard to security concerns.

The United States' recent increase in collaborative dispute settlement is a testament to progress in the areas of transnational identities and international norm-building efforts. It illustrates slight increases in international trust, and a breakdown in our perception that unilateral defense is always preferable to alternative options. As transnational interactions increase in depth and frequency, and particular norms become more internationally engrained, populations will become more receptive to the idea of a collective security architecture becoming the default protective system in place of the now-dominant, lone-wolf systems. Once a collaborative system is realized, deterrence prompted armament efforts will be unnecessary for the achievement of global safety.

This process of shifting ideologies will, again, not occur overnight. Realist subscribers will fight tooth and nail to prevent the collectivization of security for fear of vulnerability due to loss of relative power. Eventually, though, the necessity of power balancing efforts will be very unimportant to the international system, if not entirely irrelevant. "Globalization and subsequent reductions in nationalism can [even] make domestic barriers to disarmament less difficult to overcome," particularly when new "mechanisms, negotiations, and security architectures"⁴⁹ are brought to fruition to fill the void that nuclear technologies will leave behind upon their departure. In order to make greater the likelihood of success, new collective security architecture must accompany identity homogenization and international norm-building efforts, and vice versa. If one of

⁴⁸ Interview with Dr. Finaud, *Thursday, October 28, 2015*.

⁴⁹ Interview with Dr. Finaud, *Thursday, October 28, 2015*.

the components is missing from the equation, the others will be unlikely to function properly.

Conclusion

Transnational interaction is a complex and multi-faceted matter. Its worldwide implications include those of a social, economic, cultural, and political nature. Nuclear weapon technologies are comparably impactful. Status quo scholars and activists with nuclear weapon expertise will be among the first to explain that the social and cultural controversy surrounding these technologies shrouds their future in uncertainty. In a paradoxical fashion, rationality is touted both as a justification for possession of these weapons, and as a justification for their dismantlement. In short, we find ourselves today trying to traverse a “rock and a hard place” debate, with no way to accommodate the “imperatives” demanded by the multiple juxtaposed camps.

Disarmament critics are right; we have not yet reached a turning point at which a global zero initiative is in any form feasible. This is certainly disheartening, particularly given the world’s precarious position on the edge of the nuclear knife that defines status quo security architecture. However, there is certainly hope in a world in which neorealists are wrong about the mechanics of our international system.

Constructivist thought describes as clay what neorealists had previously described as stone. Borne of transnational interactions, various international transformations will soon change the rules by which the disarmament game is played. As mentioned heretofore, globalization and subsequent processes are of human origin, but are neither of conscious human design nor are they under conscious human control. As a result, the

perfect predictability of the speed at which they will effect tangible change is nigh impossible.

More definitive, however, are the ways by which these processes will help to facilitate nuclear arms reductions and an eventual global zero. This is the world I see: As national identities weaken as a result of experiences that are not confined to geopolitical boundaries and cultures homogenize with increasing rapidity, Westphalian sovereignty and the need to securitize in a starkly “domestic vs. foreign” sense will lose relevance. Evolving international norms and “logics of appropriateness” will catalyze a new, systemic necessity to disarm. Finally, the collectivization of security will ensure a smooth transition from the old defense paradigm to the new; one devoid of nuclear weapons and all the more stable as a result.

The status quo is hostile to idea of this sequence of events. Those of a more traditional, neorealist adherence use “unrealistic,” or “borderline utopian” to describe it. However, idealism is just that until it is realized. While realists claim that the system is forever locked in place, empirical evidence of past successes proves otherwise. Constructivist processes are allowing we, the people, to choose how we perceive the nuts and bolts of this world, thus granting us agency over structures that were previously considered innate. The status quo is beginning to see the first hints of this process’ realization, and the subtleties of transnational interaction will be culprits to the creation of this new system.

Abbreviations List

CCM: Convention on Cluster Munitions

GCSP: Geneva Centre for Security Policy

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross

IHL: International Humanitarian Law

MAD: Mutually Assured Destruction

NWS: Nuclear Weapon State

START: Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

UN: United Nations

UNIDIR: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

WMD: Weapon of Mass Destruction

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