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**Article**

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CES Working Papers

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*Suggested Citation:* Hincu, Roxana (2015) : EU's Policy of Disarmament as Part of its Normative Power, CES Working Papers, ISSN 2067-7693, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Centre for European Studies, Iasi, Vol. 7, Iss. 2a, pp. 472-478

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/198397>

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## EU'S POLICY OF DISARMAMENT AS PART OF ITS NORMATIVE POWER

Roxana HINCUI\*

**Abstract:** *This article argues that EU's policy of Disarmament, Non-Proliferation, and Arms Export Control can be conceptualised into the framework of the normative power. Despite the EU strategies on this policy, such as EU Strategy against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (2003), or Strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (2005), the EU is far from being a unitary actor. In the international arena most actions on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation are enhanced by the United Nations and individually by each country that is a nuclear power. The measures taken by the EU in the international forums on Disarmament are analysed with a short historic overview on the issue and with a closer view on the EU's actions within the United Nations and those taken unilaterally.*

**Keywords:** disarmament; normative power; non-proliferation; foreign policy; security

**JEL Classification:** F5; F6

### Introduction

The first ever nuclear power in the world was the United States that dropped atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945. Four years after this event, the Soviet Union detonated its nuclear bomb. Afterwards, the series of nuclear powers spread: the United Kingdom (1952), France (1960), and China (1964). The first treaty that sought to prevent nuclear proliferation was the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968 with 190 states that signed it. India, Israel, North Korea and Pakistan have never signed the treaty although they possess nuclear arsenals. In the 1970s the Soviet Union and the United States convinced each other that it was less risky to limit offensive weapons through the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks and ban anti-ballistic missiles (ABM) than to continue an arms race to gain first-strike advantages. In the 1980s the superpowers embarked on substantial reductions of offensive weapons systems (the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks), even declaring the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The “nuclear genie cannot be put back into the bottle” (Grieco *et al.*, 2015, p. 233) and therefore, regardless of how they are delivered, the distinctive feature of nuclear weapons is their unprecedented destructive capacity. Never before in history have humans created a weapon that could destroy property and people so easily and quickly, with little discrimination between combatants and civilians. For much of the Cold War, the inability to verify the terms of prospective arms control agreements precluded them from being negotiated and implemented. In 1960, however, both the

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United States and the Soviet Union began launching satellites that could take photographs and monitor events in other countries. This development provided the capability that US and Soviet policy makers needed in order to gain the acceptance of arms control agreements in their respective countries.

Thankfully nuclear weapons have not been used since the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But the nuclear club of nation-states, believed to have possession of nuclear weapons, has grown gradually to include nine members. The United States possesses the world's most diverse and technologically sophisticated nuclear arsenal, totalling over 7,000 nuclear warheads, of which about 2,100 are active or operational (Grieco *et al.*, 2015, p. 211). Although its former Cold War capacity has been diminished, Russia remains a major nuclear power with a stockpile of about 8,500 warheads, of which about 1,800 are operational. It inherited the nuclear arsenal of the former Soviet Union; former Soviet republics such as Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan transferred nuclear weapons left on their territory after the collapse of the Soviet Union to Russia during the 1990s. Great Britain, France, and China were the third, fourth and fifth nation-states to test a nuclear weapon, in 1952, 1960, and respectively, 1964. Each country currently possesses an arsenal of several hundred warheads.

### **1. EU- a normative power**

From a theoretical standpoint, EU's normative power is the base of the European integration. Although EU is elite-driven and treaty based, EU's foreign policy is also considered normative as it "disposes of reduced military resources and its status on the international arena is in line with soft power" (Manners, 2002, p. 241). The elements of EU's normative power is the centrality of peace, democracy, rule of law and human rights.

The predominant view as presented by Gerrits (2009, p. 5) is that "normative power and military power are mutually reinforcing in the case of the European Union". This perspective constituted the foundation on which efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons was built.

Whitman (2011, p. 11) argues that the normative power argument relates strongly to the presence and capability of the EU in world politics. In discussions of the European Union (EU) as an international actor, there is a wide range of interpretations in the literature. The Union is seen in general as a "civilian" or "normative" power (Whitman, 2011, p. 12). Although questions of norms and normativity are always present in the study of international relations, the role given to them can vary significantly.

Europe tends to extend to the rest of the world the governance through norms that it experiences within its own borders. Therefore, Europe makes the assumption that global governance goes through an increase of norms and that such governance through norms is the most suitable political model for an interdependent world, since it constitutes a factor of equalisation of power. Europe is structurally inclined to impose norms on the world system in order to counter two difficulties. The first is to prevent global norms from being less exacting than European ones so as not to place Europe at a comparative disadvantage. The second is the lack of power- in the sense of hard power- to impose norms on reluctant actors. When Europe discusses global issues such as disarmament with the main world actors, it needs the support of the international system to advance its own interests.

What the EU is matters, but so does what the EU says and does. The conceptualisation of normative power as a discursive dimension is very important as it allows for the distinction between the EU and others. During the 1990s, the main instruments for the promotion of these norms were economic in nature (economic, humanitarian and technical assistance), meaning that the EU remained a civilian power in the classic sense of the concept during this period.

For many member states, the EU is as a power committed to norms, including the rule of law and respect for human rights, democracy and multilateralism, still privileging civilian means, but ready to use military instruments to promote those norms when necessary. Military developments within the EU would not challenge the building of a civilising power, since these are seen to be in the service of its foreign policy objectives: restoring good government, fostering democracy, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights' and developing a stronger international society.

The international role of the EU is thus no longer perceived as one of a pure civilian power, yet, for many policy-makers the objective is not to build a military power either. The EU is commonly seen to be in a unique position to make a significant contribution to complex crisis management due to the broad range of civilian and military instruments at its disposal.

## **2. EU's achievements and challenges of Security, Non-proliferation, and Arms Control**

Policy makers and scholars alike view nuclear deterrence and arms control essential elements for the international security. The first means of preventing proliferation was the establishment of the non-proliferation regime founded on the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) first signed in 1968. This was primarily a diplomatic approach spearheaded by the US Department of States does. The NPT established three inter-locking bargains. Non-nuclear weapons states agreed to forgo the development of nuclear weapons: 1) in return for assistance in developing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes;

2) as long as nuclear weapons states worked to achieve disarmament; and 3) as long as other non-nuclear states did not develop nuclear weapons.

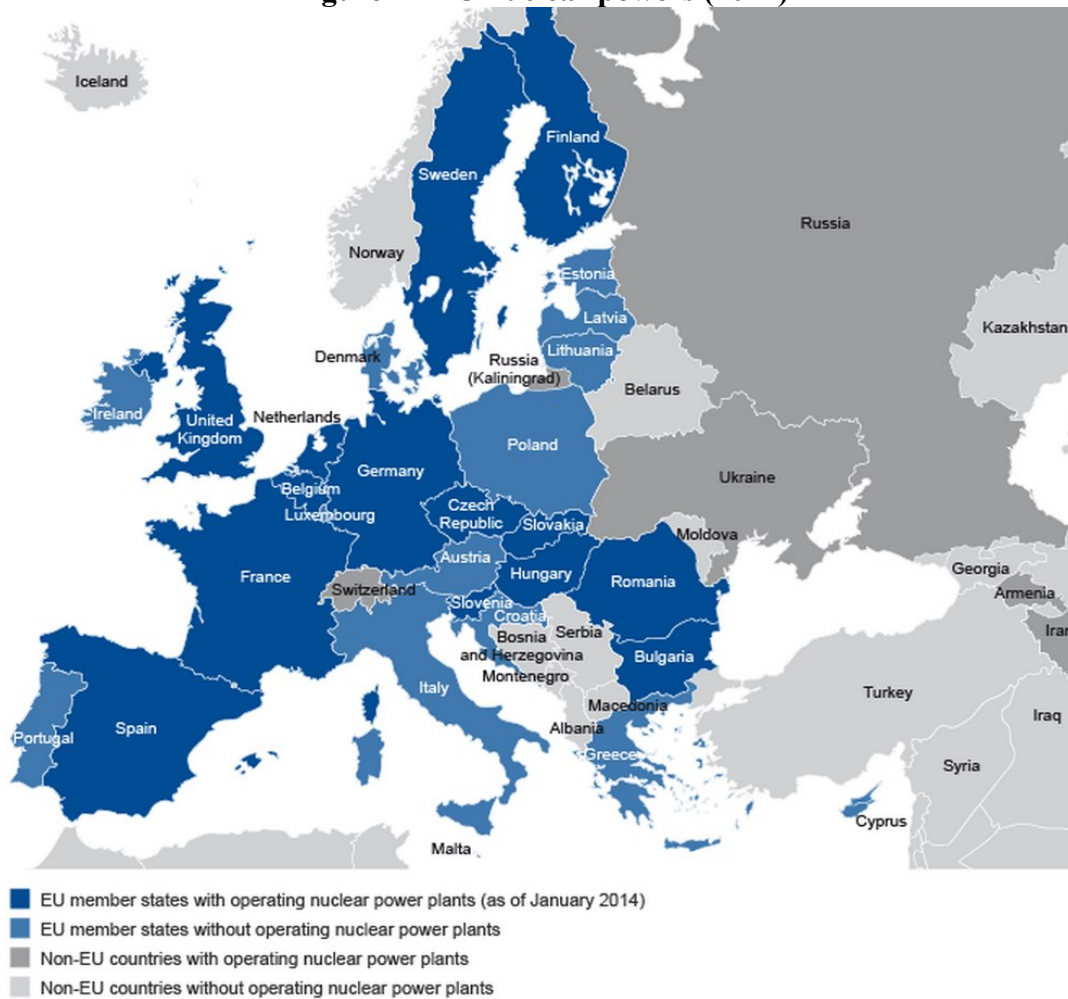
Far friendlier to arms control, Barack Obama campaigned on a promise to try to eliminate nuclear weapons. Once in office, the Obama administration actively negotiated a follow-on to the START I Treaty which expired in December 2009. In March 2010, the American and Russian governments announced that they had reached an agreement calling for a reduction of bombers, ICBMs, and SLBMs from 1,600 to 800 and total warheads from 2,200 to 1,500 within seven years (Reif, 2015).

Today's most sophisticated nuclear arsenal belongs to the United States, and contains an array of compact and miniaturized nuclear weapons that can be delivered from land, sea, and air. In addition to the necessary ingredient of uranium or plutonium, the nuclear shopping list would include air pressure measuring equipment, detonating heads, explosive charges, fuses, lead shields, neutron deflectors, and a team of scientists who could put it all together without destroying themselves and their facility in the process. Countries that already possess nuclear weapons do not sell them to others on the open market. They also guard their nuclear arsenals carefully, so weapons are not lost or stolen.

Nuclear disarmament around the world is yet another field in which the European Union has deployed its normative power. EU firstly addressed the issue of non-proliferation through the European Council by adopting its first Strategy against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction at the Thessaloniki Summit in June 2003. Also, the European Security Strategy adopted by the Council of the European Union in December 2003 (p. 6) recognizes the "unprecedented destructive capacity of nuclear weapons and their influence on modern international relations".

The EU Non-Proliferation Consortium is formed by four leading think-tanks: La Fondation pour la recherche stratégique in Paris, the Peace Research Institute in Frankfurt, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies based in London. This network also comprises over 60 think-tanks from all over Europe.

**Figure 1 - EU nuclear powers (2014)**



Source: World Nuclear Association, “Nuclear Power in the European Union”, <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/Country-Profiles/Others/European-Union/> (accessed 22 March 2015)

The Non-proliferation policy developed by the European Union is found at the very basis of its formation through the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) established by the Rome Treaty, 1957. Although the purpose was to create a specialist market for nuclear power in Europe by developing nuclear energy in the civilian nuclear industry.

According to O’Hanlon (2010, p. 50) although nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons are commonly lumped together under the heading of weapons of mass destruction, the significant differences across these categories should be recognized. Most importantly, nuclear weapons are qualitatively different in terms of their destructive power because a few weapons can do so much damage to lives and property.

Müller (2015, p. 2) noted that Europe could be a new nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) as “it goes over the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) 2010 Action Plan with an innovative approach”. Europe, together with Northern America, the Middle East, South Asia, Russia,

East Asia, is one of the regions without a nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) treaty. De Vasconcelos (2009, p. 10) notes that EU's guiding principle for non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is multilateralism.

### **Conclusions**

This article deals with the topic of disarmament, reviewing key developments, strategies and actions of the EU. Weapons of mass destruction in the hands of numerous nation-states are a cause of great concern in international politics. EU is an active and visible actor in international relations with regard to nuclear disarmament. In order to transform Europe into a nuclear-weapon-free zone, the main nuclear powers must be brought together. Nuclear weapons may have an important stabilizing effect- they discourage great powers from fighting the kind of all-out wars that characterised the pre-nuclear history of the international system. The spread of nuclear weapons to a number of additional states and potentially to non-state actors, however, raises a host of concerns about the potential for international conflicts to escalate in truly destructive ways. The existence of nuclear weapons makes war less likely, yet potentially more catastrophic should it occur.

For the first 40 years of the nuclear era, the possibility of all-out nuclear war between the superpowers preoccupied international relations scholars and practitioners. Today, the more important concern is the spread of nuclear weapons and the possibility that, as more actors obtain them, nuclear war becomes more likely either by accident or design. It is difficult to make precise estimates of the holdings of other members of the nuclear club. Much has been done to increase international security, limit the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and impose quantitative and qualitative limitations on a wide variety of weapons.

### **Acknowledgement**

This paper is supported by the Sectoral Development Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund, under the project POSDRU/159/1.5/S/13400- "Young Successful researchers- professional development in an international and interdisciplinary environment".

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