



CHALLENGES TO MULTILATERAL DISARMAMENT

Global perspectives on UN disarmament, arms control
and non-proliferation

This report is written by Trine Rosengren Pejstrup, Research Assistant, DIIS, and published by DIIS.

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DIIS · Danish Institute for International Studies
Gl. Kalkbrænderi Vej 51A
DK-2100 Copenhagen, Denmark
Tel: +45 32 69 87 87
E-mail: diis@diis.dk
www.diis.dk

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ABSTRACT

The complexities of multipolarity, heightened global tensions, and increasing militarisation are reshaping the disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation landscape within the United Nations. This report examines these evolving dynamics, contextualising their historical importance and assessing the impact of shifting geopolitical forces and technological advances on disarmament and arms control. Building on data collection focused on multilateral disarmament, it confirms two critical trends in the UN system: a significant trust deficit between member states and declining confidence in multilateral disarmament institutions, both of which severely undermine disarmament efforts. While these two trends are well-established, this report showcases how these are evident in multilateral disarmament. From a disarmament perspective, distrust goes beyond mere compliance and extends to a trust deficit in the design and intent behind disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation agreements while a lack of confidence is apparent in discussions around the challenges and opportunities posed by new technologies as well as a turn to soft law rather than hard law. The report provides recommendations for Danish diplomats as Denmark prepares for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for 2025-2026. It advocates for an integrated approach that aligns disarmament and arms control with broader efforts to promote global peace and security.



The bronze sculpture, 'Let Us Beat Swords into Plowshares', by the Soviet sculptor, Evgenily Vuchetich. The statue was presented to the United Nations on 4 December 1959.
Photo: UN Photo/John Isaac, UN7541809

INTRODUCTION

After Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, the Danish Foreign and Security Policy Strategy for 2023 described the current security setting as marked by 'increased uncertainty, complexity, and geopolitical competition'.¹ While Russia's war in Ukraine constitutes a significant breach of international law, it also reflects the continuation of the erosion of treaty compliance, disregard for international norms, and strategic manoeuvring by major powers in the area of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. An uncertain global security environment that includes rises in military spending, the introduction of new military technologies, and a heightened risk of nuclear war, significantly challenges disarmament and arms control efforts.² Against this backdrop, this report addresses the critical role of disarmament and arms control within the broader framework of international security. The aim is to offer a nuanced understanding of the current challenges and potential pathways forward in disarmament diplomacy as Denmark prepares for a seat at the UNSC in 2025-2026.

Disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation have been foundational to the United Nations' (UN) strategy for fostering global peace. However, neglect of treaties, disregard for regulations, and political manoeuvring by major countries like the United States (US), Russia, and China have led to persistent setbacks.³ In the decades that followed the Second World War, cornerstone multilateral agreements and treaties as well as strategic bilateral and regional agreements came into shape. However, today the collection of disarmament and arms control bodies and mechanisms that the international community has relied upon appears increasingly inadequate. Nuclear states like the US, Russia, and China have repeatedly ignored or violated these frameworks, underscoring a critical gap between existing structures

and the challenges of today's geopolitical realities. UN Secretary-General (SG) António Guterres' 'New Agenda for Peace' published in 2023 seeks to reposition disarmament as a cornerstone in the broader strategy to enhance global stability.⁴ By advocating for integrated approaches that bridge the gap between disarmament and development, the New Agenda proposes a redefinition of the role of disarmament in securing a sustainable future. The integration of disarmament and development is crucial to the SG's vision because it directly links peace and security with sustainable development, addressing the root causes of conflict. This approach aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 16, which promotes peace, justice, and strong institutions, and underscores the need for peaceful and inclusive societies as a foundation for sustainable development.

BOX 1. DISARMAMENT, ARMS CONTROL AND NON-PROLIFERATION

Disarmament involves removing access to and use of weapons, aiming to eliminate or reduce the number of weapons, particularly weapons of mass destruction. Arms control ensures that access to, management, and use of weapons are regulated for legitimate purposes, preventing their excessive accumulation and misuse. Non-proliferation focuses on preventing the spread of weapons, especially nuclear weapons, to maintain international peace and security.⁵

This publication is part of the 'UN Peace and Security Studies' and was published with financial support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. It reflects the views of the author alone. The report draws on desk-based research drawing on academic publications, media sources, independent research and expert interviews with researchers, analysts and policy makers⁶, which are all anonymised. Drawing on insights from primary and secondary sources, this report confirms two key trends in international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation: a significant trust deficit between member states and declining confidence in UN disarmament and arms control mechanisms. Based on comprehensive data collection from both primary and secondary sources, the report focuses on selected key themes deemed defining for multilateral disarmament and arms control discussions – such as weapons of mass destruction (WMD), conventional weapons, outer space, and emerging military technologies – while Denmark is in the UNSC and moving forward. The report examines the evolving dynamics, historical context, and strategic opportunities that influence multilateral disarmament efforts within the UN. As such, it does not attempt to cover all subjects within the disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation sphere comprehensively but rather focuses on categories of

disarmament and arms control that convey tension and offer potential for bridge-building as identified throughout the data collection. This approach offers targeted insights rather than presenting an exhaustive overview of disarmament at the UN or Danish engagement in disarmament and arms control. The report suggests that as Denmark prepares for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council (SC) for the 2025-2026 term advocating for a 'more secure, peaceful, and equitable world'⁷, it has unique opportunities in the disarmament sphere. Denmark can leverage its soft power, reputation as a peaceful nation, and pragmatic diplomacy to act as a bridge-builder. By focusing on facilitating dialogue and maintaining open channels of communication, Denmark can play a significant role in fostering cooperation in disarmament and arms control.

The report is structured as follows. First, it sets the historical context, tracing the evolution of disarmament and arms control within the UN framework and highlights its longstanding significance to global security. Secondly, it delves into the current state of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, examining the central political dynamics at play amid contemporary geopolitical challenges and technological shifts. This provides the opportunity, then, to inform 5 strategic recommendations for Danish UN diplomacy as well as Denmark's tenure as an elected non-permanent member of the Security Council 2025-2026 drawing from the insights of the preceding chapters.



The 'Non-Violence' (or 'Knotted Gun') sculpture by Swedish artist Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd on display at the UN Visitors' Plaza.
Photo: Trine Rosengren Pejstrup.

GIFT OF LUXEMBOURG
1988

NON VIOLENCE



DISARMAMENT, ARMS CONTROL AND NON-PROLIFERATION AT THE UN

This chapter provides an overview of the historical context of multilateral disarmament and arms control. Understanding the historical context and recent developments in disarmament and arms control is crucial because it allows for a comprehensive analysis of how power dynamics, technological advancements, and geopolitical shifts have shaped the current framework. This knowledge equips policymakers and scholars with the insights needed to identify effective strategies and potential pathways for enhancing international cooperation and stability in a rapidly changing global security environment.

From the founding of the UN in 1945 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind'⁸, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation have been central to the organisation's efforts to prevent conflicts and maintain international peace and security. The recognition of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons, highlighted by the use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 as well as the nuclear arms race between the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, meant that the initial focus was on weapons of mass destruction (WMD), especially nuclear weapons.⁹ Since then, nuclear testing has further demonstrated the devastating humanitarian impact of these weapons by causing significant environmental destruction, including radioactive contamination of land and water, leading to severe health issues for populations exposed to radiation.¹⁰ The importance of this agenda is emphasised by the fact that the very first resolution of the UN General Assembly (GA), Resolution 1, adopted in January 1946, called for 'the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major


weapons adaptable to mass destruction'.¹¹ As such, disarmament became a central priority in international relations, with states recognising the need for multilateral cooperation, diplomatic negotiations, and the establishment of international norms and treaties to limit weapons proliferation and promote global peace and security.

Disarmament machinery

This first resolution was followed by the development of institutions, agreements, and processes established at the international level to negotiate, implement, and monitor arms control and disarmament measures.¹² The UN disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation policy is situated within what is called the 'disarmament machinery'. Central to this machinery is the GA's First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament (CD), and the Disarmament Commission (UNDC). The First Committee is tasked with dealing with disarmament and related international security issues. It discusses all disarmament and international security matters within the scope of the Charter including WMDs, conventional weapons, outer space, and emerging technology. The Conference on Disarmament is a multilateral arms control and disarmament negotiating forum of the international community focused on drafting and negotiating major agreements. It is composed of 65 official members, while other UN member states can participate as observers. The Conference, which is based in Geneva, works on the basis of consensus, requiring agreement from all member states to advance any negotiation. This ensures that all countries' interests are considered but can sometimes lead to impasses. The Disarmament Commission serves as a forum for comprehensive discussions on general disarmament matters, which include not only the global reduction of nuclear arsenals but also measures related to small arms and light weapons, land mines, cluster munitions and the arms trade, among other topics. The Commission aims to provide consensus-based recommendations to the General Assembly on these diverse aspects of disarmament, which are critical for promoting international peace and security.

The first Special Session on Disarmament held by the UN GA in 1978 originally identified the First Committee, the UNDC and the CD as the only components of the disarmament machinery. However, over the years, additional institutions have been established and have significantly contributed to the disarmament machinery, thereby playing an active role in bolstering the disarmament agenda. The UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) facilitates multilateral dialogue and conducts independent research on disarmament and arms control, acting as a bridge between UN member states and the research community through expert meetings, research projects, and collaborations with various organisations. The Advisory Board on

Disarmament Matters provides the SG with advice on arms limitation and disarmament matters and oversees the implementation of the United Nations Disarmament Information Programmes. The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) supports the Disarmament Machinery and UN member states in achieving the goal of general and complete disarmament. It does so by facilitating multilateral dialogue, transparency, confidence-building measures, and providing objective, impartial, and current information on arms control and disarmament issues. Additionally, the UN Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament (UNREC) provides support to member states in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, as well as Latin America and the Caribbean towards the realisation of measures to achieve peace and disarmament. Beyond these are other multilateral bodies that strengthen the disarmament machinery, including: the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBO), the interim implementing body of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC); and the IAEA, which is responsible for the international safeguards system that verifies that states are not diverting nuclear materials and technology into nuclear weapons programmes. Overall, the UN disarmament machinery plays an invaluable role in the negotiation and adoption of major multilateral arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament treaties.

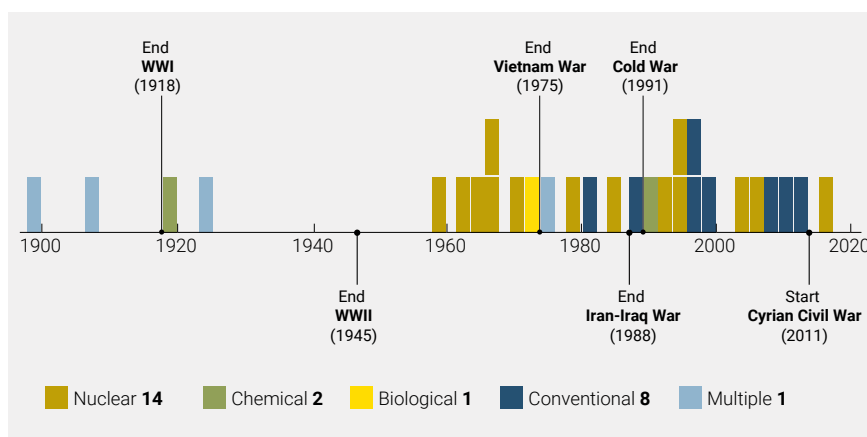


In recent years, states have withdrawn from several critical disarmament and arms control agreements negotiated inside as well as outside the UN framework.

Multilateral disarmament agreements

The Cold War era saw the establishment of multilateral disarmament and arms control agreements. Most of these treaties share common structural components including a preamble that outlines the treaty's purposes and motivations, main provisions that specify the obligations of the parties involved, verification mechanisms to ensure compliance, and final clauses dealing with ratification, entry into force, and conditions for withdrawal.² Additionally, most of these treaties establish specific bodies or utilise existing ones to monitor compliance and facilitate consultations and cooperation among state parties. Early efforts of the UN in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation were significantly directed towards nuclear disarmament. Over time, though, the scope of disarmament efforts

Figure 1. Global disarmament treaties



Note: Over the past century, dozens of treaties have been signed to regulate the use and stockpiling of nondiscriminating weapons in war.

Source: Aljazeera <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/10/28/can-the-world-be-free-of-weapons>

broadened to include other forms of WMDs, namely biological and chemical weapons, as well as conventional weapons, such as small arms and lights weapons, landmines, and new technologies as visualised in Figure 1.

The field of disarmament is currently experiencing a significant deadlock, illustrated by the stagnation at the Conference on Disarmament, which has not successfully negotiated any new treaties since the 1990s. Despite, or perhaps due to, this deadlock, disarmament and arms control treaties have been negotiated outside traditional bodies. Notable examples include the Land Mine Convention of 1997, the Cluster Munitions Convention adopted in 2008, and the Arms Trade Treaty of 2013.¹³ The mandate of the UN on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation is significantly limited by the sovereignty of states, which permits nations to prioritise their security policies over international agreements. This often leads to selective compliance and non-compliance with disarmament treaties.

In 2018, the US unilaterally withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, leading to increased tensions and a breakdown in compliance by Iran.¹⁴ Although not negotiated under the UN directly, the JCPOA is closely related to UN efforts because it was endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231.¹⁵ The breakdown of this agreement highlights the difficulties in maintaining international consensus and compliance, which are central

BOX 2. DISARMAMENT, ARMS CONTROL AND NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY STATUSES

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

■ Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) - 1968

Under pressure due to non-compliance and dissatisfaction

Cornerstone agreement addressing the spread of nuclear weapons by promoting disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

■ Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) - 1996

Under pressure due to non-ratification by key states

Legally binding global ban on all nuclear explosive testing.

■ Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) - 2017

Active but limited support from nuclear-armed states and their allies

Prohibits the use, threat of use, development, production, manufacturing, acquisition, possession, stockpiling, transfer, stationing, and instalment of nuclear weapons or assistance with any prohibited activities.

■ New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) - 2010

Active but under strain

Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States for further reduction and limitation of offensive arms. Currently the only remaining US-Russia arms control agreement, extended until 206 but facing geopolitical tensions.

■ Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - 2015

Inactive due to withdrawal and non-compliance

Agreement aimed at ensuring Iran's nuclear program would be exclusively peaceful in exchange for lifting economic sanctions. The US unilaterally withdrew in 2018, leading to increased tensions and a breakdown in compliance by Iran.

CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

■ Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) - 1972

Active but challenged by verification issues

First multilateral disarmament treaty that banned the development, production, and stockpiling of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

■ Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) - 1993

Active and effective

Multilateral treaty requiring the destruction of chemical weapons and the prohibition of development, production, stockpiling, and use of chemical weapons.

CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

■ Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty - 1972

Inactive due to withdrawal

Agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union to limit ABM deployment areas. The US withdrew in 2002, effectively ending the treaty.

■ Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) - 1980

Under pressure due to non-compliance and limited scope

Seeks to prohibit or restrict the use of certain conventional weapons deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects.

■ Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) - 1987

Inactive due to withdrawal

Required the destruction of ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with certain ranges, and associated equipment. The US withdrew in 2019 citing Russian non-compliance, leading to the treaty's collapse.

■ Mine Ban Treaty (Ottawa Treaty) - 1997

Active and effective

Seeks to eradicate landmines by prohibiting the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of antipersonnel mines.

■ Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) - 2008

Under pressure due to non-signatories and recent use

Prohibits the use, transfer, and stockpile of cluster bombs that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. Not signed by key states including the US, Russia, and China; recent use in conflicts undermines its norms.

■ Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) - 2013

Under pressure due to non-compliance and limited enforcement

Establishes common international standards for regulating the international trade in conventional arms, seeking to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms. Many major arms exporters have not fully aligned their practices with the treaty's standards.

OTHER TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS

■ Outer Space Treaty - 1967

Active but facing new challenges in outer space

Prevents states from placing nuclear weapons or other WMDs into Earth's orbit, and prohibits the installation of such weapons on the Moon or celestial bodies or stationing them in outer space in any other manner.

■ Active and effective

■ Under pressure due to e.g. dissatisfaction, non-compliance, and limited enforcement

■ Inactive or heavily under pressure due to e.g. expiration, non-compliance and withdrawal

themes in multilateral disarmament. Similarly, the US cited Russian non-compliance as the reason for its 2019 withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which was considered a cornerstone of Cold War arms control eliminating an entire class of nuclear and conventional missiles.¹⁶ Moreover, the suspension of the New START Treaty by Russia has jeopardised the last standing arms control pact between the US and Russia, highlighting severe trust deficits and the potential for escalated arms races.¹⁷ The challenges are not limited to nuclear arms control. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which aims to regulate the international trade in conventional arms, has also encountered significant hurdles. Despite being a landmark agreement under the UN framework, many countries, especially major arms exporters, have struggled or been reluctant to fully align their national laws and practices with the treaty's standards.¹⁸

It is important to note that the overview provided in Box 2 is not exhaustive and does not cover all treaties, such as those establishing nuclear weapon-free zones. Rather, the snapshot underscores the dynamic and often precarious state of international disarmament efforts in the current geopolitical climate. As depicted in Box 2, many of the central disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation agreements are currently under strain for various reasons. These include non-compliance by key states, limited enforcement mechanisms, and outright withdrawal from treaties. Prioritising national security policies over international agreements, selective compliance, non-compliance, and recent withdrawals from critical agreements all highlight trust deficits, enforcement challenges, and the difficulty in maintaining international consensus.

Obstacles to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation

Three main elements are often referred to as substantial obstacles to overcoming the disarmament deadlock: increasing military spending, the renewed focus on nuclear weapons, and the advent of new technologies. The past years have seen nuclear weapons states hardening their rhetoric on the significance of nuclear weapons for national security and therefore investing in extensive nuclear modernisations and expansions. The nine nuclear-armed states – the US, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel – are either openly or believed to be modernising or expanding their nuclear arsenals.³ The escalation in nuclear capabilities and rhetoric among major powers signals a shift towards a more militarised global environment. Substantial investments in nuclear arsenals and the emphasis on their strategic importance heighten the risk of an arms race and increase the potential for geopolitical tensions to escalate into open conflict.

BOX 3. DEVELOPMENTS IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAMS

Russia: In 2022, amidst heightened tensions due to the conflict in Ukraine, President Putin emphasised Russia's readiness to defend its sovereignty and interests, explicitly mentioning the country's advanced nuclear arsenal as a deterrent. Russia continues to modernise its nuclear forces, introducing new systems such as the hypersonic missile Avangard and the intercontinental ballistic missile Sarmat.¹⁹

China: In response to perceived threats and regional tensions, China has significantly increased its nuclear capabilities, with the Pentagon estimating in 2022 that China's nuclear warhead stockpile could exceed 1,000 by the 2030s.²⁰ This expansion includes the development of new missile systems and enhancements to its nuclear triad.

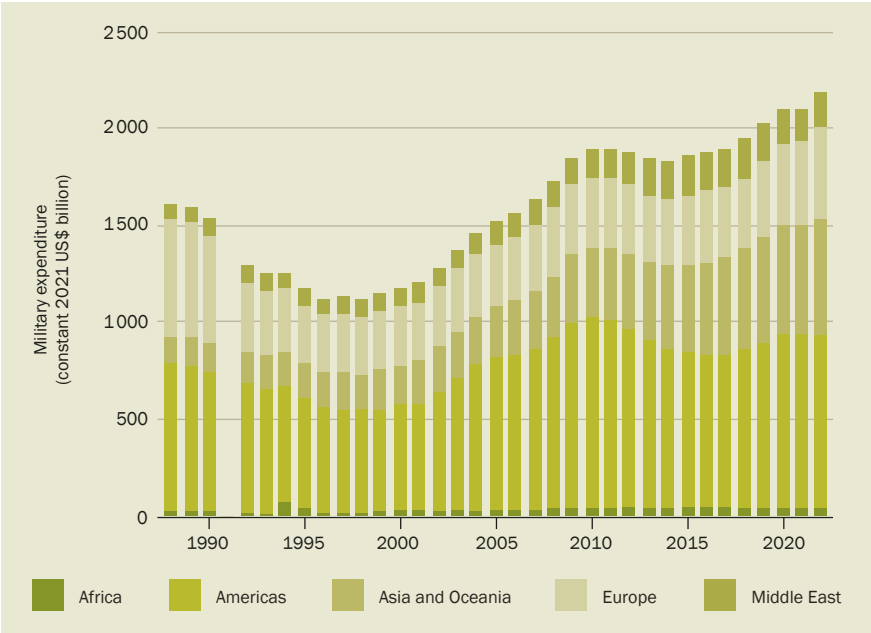
United States: The 2022 Nuclear Posture Review under President Joe Biden reaffirms the US's commitment to nuclear deterrence with a focus on modernising its nuclear triad. This includes investments in new Columbia-class submarines, B-21 bombers, and ground-based strategic deterrent missiles.²¹ According to estimates by the independent organisation Arms Control Association, the total sustainment and modernisation costs of US nuclear forces could reach \$2 trillion over the next 30 years.²²

At the same time, the total international military expenditure reached a new high of \$2443 billion in 2023.²³ The volume of global transfers of major conventional arms also increased, indicating growing militarisation. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), world military spending has been rising since the 1990s. As shown in Figure 2, global military spending grew by 19% in the decade from 2013 to 2022, with consistent annual increases since 2015.²³ In 2022, Europe saw a 13% rise in military expenditure, marking the largest annual increase in the post-Cold War era. This surge was primarily driven by significant spending hikes in Russia and Ukraine, although many other European countries also elevated their military budgets. Additionally, increased spending in parts of Asia and Oceania further contributed to the global growth in military expenditures for the year.²⁴

Technological arms races are intensifying global military dynamics, as nations strive to gain the upper hand through advancements in defence technologies. Major global powers as well as NATO are deeply invested in achieving technological superiority, emphasising the crucial role of technology in future security.²⁵ Key technologies being discussed include autonomous weapons systems, which have the potential to revolutionise warfare by enabling unmanned vehicles and drones to make independent decisions on the battlefield. Additionally, advancements in cyber warfare, quantum computing, and biotechnology are shaping future military

capabilities. These technologies have the potential to transform the nature of warfare, offering new ways to conduct operations, gather intelligence, and project power. For example, cyber warfare can disrupt critical infrastructure and communication networks, quantum computing could break existing encryption methods, and biotechnology might enable the development of new forms of biological weapons or enhance soldiers' physical and cognitive abilities through genetic modifications. Russian President Putin has notably emphasised the strategic importance of artificial intelligence (AI), asserting that 'whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the ruler of the world'.²⁶ As the race for technological dominance escalates, these high-tech solutions are becoming central to national security strategies, shaping everything from cybersecurity defences to advanced combat scenarios. The global focus on these technologies is set to intensify, with nations eager to secure a competitive advantage in the evolving security environment.

Figure 2. World military expenditure, by region, 1988–2022



Note: The absence of data for the Soviet Union in 1991 means that no total can be calculated for that year.
Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, Apr. 2023.



General Assembly approves global arms trade treaty, April 2013.
Photo: UN Photo, UN7294518.

KEY DYNAMICS AND CHALLENGES TO MULTILATERAL DISARMAMENT

Two critical trends are shaping UN disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation: a significant trust deficit between member states and declining confidence in multilateral disarmament institutions. While interrelated, the trends present distinct challenges to disarmament efforts. By examining these key dynamics, this chapter aims to suggest potential avenues for better aligning the disarmament framework to current complex realities.

TRUST DEFICIT BETWEEN MEMBER STATES

The first overarching trend in disarmament and arms control concerns how the erosion of trust between member states is concretely reflected in disarmament discussions. As Guterres in February 2024 emphasised to the Conference on Disarmament, 'global trust is falling apart'.²⁷ A Representative of Malaysia to the First Committee, speaking during its 78th session in 2023, argued:

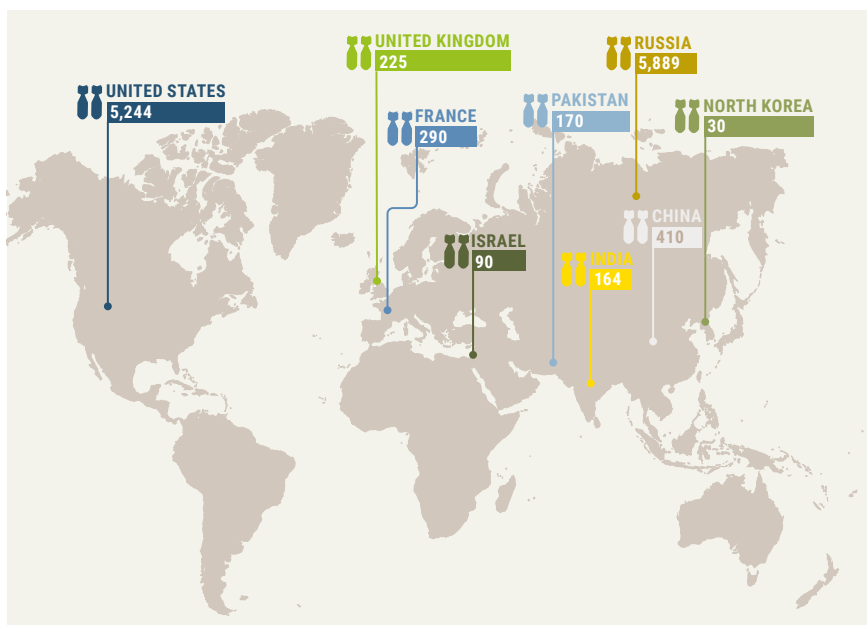
Malaysia is concerned by the widening of the trust deficit witnessed in the First Committee in recent years. This is reflected in the general tenor of debates, and in the consideration of draft resolutions and decisions, on which consensus is becoming increasingly difficult.²⁸

Similarly, UN staff interviewed for this report noted how the trust deficit between states is apparent in the abandonment of or disengagement from both bilateral and multilateral key disarmament agreements. 'Everything has come to a standstill'²⁹, as no consensus can be reached either within and outside the UN framework, a UN interviewee emphasised. This erosion of trust is particularly apparent across the various categories of disarmament as discussions on nuclear weapons and conventional weapons separately provide distinct insights into the lack of trust. Discussions on nuclear disarmament and conventional weapons illustrate how a trust deficit in disarmament contexts is evident in two ways: distrust in treaty compliance and distrust in good intent in treaty negotiations.

Nuclear disarmament and trust

As regards multilateral agreements, the trust deficit is particularly visible in the nuclear sphere. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), a cornerstone in global efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation and promote disarmament, includes crucial provisions for disarmament under its Article VI, which obligates signatories, particularly nuclear-armed states, to pursue negotiations towards nuclear disarmament. While the NPT legitimises the nuclear arsenals of the five recognised nuclear states under its framework - the US, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom - it also obliges them to work towards disarmament. These five states are recognised because they were the only ones that had tested nuclear weapons before the NPT was opened for signature in 1968. However, since the NPT's inception, four additional states – India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel – have developed nuclear weapons outside the NPT framework, further complicating global non-proliferation efforts and highlighting the challenges of achieving comprehensive nuclear disarmament.

Map 1. Estimated global nuclear warhead inventories 2023



Source: Hans M. Kristensen, Matt Korda, Eliana.

As of 2023, the global nuclear arsenal has shown a reduction in total numbers.³⁰ However, this decrease is primarily driven by the dismantling of retired warheads by the US and Russia, whilst operational warheads are growing in numbers.³¹ As Map 1 shows, the 2023 estimated global nuclear warhead inventories of the world are dominated by the US and Russia.³⁰ The expansion and modernisation of nuclear capabilities highlights a significant trust deficit with regard to the willingness and ability of nuclear-armed states to fulfil their disarmament promises, exacerbating global security tensions and challenging the integrity of the NPT framework.³² Historically, disarmament and arms control negotiations were largely bipolar, focusing on the strategic interests and security concerns of the US and the Soviet Union, which were the principal actors in shaping global arms control treaties during the Cold War⁹.

Today, Russian representatives often assert their country's constructive engagement, claiming to prioritise cooperation and seek common ground on arms control and disarmament issues themselves. They accuse the US and allies of transforming disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation into 'an instrument for advancing unilateral priorities'.³³ American representatives dismiss Russian claims and

emphasise the US' role as a 'devoted guardian' of the world's disarmament and arms control, while asserting that Russia actively repudiates disarmament cooperation.³³ This lingering adversarial mindset, however, now contends with a broader spectrum of voices advocating for a more cooperative and inclusive approach.

A national representative from a UN member state described how non-nuclear states view the NPT as being 'exploited by nuclear-armed states to maintain a status quo that benefits them, rather than advancing towards a nuclear-free world'.³⁴ This was echoed by civil society representatives, who described how this discrepancy fuels a perception of the NPT as unfair amongst disarmament advocates.³⁵ The focus on 'good faith' in the NPT – which is meant to ensure that nuclear-armed states are genuinely working towards reducing and eventually eliminating their nuclear arsenals, rather than merely maintaining the status quo – has been undermined by actions such as Russia's announcement in 2023 of the deployment of non-strategic nuclear weapons to Belarus.³⁶ However, the Western critique of Russia that followed has been weakened by a perception of Western hypocrisy in the Global South, for example pointing to NATO's nuclear weapons-sharing arrangements under which the US has deployed approximately 100 B-61 nuclear weapons to locations in 5 EU and NATO member states (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and Türkiye) according to SIPRI.³¹ Recent literature on nuclear disarmament points to the disarmament rhetoric within the NPT framework as enabling nuclear states to present themselves as responsible actors while continuing to modernise their arsenals. This creates distrust not only in the compliance of states with the treaty but in the intention behind the treaty design and commitment³⁷.

As emerging powers like China and other BRICS nations demand a role in crafting treaties that impact global security, seeking to dismantle entrenched power structures favouring a select few, hegemonic security paradigms are challenged.³⁸ In 2022, a representative from Mexico commented at the 77th session of the First Committee that 'the assertion that nuclear weapons guarantee security is unsustainable, intrinsically immoral and an insult to our intelligence'.³⁹ Nuclear disarmament efforts are hampered by perceptions of Western double-standards and a sense that the Global South's interests are being deprioritised in nuclear diplomacy. This perception is evident in the discussions around the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which has been widely supported by nations in the Global South who advocate for a non-nuclear approach to security. In 2017, two-thirds of the UN adopted the TPNW. Alongside the nine nuclear-armed states, most European countries, including Denmark, have opposed the TPNW, arguing that it risks undermining Article 6 of the NPT which addresses nuclear disarmament.⁴⁰

BOX 4. THE BAN TREATY

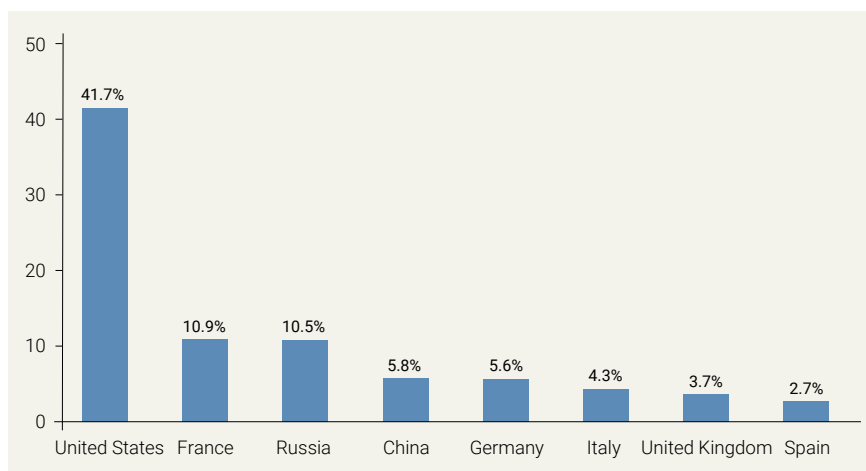
The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, also known as the Ban Treaty, entered into force in January 2021 with the approval of 122 nations. As the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons, the TPNW mandates its parties to never develop, test, produce, acquire, possess, stockpile, use, or threaten to use nuclear weapons. The nuclear weapons states (the US, Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel) did not participate in the treaty negotiations and have not signed the treaty. Most NATO members, including Denmark, also did not support the treaty, aligning with the stance of the nuclear-armed states.

While NATO obligations prevent TPNW ratification, some NATO member states have actively sought to show their support for the treaty. Norway has consciously engaged in the humanitarian initiative around the TPNW to strengthen its own security⁴¹ and in 2022, Norway became the first NATO country to commit to observe a TPNW conference, with Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands following suit.⁴² This illustrates that there is some navigational space despite NATO membership, highlighting how a principled rejection of the TPNW can be perceived as an unwillingness to engage with legitimate concerns of the broader UN membership. Recent scholarship also argues that Finland and Sweden can effectively advocate for nuclear disarmament as NATO members through collaborative Nordic efforts.⁴³

Disparities in conventional arms control

The trust deficit between member states extends beyond nuclear negotiations to the arena of conventional weapons, exemplified by the inconsistent adherence to frameworks around the global arms trade. Adopted in 2013, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) emerged from a campaign initiated by NGOs like Oxfam, Amnesty International, and the International Action Network on Small Arms. This movement, which began in 2003, sought to regulate the arms trade and ensure that the transfer of conventional weapons does not fuel conflict or undermine global peace and security. The treaty received robust support from the Global South, regions that have often borne the brunt of unchecked arms proliferation and witnessed first-hand how disparities in the arms trade can exacerbate conflicts, impede sustainable development, and undermine efforts in peacekeeping and conflict resolution.⁴⁴ The global arms trade predominantly involves the export of weapons from countries in the Global North to nations in the Global South, highlighting a significant geographic and economic disparity in the international arms trade.⁴⁵ As Figure 3 illustrates, the distribution of global arms exports from 2019 to 2023 was led by countries of the

Figure 3. The world's biggest arms exporters




Note: Share of global arms exports from 2019 to 2023, by country. Based on size/value of arms transfer independent of purchase price.

Source: SIPRI.

Global North, particularly the US which was responsible for 41.7% of the world's arms exports. France followed with 10.9%, with Russia closely behind at 10.5%.⁴⁶ This data is indicative of the dominant role played by these countries in the international arms trade.

During the ATT campaign, representatives from the Global South voiced a poignant metaphor, likening their situation to 'mopping the floor with the taps open'.⁴⁷ They argued that without stringent controls on the arms trade, any effort towards peace and development was fundamentally compromised, underscoring the need for the Global North to 'turn the tap off' and adhere more strictly to treaty commitments.⁴⁷ After a decade of advocacy efforts, the ATT entered into force in 2014, becoming the first legally binding instrument ever negotiated in the UN to establish common standards for the international transfer of conventional weapons. Since then, many countries, especially major arms exporters, have struggled or been reluctant to fully align their national laws and practices with the treaty's standards, resulting in a gap between the commitment made on paper and the reality of arms trade controls.¹⁸ For example, the United Kingdom has faced significant criticism for continuing to export weapons to Saudi Arabia despite allegations of violations of international humanitarian law in Yemen, highlighting a gap between its commitments on paper and its actual arms trade practices.⁴⁸ NGOs and academic circles have raised stark criticism of this non-compliance, accusing these countries of prioritising economic benefits over the humanitarian and peacekeeping objectives of the ATT.⁴⁹

During the treaty negotiations, powerful arms-exporting nations such as the US and the United Kingdom framed their arms export practices within a discourse of morality, responsibility, and legitimacy, claiming that their national regulations surpass those mandated by the ATT.¹⁸ This effectively allowed these countries to maintain or even expand their arms exports under the guise of compliance, positioning the ATT as a tool that facilitates the legitimisation of contemporary liberal warfare and preparation rather than advancing the cause of human security.¹⁸ This situation has led to perceptions that powerful arms-exporting countries may manipulate the treaty system to serve their interests, thereby undermining trust in the treaty's effectiveness and intentions.



The multipolar reality of the UN has provided the Global South with novel opportunities to voice concerns and dissatisfaction with the status quo. Failure to acknowledge and tackle these tensions risks perpetuating global instability and insecurity.

Previous studies on the UN have highlighted a pervasive trust deficit among member states.⁵⁰ However, by specifically focusing on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation this report brings new insights into how this trust deficit is evident within the UN. This section has shown that this trust deficit in disarmament contexts manifests in distrust in treaty compliance and distrust in good intent in treaty negotiations. It finds that the lack of trust extends beyond mere compliance to deeper issues regarding the sincerity and integrity of treaty negotiations and cuts across various categories, affecting both nuclear weapons discussions and debates on the conventional arms trade. While this lack of trust is not new, the multipolar reality of the UN has provided the Global South with novel opportunities to voice concerns and dissatisfaction with the status quo. Failure to acknowledge and tackle these tensions risks perpetuating global instability and insecurity. The next section will explore the second significant trend identified in this report: the decreasing confidence in the effectiveness of disarmament and arms control.

DECREASING CONFIDENCE IN THE UN DISARMAMENT MACHINERY

Another key trend is that of decreasing confidence in the capabilities of the UN disarmament machinery – the bodies and hard law that constitute the field of multilateral disarmament and arms control. Indeed, the authority of, and trust in, the


UN as the main global governance body are increasingly undermined and challenged.⁵¹ While this is a well-established trend in the UN system, this section dives into how it plays out in disarmament discussions. This section shows how a decreasing confidence in the capabilities of the UN disarmament machinery specifically is evident in a shift to soft law rather than hard law and an increasing tension between the opportunities and challenges posed by new technologies. These trends are particularly apparent in discussions at the UN on emerging technologies and outer space, which provide distinct insights into the declining confidence in the effectiveness of multilateral disarmament and arms control efforts.

Emerging technologies: challenges and opportunities

The rapid pace of technological arms races places unprecedented pressure on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. As the Agenda for Disarmament acknowledges: 'the combined risks of new weapon technologies could have a game-changing impact on our future security'.⁵¹ The introduction of AI in military capabilities has prompted fears of a new kind of arms race, one less about the number of weapons and more about their sophistication and autonomy.⁵² Though still speculative, it is believed that AI will have the capability to refine information collection and support rapid decision-making, improve the ability to detect and provide early warnings of missile threats, as well as facilitate the use of smaller, more accurately targeted nuclear warheads.⁵³ These advancements could represent a significant shift from traditional strategic paradigms, suggesting a future where technological superiority could redefine the principles of nuclear deterrence and strategic security.⁵³ Specifically, the US and China have emerged as frontrunners in the strategic incorporation of AI into their defence capabilities.⁵⁴ Concerned by this development, SG Guterres in 2023 highlighted to the UNSC that the progress made in AI over the past years could accelerate the arms race and significantly increase the risk of a future nuclear war.⁵⁵ From an arms race perspective, simply the idea that other nations possessing nuclear weapons intend to integrate or leverage AI in their nuclear arsenals could spark a competition for technological dominance, thereby escalating the risk of a nuclear confrontation.⁵⁶

On the one hand, the introduction of new technologies fluctuates in disarmament discussions at the UN as an argument for the need for entirely new multilateral approaches that are specifically tailored to manage these technological advancements and their implications for international security.⁵⁷ Simply put, some member states are not convinced that the existing frameworks are able to

handle the unique complexities of contemporary warfare. On the other hand, new technologies are being highlighted by other member states in disarmament forums for their possible positive contribution to verification.⁵⁸



The introduction of new technologies not only risks accelerating existing arms races but also raises concerns about the potential for a future nuclear confrontation, thereby undermining confidence in existing disarmament frameworks.

Blockchain has been presented as a possible tool to overcome the decreasing confidence in disarmament and arms control mechanisms. Blockchain technology works by securely recording and verifying data across a decentralised network of computers. Each transaction or piece of data is encrypted and linked to the previous one through a process called hashing, which converts the data into a fixed-size string of characters unique to each block.⁵⁹ If any data is altered, the hash will change, making it immediately apparent that tampering has occurred. This system prevents unauthorised alterations, providing a transparent and reliable platform for states to share information and verify compliance without relying solely on mutual trust. Therefore, blockchain could 'help verify the dismantlement of nuclear warheads in a safe, secure and reliable way'⁵⁹, which, in turn, could foster greater verification, transparency and accountability: key elements that are often lacking due to the sensitivity of nuclear information and the inherent suspicion among nuclear-armed states.

The introduction of new technologies not only risks accelerating existing arms races but also raises concerns about the potential for a future nuclear confrontation, thereby undermining confidence in existing disarmament frameworks. The current disarmament machinery is not adequately developed to tackle these emerging technologies, speaking to greater concerns about the capability of the UN system. At the same time, they can offer opportunities for innovative approaches to verification and transparency, as exemplified by the potential use of blockchain technology to enhance nuclear disarmament verification processes. Hence, while emerging technologies challenge the current disarmament framework, these technologies might also have the potential to foster new forms of collaboration and trust-building in disarmament forums.

Soft law/hard law discussions

Multilateral disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation has mainly focused on treaty building and development of legal obligations – what is often referred to as hard law. However, whether hard law can keep up with the current technological pace is being called into question. Verification and compliance issues complicate the effectiveness of hard law, as advanced technologies enable states to conceal weapons programmes, undermining trust in these agreements.⁶⁰ This has led to a growing focus on the importance of establishing shared norms and codes of conduct – what is known as soft law. Soft law offers more flexibility and quicker adaptability to the immediate challenges of global security, as UN staff members described.⁶¹ While this can encompass confidence-building measures or voluntary codes of conduct that aim to promote transparency and cooperation among states, it lacks the enforceability of hard law. The discussion is particularly apparent around outer space security. The most notable disarmament and arms control achievements in space security occurred during the Cold War era. These culminated in the Outer Space Treaty (OST) of 1967, which established basic guidelines for nations' activities in outer space, including the prohibition of placing nuclear weapons or any other WMD in orbit around Earth. Despite these early steps, there has been minimal advancement in developing binding agreements to address the new challenges in space security, such as the commercialisation of outer space and the deployment of anti-satellite weapons.⁶² The commercialisation of space has accelerated, with companies like SpaceX launching 1,937 out of 2,917 US satellites in 2023 alone.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the proliferation of anti-satellite weapons, evidenced by at least 11 known tests conducted by the US, Russia, China, and India, poses a growing threat to space security and has created hazardous space debris.⁶³

While the OST prohibits the placement of weapons of mass destruction in space, it does not explicitly restrict all types of military activities or weaponisation, leaving room for varied interpretations of what qualifies as peaceful space activities. A lack of shared definitions concerning behaviours in outer space therefore provides little foundation for common conduct. In UN disarmament discussions, Russia mainly advocates for the drafting of a multilateral legally binding instrument that would 'prohibit the deployment of weapons of any kind, as well as the use or threat of force in outer space'⁶⁴. The EU and its member states, on the other hand, often argue:

The most pragmatic, realistic and concrete way to strengthen space security and to prevent misunderstandings and miscalculations at this point in time, is to agree upon norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours and to increase transparency and predictability of space activities.⁶⁴

Though many states subscribing to the soft law school of thought are not categorically rejecting supporting or participating in legally binding instruments, they argue that soft law should be the foundation from which hard law can be agreed upon. While some argue for the need for detailed definitions and characterisation of disarmament matters to enhance specificity, reaching agreement on a shared vocabulary often proves arduous and time-consuming. Conversely, as described by UN staff members as well as representatives from member states, many member states contend that lacking definitions impedes the development of legally binding measures.⁶⁵ This poses an opportunity for small states, as exemplified by Norway and the Netherlands who have exercised significant ‘soft power’ by utilising their reputations as peaceful nations and their diplomatic skills to influence debates that have focused on norm development. During its 2018 tenure on the UNSC, the Netherlands pushed for international norms to ensure the peaceful use of outer space, advocating for the establishment of transparency and confidence-building measures and supporting the work of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.⁶⁶


Summing up, the multilateral disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation landscape faces significant challenges, including decreasing confidence in disarmament and arms control and evolving technological arms races. Traditional hard law approaches struggle to keep pace with rapid technological advancements and non-traditional security threats, leading to growing calls for more adaptable soft law initiatives. Despite these challenges, emerging technologies such as AI and blockchain offer opportunities for innovative verification and transparency measures. While the decreasing confidence in the capabilities of the UN is well-established, zooming in on the disarmament machinery allows us to better understand how this impacts disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Specifically, this section points to a shift to soft law rather than hard law and an increasing tension between the opportunities and challenges posed by new technologies as reflections of this decreasing confidence.



Security Council meets on protection of civilians in armed conflict, June 2024.
Photo: UN Photo, UN71048632.

AVENUES OF INFLUENCE IN UN DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL

The report confirms two critical trends in the UN system: a significant trust deficit between member states and declining confidence in multilateral disarmament institutions, both of which severely undermine disarmament efforts. While these two trends are well-established, this report shows how these are evident in multilateral disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. From a disarmament perspective, distrust goes beyond mere compliance and extends to a trust deficit in the design and intent behind treaties and agreements, while a lack of confidence is apparent in discussions around the challenges and opportunities posed by new technologies as well as a shift to soft law rather than hard law. This points to a number of areas where a small state with limited resources, like Denmark, can have an impact.



Distrust goes beyond mere compliance and extends to a trust deficit in the design and intent behind treaties and agreements.

Denmark has historically supported international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation initiatives at the UN, aligning with its broader commitment to global peace and security. This include participation in key treaties and conventions, such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as supporting the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty.⁶⁶ Denmark is also a NATO member state, which impacts Denmark's approach to disarmament. Specially, while Denmark does not possess nuclear weapons, it remains under NATO's extended nuclear deterrence, acknowledging the role of nuclear deterrence in the alliance's strategy. Beyond the UN system, Denmark

participates in the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament, a coalition of 16 countries focused on advancing nuclear disarmament through practical steps and bridge-building between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states, which aims to generate new approaches and actionable measures to support the NPT and other international frameworks.⁶⁷ Denmark's campaign to the UNSC emphasised its longstanding commitment to the UN system and its role in fighting global inequality and advancing sustainable development, peace and security.⁷ Informed by the central trends and political dynamics within contemporary multilateral disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation identified in this report, this chapter presents 5 recommendations which identify areas where Denmark is particularly well-positioned to influence the disarmament during its tenure on the UNSC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Bridging soft law and hard law in disarmament forums

A significant hurdle in achieving consensus within disarmament forums is the number of differing beliefs surrounding the application of soft law and hard law. These terms are often presented as contradictory forces in disarmament dialogues. However, recent discussions within the UN suggest that these approaches are not mutually exclusive but can be complementary.

This provides a fresh perspective on how integrating the flexibility of soft law with the enforceability of hard law can create more effective and adaptable disarmament frameworks. Denmark could be inspired by countries like Norway and the Netherlands who have exercised significant 'soft power' by leveraging their reputations as peaceful nations and their diplomatic skills to influence debates focused on norm development in the area of outer space security.

Denmark is well-positioned to advance this approach, particularly in the context of outer space security. As an active member of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, which addresses a wide range of space-related topics including space security, space science, and space law, Denmark can introduce discussions on how soft law and hard law can be harmonised. By advocating for a combined legal strategy in space security, Denmark can help address the unique challenges posed by the outer space environment, such as satellite traffic management and the prevention of space debris. Promoting this approach in COPUOS will not only enhance the effectiveness of space governance but also set a precedent for other areas of international law where similar tensions between soft and hard law exist.

Integrating the debates on soft law and hard law can be supported by conducting a thorough stocktaking of current discussions to develop flexible, non-exhaustive core definitions that can be tailored to specific contexts. Additionally, formulating potential indicators and themes can facilitate this integration, allowing for a more adaptable and responsive framework that addresses the unique challenges of various disarmament contexts.

Strengthening Nordic cooperation in the area of disarmament and arms control

The trust deficit between member states is a significant dynamic affecting multilateral disarmament and arms control across domains – from nuclear proliferation to the global arms trade. Small states can foster inclusive, human-centred disarmament policies that build trust and confidence, including between the Global North and Global South and, as such, strengthen the disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation architecture.⁶⁹ To address the trust deficit and effectively utilise limited resources, Denmark should focus on enhancing the integration of research and policy. This can be achieved by fostering better communication and collaboration between researchers and policymakers, ensuring that insights and evidence from research are directly applied to policy development. This approach would optimise the use of resources and strengthen the overall disarmament and arms control efforts.

Denmark could consider strengthening its collaboration with other Nordic NATO members to draw on existing lessons-learned by these states. This includes Norway, which has long balanced NATO membership and active disarmament engagements, as well as Finland and Sweden, who have recently joined NATO and are determining how this affects their disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation efforts. This could include supporting joint research initiatives involving institutions such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, and the Danish Institute for International Studies with the aim of engaging in a broader dialogue on lessons-learned and more effectively integrating existing research knowledge into the policy level.

Integrating disarmament with broader global challenges

The growing understanding among international stakeholders is that disarmament cannot be considered in isolation; it is intrinsically linked with other global challenges such as development, climate change, and inequality. This interconnectedness

necessitates the integration of disarmament into broader security and development discussions, highlighting the need for a holistic approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Denmark has a strong history of integrating political themes and should continue to leverage its diplomatic expertise to ensure that discussions on disarmament also encompass these broader dimensions. Denmark can enhance this advocacy by linking disarmament to broader security and development goals, demonstrating how effective arms control contributes to overall global stability and human well-being. This could include identifying areas (factors/ mechanisms) where these links are experienced as particularly pertinent through support to objective and open-ended formats that provide voice to the broader UN base. Denmark could also support existing initiatives that delve into the nexus between various global issues to identify integrated solutions for compound security challenges such as the UNIDIR new focus area on 'Interconnected Global Risks'.⁷⁰

Narrowing North-South disarmament divides

Disarmament efforts are often challenged by perceptions of Western double-standards and the notion that the Global South's interests are being deprioritised. The Danish campaign has emphasised the need to strengthen interactions with the broader UN membership, highlighting the need to listen and integrate different perspectives on the disarmament, arms and non-proliferation agenda.

The growing sense of double standards and limited trust in the capacity of the UN underscores the need to be transparent and avoid finger wagging and invite broad engagement. The upcoming Summit for the Future, where one of the key deliverables is 'revitalised disarmament and arms control efforts',⁷¹ could present an opportunity to show a willingness to engage, for example by organising an off-site side event during the Summit for the Future on building trust in disarmament to facilitate dialogue across North-South divides.

Leveraging emerging technologies for good

The deployment of advanced technologies such as AI and blockchain in the realm of international security introduces both opportunities and challenges as described in this report.

Navigating this complex landscape requires a careful, informed approach to ensure that technological advancements contribute positively to international peace efforts. Through initiatives like 'Tech for Democracy' and the strategic appointment of a Tech Ambassador in Silicon Valley, Denmark has demonstrated its commitment to merging technological innovation with democratic values and enhancing international diplomacy. As a recognised high-tech nation, it successfully facilitates critical dialogues between the tech sector and governmental bodies, which are essential for responsibly incorporating technology into security frameworks.

To operationalise this, Denmark could draw on the successful strategies from the Tech for Democracy initiative, such as facilitating critical engagement with the tech sector through closed-door virtual roundtables. This approach could be adapted to disarmament by organising similar roundtables, bringing together experts in AI and blockchain, disarmament policymakers, and representatives from the tech industry, which could focus on developing concrete applications of these technologies to enhance verification processes in disarmament. Including a variety of stakeholders could be instrumental in guiding these conversations, ensuring that the initiatives are grounded in a deep understanding of both the technological aspects and the disarmament context.

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APPENDIX A

List of disarmament treaties. Data collected from the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).

Nuclear weapons treaties		
1959	Antarctic Treaty	A treaty that sets aside Antarctica as a scientific preserve, establishes freedom of scientific investigation and bans military activity on that continent.
1963	Partial Test Ban Treaty	The Partial Test Ban Treaty prohibited all test detonations of nuclear weapons except for those conducted underground.
1967	Outer Space Treaty	The treaty provides guidelines for the exploration and use of outer space, the Moon and other celestial bodies. Parties will refrain from placing in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, install such weapons on celestial bodies, or station such weapons in outer space in any other manner.
1968	Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone	A treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.
1971	Seabed Treaty	A treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof.
1979	Moon Agreement	An agreement stating the Moon should be used for the benefit of all states and all peoples of the international community. It also expresses a desire to prevent the Moon from becoming a source of international conflict. Bans any military use of celestial bodies, including weapon testing or as military bases
1985	Treaty of Rarotonga	The treaty bans the use, testing, and possession of nuclear weapons within the borders of the 'South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone'.
1995	Treaty of Bangkok	A treaty between 10 Southeast Asian member states under the auspices of the ASEAN: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. It obliges its members not to develop, manufacture or otherwise acquire, possess or have control over nuclear weapons
1996	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty	A treaty that bans all nuclear explosions, for both civilian and military purposes, in all environments.
1996	Treaty of Pelindaba	The African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty. It prohibits the research, development, manufacture, stockpiling, acquisition, testing, possession, control or stationing of nuclear explosive devices in the territory of parties to the Treaty and the dumping of radioactive wastes in the African zone by Treaty parties.
2005	Nuclear Terrorism Convention	A United Nations treaty designed to criminalise acts of nuclear 'terrorism' and to promote police and judicial cooperation to prevent, investigate and punish those acts.
2006	Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia	The treaty is a legally binding commitment by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan not to manufacture, acquire, test or possess nuclear weapons.
2017	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons	A treaty that provides for a time-bound framework for negotiations leading to the verified and irreversible elimination of its nuclear weapons programme for signatory states.
Chemical weapons treaties		
1919	Treaty of Versailles	Contains provisions banning the use of poison gas.
1993	Chemical Weapons Convention	The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction

Biological weapons treaties		
1972	The Biological Weapons Convention	The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction
Conventional weapons treaties		
1980	Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons	A convention that prohibits or restricts the use of certain conventional weapons which are considered excessively injurious or whose effects are indiscriminate.
1990	Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe	A treaty that establishes comprehensive limits on key categories of conventional military equipment in Europe (from the Atlantic to the Urals) and mandated the destruction of excess weaponry.
1997	Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention	Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. An international agreement that bans antipersonnel landmines.
1997	Inter-American Convention on Firearms	A convention that establishes a regional standard for the control of the illicit manufacturing and trafficking in firearms.
1999	Inter-American Convention on Transparency	A convention that establishes voluntary annual reporting by member states on their arms imports, exports, and procurement through national production of any of seven categories of weapons – battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, and missiles and missile launchers.
2008	Convention on Cluster Munitions	An international treaty that prohibits the use, transfer, and stockpiling of cluster bombs – a type of explosive weapon which scatters submunitions ('bomblets') over an area.
2010	Kinshasa Convention	The Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition, Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair or Assembly.
2013	Arms Trade Treaty	A multilateral treaty that regulates the international trade of conventional weapons for the purpose of contributing to international and regional peace, reducing human suffering, and promoting cooperation, transparency, and responsible action by and among states
Multiple weapons treaties		
1899	1st Peace Conference at the Hague	A series of treaties, including the Prohibition of the Discharge of Projectiles and Explosives from Balloons or by Other New Analogous Methods; Prohibition of the Use of Projectiles with the Sole Object to Spread Asphyxiating Poisonous Gases; Prohibition of the Use of Bullets which can Easily Expand or Change their Form inside the Human Body.
1907	2nd Peace Conference at the Hague	A series of treaties, including: Convention relative to the Laying of Automatic Submarine Contact Mines; Convention concerning the Prohibition of the Use of Projectiles with the Sole Object to Spread Asphyxiating Poisonous Gases; Declaration Prohibiting the Discharge of Projectiles and Explosives from Balloons.
1925	Geneva Protocol	The Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare.
1976	Environmental Modification Convention	A convention prohibiting the military or other hostile use of environmental modification techniques having widespread, long-lasting or severe effects – includes any technique for changing – through the deliberate manipulation of natural processes – the dynamics, composition or structure of the Earth, including its biota, lithosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere, or of outer space.

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