

Nuclear Weapons Free Zones and Zones of Peace: Interview with Pedro Seabra



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The Center for International Studies, University Institute of Lisbon (CEI-IUL) is a multidisciplinary research center at the Instituto Universitário de Lisboa. One of your most recent projects looks at existing denuclearized zones and aims to assess linkages with the zone of peace and cooperation in the South Atlantic. How do these linkages manifest themselves?

Denuclearized zones (also known as nuclear-weapons free-zones - NWFZs) are generally credited as the most effective instrument to keep regions free of nuclear weapons. Zones of peace, on the other hand, have been mostly overlooked because they fall short of advancing any formal denuclearization commitments of their own and lack any formal associated guaranties from nuclear-weapon states. Yet, zones of peace have managed to display considerable endurance over time and have often acted as buffer mechanisms and as stabilizing factors in various parts of the world and on many levels, including non-proliferation. Our ongoing project highlights how they can help generate an alternative strategy and narrative to (regional) denuclearization, thereby achieving at least some of the practical goals of nuclear weapons free zones. We believe these dynamics can be best untangled by exploring overlapping structures, mandates and agendas of key countries in the region in question, as our case study, the South Atlantic, attests to.

To what extent could the EU engage with a zone of peace and cooperation in the South Atlantic and other similar initiatives worldwide?

The EU's toolbox has long included support for regional non-proliferation initiatives. Hence, any further encouragement of regional-led initiatives of the sort, whether in the South Atlantic or in any other part of

the world, would only consolidate the EU's role as a substantial normative promoter abroad. However, it is important to emphasize that the (re)emergence of this kind of dynamics usually comes as either a direct reaction against to outside pressures or due to a lack of developments at the international level. That means the EU should avoid imposing a specific format of engagement on non-proliferation matters, as zones of peace are the result of specific regional dynamics a one-size-fits-all approach would fail to appreciate. A demand-driven approach, according to which the EU is engaged by regional actors and works with them as an honest broker, remains the best strategy to achieve denuclearization goals.

What are the prospects for the establishment of new denuclearized zones, also in Europe, in the current context, and what are the main challenges?

A formal denuclearized zone in Europe has been repeatedly floated in the past. However, it is safe to say there is presently no political appetite for such an enterprise on the continent. The trade-off between a symbolical new commitment, and the hurdles of actually agreeing upon such commitment, and then proceeding with its ratification and subsequent implementation, usually tilts the odds against success. Moreover, although conceivably within reach, it could potentially divert efforts and resources from other more pressing non-proliferation agreements, presently more at risk. For the time being, the Middle-East nuclear-weapons free-zone is bound to continue as the most coveted initiative of the kind, albeit there few chances of immediate progress given the present level or regional distrust between every stakeholder involved with the issue.

SMALL STATES AND THE FUTURE OF ARMS CONTROL

After years of stable peace based on a cooperative security system, Europe finds itself in the middle of a new global arms control crisis. Arms control and disarmament regimes are gradually coming to a stalemate and European powers may soon find themselves in an unrestricted and uncontrollable armament races. This worrying trend does not only concern countries engaged in the arms race, but the entire European security environment, including small states.

Therefore, it is essential for small European states not to be passive consumers of security but contribute actively to the re-establishment of an effective arms control system. Their role appears to be increasingly important in the current context of international relations characterized by growing rivalry among major powers.

In addition to implementing commitments based on current international conventions small states can contribute in other ways to advance international cooperation in the arms control field. First and foremost, they can put pressure, alone or in coalition with other states, on those countries involved in the arms race, notably China, Russia and the US, and engage them in a dialogue on arms control. More importantly, they should make a more proactive use of the right to propose arms control and confidence-building measures that international organizations promoting arms control give all participating states, including small ones.

Arms control regimes are also being undermined by new technologies that are currently not subject to any restrictions and can be applied to weapons. Small states have valuable expertise to offer to identify and develop ways and means to control the use of new technologies in warfare.

The arms control system faces a set of new challenges that requires the attention not only of countries involved in the arms race. Small states can play a prominent role in the efforts to revive the arms control process and promote a coordinated international approach.

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EU INSTITUTIONAL NEWS

The European Union delivers a statement at the Fourth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

On 26 November 2019, during the [Fourth Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention](#), the European Union delivered a statement renewing its support for the universal ban on anti-personnel mines (APMs).

[The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention](#), signed in 1997 and ratified in 1999, prohibits the use, development, production, stockpiling and transferring of anti-personnel mines. The Convention also obliges States Parties to identify and destroy all APMs deployed in their territories. Since its ratification, the majority of States Parties have destroyed their respective APMs stockpiles, and nearly half of those that officially had mined areas on their territory have reportedly cleared them. In 2014, during the Review Conference in Maputo (Mozambique), States Parties established the goal of completely eliminating APMs by 2025.

Against this backdrop, the EU reiterated its support for the Convention, defining it as a “success story of effective multilateralism and disarmament diplomacy”. The EU also called on non-States Parties to adhere to the norms of the Convention, acknowledging that in light of ongoing conflicts, more effective measures and plans are needed to tackle the recent proliferation of landmines.

All EU Member States have ratified the Convention and the EU itself has become one of its main financial contributors. The EU has committed over 500 million Euros since the 2014 Review Conference for mine clearance in affected countries.

For more information:

[Full Statement](#)

CONSORTIUM NEWS

The EUNPDC launches “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: History, Threats and Solutions” Short Course

Attention all graduate and post-graduate students in the fields of IT and engineering. The EUNPDC will be holding a short course from **19 to 21 February 2020** on “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: History, Threats and Solutions”. The course will be held at the [VCDNP in Vienna, Austria](#), and will cover the fundamentals of the nuclear fuel cycle, the history of the spread of nuclear weapons and the existing international and national non-proliferation mechanisms. The course will also examine the challenges and opportunities presented by new and emerging technologies. Prior to the in-class session, course participants will be given access to online preparatory materials. To apply, students need to be currently enrolled in a European university, pursuing a graduate or post-graduate degree in the field of IT or engineering.

All application materials should be submitted in English and include:

- A letter of interest of no more than 500 words;
- A letter confirming current enrollment in a graduate/post-graduate program;
- A record of courses taken to date and grades received;
- A request for travel support (if relevant). The VCDNP will cover accommodation for students travelling from outside Vienna upon request and might be in a position to offer travel support for students traveling from within Europe.

Application deadline is **07 January 2020**. All application materials and questions should be sent to apply@vcdnp.org

More information can be found on the VCDNP website at: www.vcdnp.org

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