

## Towards the Tenth NPT Review Conference: Interview with Benjamin Hautecouverture



Benjamin Hautecouverture is Head of the Arms control and Technologies programme at the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique in Paris, and an associate fellow at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, in Ottawa. He is also Technical Director for the EU ATT Outreach Project at Expertise France. Founding member of the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium since 2010, he has written extensively and participated in the international academic debate on global non-proliferation and disarmament regimes, arms control, deterrence and strategic issues, export controls and regional security in Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

The Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS) is a leading European think tank on strategic and international affairs. What aspects and issues of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament does the institute explore?

Strategic and international security issues, including those related to arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament of conventional as well as non-conventional weapons, are at the heart of the "Arms Control and Technologies" programme currently under construction at the Fondation for Strategic Research. As the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) celebrates the 50th anniversary since its entry into force this year, our programme is contributing to this debate by trying to renew the traditional approach to strategic nuclear issues.

In light of the situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Review Conference (RevCon) of the Parties to the NPT has been postponed to a later date in 2021. In your view, what areas and issues need particular attention and should be prioritised during the RevCon?

With more than twenty years of practice on strategic issues, which are also the years in which the European Union has gradually shaped a common policy on nuclear non-proliferation, I have come to the conclusion that the consideration of nuclear issues must be systematically depoliticised and freed of ideological bias if effective action is to be taken. As such, the issues of the right to withdraw from the NPT Treaty (article 10), the right to uranium enrichment and

plutonium reprocessing (as part of so-called peaceful uses, pursuant to article 4), the framework for nuclear Research & Development (R&D) and the impact of emerging technologies on the non-proliferation norm are the real issues on which analysis should now focus specifically.

The drift between nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states is now greater than ever, with the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) recently reaching its 50<sup>th</sup> ratification, which enables its entry into force within 90 days. While the position of the EU on the matter notably has not been unanimous, in what other areas can the EU play a bridge-builder role?

EU countries are at the forefront of civil nuclear technology and are among the largest exporters of nuclear goods, services and technology in the world. As such, they have a particular responsibility for export controls and the production of non-proliferating technologies. However, issues related to the civil uses of nuclear energy are the pillar of the NPT on which attention has traditionally been least focused. This is a pity. The review of Article 4 of the NPT provides an opportunity for Europeans, in the framework of their common policy, to demand a radical and ambitious approach, in line with the ambition of strategic autonomy. Such an ambition shall fuel European foreign and security policies in an international environment where Europeans are more than bridge builders, but shall on the contrary defend strategic interests in their own right.

## A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY FOR NEW START TREATY

With only three months to go before the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New Start) expires on 5 February 2021, the prospect of a collapse of the last remaining US-Russian nuclear arms control treaty looms large on the horizon, spurring fears of a destabilising arms race. Yet, recent mutual concessions agreed between the two sides provide a glimmer of hope.

Under the provisions of the New Start, which allows for a five-year extension, Russia and the US are allowed to deploy a maximum of 1,550 nuclear warheads and 700 missiles and heavy bombers each. In a major shift, the White House, which had previously expressed doubts about whether the treaty was in the US's interest and called for trilateral talks to involve China, has proposed a one-year extension agreement in return for a freeze on the number of strategic nuclear weapons. For its part, the Kremlin, which had initially backed a five-year extension and then proposed an extension for one year without pre-conditions, now accepts a warhead freeze.

A major sticking point is Russia's opposition to the US's new request to establish a more robust inspection regime to monitor compliance (the two sides have long ceased to conduct mutual inspections). Moreover, while President Trump has pushed for a deal before the November election and Former Vice President Joe Biden supports an extension of the treaty without conditions, a number of technical issues remain to be resolved and these may take months to address.

The Europeans' have repeatedly voiced their vital interest in the preservation of the New Start as a pillar of the global arms control architecture, warning of the risks implied by its demise. A treaty extension can provide the basis for new measures to control the more powerful arm systems that nuclear powers are building. It would also send a reassuring signal ahead of the review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), whose outcome remains highly uncertain.

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## Latest Publications

*Beyond the Disarmament Impasse: How Europe Perceives the UK's Disarmament Verification Efforts*, Cristina Varriale, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), 2020

*Current Trends in Ballistic Missile Proliferation*, Emmanuelle Maitre and Lauriane Héau, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS), 2020

*Non-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament: Renewing Multilateralism for the 21st Century. The Role of the United Nations and of the European Union*, Federica Dall'Arche, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) & FEPS, 2020

*Supporting Effective Implementation of United Nations Sanctions on North Korea*, Hugh Griffiths, Small Arms Survey (SAS), 2020

## Network Calls

**SCIENCE · PEACE · SECURITY '21**  
The impact of new technologies: Between destabilization and enabling resilience

The new Science Peace and Security Conference will be held at RWTH Aachen University from *September 8 to September 10, 2021*.

Funded by the German Foundation for Peace Research (DSF), the Volkswagen Foundation (VWS) and the German Research Association for Science, Disarmament and International Security (FONAS), the conference aims at discussing results of on-going research through a dialogue between academics, think tank scholars and the policy community.

For more information visit the [website](#) or register to the [conference's mailing list](#)

## NETWORK NEWS

### The EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Papers Series

As part of its mandate, defined in Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/299 of 26 February 2018, the EU Non-Proliferation Consortium is publishing a new series of Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Policy Papers. One of the latest papers is authored by Elisabeth I-Mi Suh (Germany), research fellow at the German Council on Foreign Relations, an associate PhD fellow at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Studies at the University of Hamburg and a visiting fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

#### *Mapping Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Education in Europe*

##### Summary:

This paper maps activities undertaken to educate the next generation of Europeans on non-proliferation and disarmament-related topics with a view to training future scholars and professionals. Most members of the European network of independent non-proliferation and disarmament think tanks conduct informal and formal educational activities, ranging from courses for students to workshops for young professionals, internships, networking events and mentoring programmes. However, the geographic distribution and dominant political science focus of these efforts illustrate the lack of accessibility and multi-disciplinarity of non-proliferation and disarmament education currently available in Europe. Treating education as empowerment rather than a one-way process of recruitment can facilitate the introduction of new approaches and tools. Education can tap into existing potential among the next generation, such as intercultural competencies, multilingualism or technical know-how. Forms of participatory learning and autonomous project work place more responsibility on the learner to develop the skills required to deal with tasks.

Read the full paper [here](#)

Previous papers can be found [here](#)

## CONSORTIUM NEWS

### The EUNPD Consortium hosts its Ninth Consultative Meeting

On 10 and 11 September 2020, The EUNPDC held its ninth consultative meeting in remote format. The meeting was an opportunity to welcome the new Special Envoy on Disarmament and Non-proliferation and Head of the EEAS Disarmament Non-proliferation and Arms Export Control Division, Ambassador Marjolijn Van Deelen, who focused her presentation on the challenge of multilateralism in arms control.

The meeting also addressed Arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament challenges in the context of the global health crisis; the challenges the EU faces in the run-up to the 10th NPT Review Conference; Artificial Intelligence in weapon systems, the norm of non-use of chemical and biological weapons, key developments in the global and European arms trade, and attempted to elaborate a long-term view on export control regimes.

The virtual format allowed more than 80 European participants representing States, the EU, and research centres of our Consortium network to discuss the thorny questions that the particularly tense strategic environment poses in terms of arms control and international security. Year after year, changes in the technological context in which new weapons systems are emerging are increasingly at the heart of the reflections of our group, with the aim of placing European action at the forefront of the new challenges facing arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament.

Noteworthy this year: for many participants, the global public health crisis will probably contribute to polarising further the debate in arms control and disarmament.

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