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# Cooperative Security:
## A New Paradigm For A World Without Nuclear Weapons?

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## Abstract

*If there is a loose consensus on aiming at a world free of nuclear weapons in the future, there are clear oppositions as to the timeframe as well as the means for achieving this goal. The approach to nuclear disarmament followed to date has only yielded limited success because it has been conceived in isolation from global and regional security environments and threat perceptions. A new paradigm should thus be sought in order to reconcile nuclear powers' security doctrines with global aspirations for a safer world, and ensure that nuclear powers derive their security less from others' insecurity but from mutually beneficial cooperative security. This should not become a pretext for preserving nuclear weapons for ever. It will on the contrary require parallel tracks addressing the initial motivations for acquiring nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD), in particular in the context of regional conflicts, as well as dealing with the current issues necessarily related to nuclear disarmament (missile defence, weaponization of space, conventional imbalances and future weapon systems). Ultimately, in a globalised nuclear-weapon free world, state security will not require nuclear weapons because it will be inserted into a broader network encompassing all aspects of security addressed in cooperative and multilateral approaches.*

## 1. Disagreements on the Best Route to Nuclear Disarmament

The ultimate goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons, expressed in the very first resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, is regularly reaffirmed by all states, including the nuclear powers. It is at the heart of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the commitments adopted at its Review Conferences in 1995, 2000 and 2010. It was solemnly proclaimed by President Obama in his 2009 Prague speech. However, 68 years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki and two decades after the end of the Cold War, the world's nuclear arsenals are still estimated to total more than 17,000 warheads, nearly 94% of which are

* In the author's previous career as a French diplomat, he was involved in several arms control and disarmament negotiations. He only expresses here his personal views. He wishes to thank Jonathan Granoff and Gustav Lindström for their contribution to this paper, which was presented at the meeting of the Berlin Framework Forum on 21 February 2013.

in the hands of the United States and Russia.[*] This is a real improvement compared to the 65,000 weapons active in 1985, but the fact that all nuclear powers keep modernizing their arsenals and some increase theirs shows how much progress is still needed to achieve the common goal of nuclear disarmament. The firepower of the sole US and Russian deployed nuclear weapons still equals 700 times the explosive firepower of all the bombs exploded during World War II (expressed in tons of TNT).[†]

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Because of the primary responsibility of the two main nuclear powers, their bilateral negotiations and agreements have until now remained the principal channel for both preventing further "vertical" proliferation, i.e. ceilings on numbers of delivery vehicles and warheads, and reducing actual stockpiles by dismantlement of delivery vehicles or non-deployment of warheads. This process, started in the early 1970s, did yield the above-mentioned reductions. However, since 1949, in parallel, the number of states having manufactured and exploded nuclear weapons increased from two to eight (with the addition of UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea) or nine counting Israel (which has not exploded a nuclear device). While the US and the Soviet Union followed by Russia had begun reducing their stockpiles, some new nuclear weapon-states increased their stockpiles. However, the UK and France also carried out reductions in their smaller arsenals after the end of the Cold War (France is actually the only nuclear power to have cut its total stockpile by half, reduced by one third the number of its active nuclear submarines and airborne weapons, missiles and aircraft, scrapped its land-based component, and dismantled both its testing site and fissile material production site).[1]

Between the main protagonists of the Cold War, the process of nuclear disarmament, albeit limited, was closely related to an evolution of the global security environment. The relaxation of tensions during the 1970s, followed by Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost and perestroika* culminating in the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Warsaw Pact facilitated unilateral and bilateral disarmament initiatives. The most effective approach was an incremental building of mutual confidence through direct communication lines, data exchange centres, reciprocal verification of ceilings and dismantlement. The same approach was followed in the conventional domain, with confidence – and security-building measures gradually allowing actual elimination of the most destabilizing heavy armaments in huge quantities in Europe.

If the general political environment and the reduction in the level of potential military confrontation have favoured a sense of strengthened security among the former Cold War

[*] Federation of American Scientists, "Status of World Nuclear Forces", Nov. 2012 (http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/nuclearweapons/nukestatus.html)

[†] See http://www.nucleardarkness.org/

enemies, those countries have not felt secure enough to move faster and closer to the goal of nuclear abolition. At the same time, new nuclear powers have emerged and developed their capabilities and stockpiles for reasons of their own. In both categories, if the process of nuclear disarmament has to proceed further or to be initiated, considering the current failures, a new security paradigm will need to be elaborated.

*"Even when the actual risk of aggression from any potential enemy tends to disappear, nuclear-weapon states find in the power conferred upon them by nuclear weapons a new reason for maintaining them."*

## 2. Addressing Motives and Threat Perceptions: Fear and Power

In order to build this new security doctrine, one will need to review the motives which have led governments to join the nuclear club. Basically, those motives can be boiled down to two: **fear and power.** Even former Cold War protagonists have not drawn all the consequences of the disappearance of their former enemies. Their reliance on nuclear weapons to protect their vital interests is still predicated on a **zero-sum game security concept:** their security will be preserved only if their potential enemies (even currently undefined) feel insecure and thus dissuaded* to launch any aggression against them. **Nuclear deterrence is based on nuclear powers' fear of potential enemies and on the latter's fear of potential damage that should outweigh the benefits of aggression.** But, even when the actual risk of aggression from any potential enemy tends to disappear, nuclear-weapon states find in the ***power*** **conferred upon them by nuclear weapons a new reason for maintaining them.** This nostalgia of nineteenth and twentieth-century power politics by a small number of potent states is still prevalent in the minds of leaders who are considering what their countries would become without nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, the world has changed: power comes less from the traditional instruments of state power such as nuclear weapons and more from economic and/or demographic dynamism, capacity for technological innovation, digital transformation, and intellectual influence, qualified by Joseph Nye as *soft power.*[2]

*"Reducing the benefits conferred by nuclear weapons in terms of power will thus need to be pursued along with mitigating the justified fears or perceived threats that now justify resorting to nuclear weapons."*

In regions of protracted conflict, nuclear weapons have appeared as an attractive means of guaranteeing security in the **same zero-sum game approach** and combination of fear and power, even if they have played the role of an **equalizer of conventional imbalances** (like in the case of Israel versus the Arab world and now a potentially nuclear Iran, or Pakistan versus India) and, as for Cold War protagonists, their possession has so far prevented a nuclear war but not direct or proxy conventional wars. While military might has ceased to be

* In French, deterrence is translated to dissuasion which carries less connotation of terror and relies more on a rational decision to abstain from aggression.

the sole criterion of power for western states, emerging countries like India or China cannot conceive asserting themselves without strengthening their military capabilities, including nuclear power. When North Korea and Iran crave for recognition, drawing inspiration from the most powerful country, the US, they develop their nuclear programmes. They cannot ignore the precedents of Iraq and Libya, which became subject to military intervention after they had renounced, voluntarily or not, their WMD programmes.

For both categories of states, **reducing the benefits conferred by nuclear weapons in terms of power will thus need to be pursued along with mitigating the justified fears or perceived threats that now justify resorting to nuclear weapons.** Of course, this is easier said than done. The UN Security Council has identified the key objective in its historic resolution 1887 which was unanimously adopted at the level of heads of state or government on 24 September 2009: *"to seek a safer world for all and to* ***create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons,*** *in accordance with the goals of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in a way that promotes international stability, and based on the principle of undiminished security for all*." Several tracks could be pursued simultaneously in that direction.

## 3. Four Steps Towards Cooperative Security

Cooperative security has been defined as: ***"a process whereby countries with common interests work jointly through agreed mechanisms to reduce tensions and suspicion, resolve or mitigate disputes, build confidence, enhance economic development prospects, and maintain stability in their regions."***[3] In order to make progress towards the emergence of such a system and create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, four steps should be envisaged.

1. The first one would be to **disconnect the permanent membership of the UN Security Council from possession of nuclear weapons.** Actually, from 1971 (when the People's Republic of China joined the Security Council) to 1998 (when India became a nuclear-weapon state), there was a strict equivalence between the status of a Permanent Member (with veto power) and that of a nuclear-weapon state. Obviously, there are other reasons for the attractive character of this coincidence why other countries acquired nuclear weapons. However, if countries such as Germany, Japan, Brazil, and Egypt do become Permanent Members while they do not possess nuclear weapons, this attractiveness would be reduced. It would be demonstrated that **it is possible to acquire power and influence over world affairs without a nuclear arsenal.** The role currently played by Germany in the "P5+1" negotiations with Iran on its nuclear programme or by Japan in the "Six-Party Talks" with North Korea (beyond both countries' contribution to the funding of the UN or other organisations) can be a justification in advance for such a move.

2. The second step would consist in **vigorously addressing the regional conflicts which fuel nuclear proliferation:**

   – In **South Asia,** it is true that India did not become a nuclear-weapon state because

of Pakistan (but mainly because of China) while the reverse is true. Therefore, India and China should be encouraged to resolve their disputes including territorial ones, possibly with the mediation of the UN Secretary-General or his envoy, and consider a set of confidence-building measures to move towards cooperative security for their mutual benefit. This could lead to negotiated or unilateral but coordinated steps towards conventional and nuclear disarmament. Between India and Pakistan, although confidence-building measures such as direct communications links and an agreement on the non-attack of nuclear facilities are already being implemented, no major breakthrough can be expected until a negotiated solution to the Kashmir conflict (and other territorial disputes) is achieved. The US, which aggravated Pakistan's frustration by granting India a nuclear cooperation agreement despite its non-NPT membership, has a critical role to play. Some compensation for Pakistan will need to be found, especially to encourage it to accept a multilateral negotiation on the prohibition of production of fissile material for weapons purposes ("Cut-off Treaty"). Beyond South Asia, it is also clear that persisting tensions between China and the US (mainly about Taiwan) as well as territorial disputes between China and Japan must be addressed to avoid escalation in the Chinese military build-up.

- In the **Korean Peninsula,** the Six-Party Talks must be revived to ensure the implementation of the 1992 and the 2005 agreements on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Here too, the US has a crucial role to play to alleviate the fears of the North Korean regime stemming from a perceived policy of regime change and unqualified support to South Korea. With the needed support from China, Pyongyang should be convinced of the benefits it may derive from denuclearization that should outweigh the costs of the status quo, including sanctions and isolation. Beyond that aspect, both Koreas should get incentives for concluding a far-reaching normalization agreement.

- In the **Middle East,** another volatile region, priority should of course be given to the central issue of a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians allowing the recognition of the state of Palestine and consequently the mutual recognition of Israel and all Arab states. It is an illusion to think that anything will happen in the area of arms control or *a fortiori* disarmament unless this preliminary step is achieved. Beyond that essential milestone, threat perceptions and military asymmetries in the region will still need to be addressed, especially because they are affected by a perception of Western double standards in favour of Israel.[4] As for Iran, a parallel can be established with North Korea: until Tehran receives some form of recognition for its legitimate regional role from the US, amounting to a definitive abandonment of the regime change policy, Iran will continue to develop the capacity to deter what it perceives as a threat from the US and Israel. Some, like Gen. James Cartwright, go as far as suggesting that the US offer extended deterrence to Iran.[5] Presumably, this would be part of a Grand Bargain whereby Iran would accept to forego nuclear weapons in exchange for continuing low enrichment of uranium for peaceful purposes. Of course, the best way of ensuring an end to proliferation in the

region will be an agreement on a WMD-free zone including Iran and Israel, with external guarantees.[6]

3. The third step would be, assuming that regional conflicts are addressed to open the way to regional security architectures, to **promote synergies between regional and global disarmament.** Indeed, even if regional tensions can be reduced by confidence- and security-building measures and commonly agreed constraints on the most destabilizing armaments, one major incentive for regional disarmament should come from global disarmament efforts by the most heavily armed states. The idea is to **move from the vicious circle of maintaining nuclear deterrence against current or possible proliferation to a virtuous circle of accompanying de-proliferation with reduced levels of armaments.** Any pursuit of the status quo, where the developed nuclear powers keep their nuclear weapons because of the growing threat of developing states' weapons, may amount to a **self-fulfilling prophecy.** In other words, letting existing or potential proliferation crises develop may in the end justify maintaining nuclear stockpiles or even building them up, consequently encouraging the proliferating states in their endeavour. How is it possible to avoid a sense of **double standards** when India is told to disarm while China increases its arsenal? When Pakistan is told to disarm while India benefits from a US nuclear cooperation agreement? When Iran is told to stop its nuclear programme while nothing is done about Israel's capability? When North Korea is told to disarm while South Korea enjoys US extended deterrence? On the contrary, the power of example may be strong and at minimum must be tried: if the US ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), it could have a domino effect on the other key states missing (China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan) and allow the treaty to enter into force. At least the US would be credible in campaigning for this non-proliferation instrument. If the US and Russia returned to a **Reykjavik-type*** **approach** (elimination of all ballistic missiles and 50% of all strategic weapons within 10 years), the onus would be on the other nuclear powers, including China, the UK, and France to follow suit in taking part in some negotiation. Obviously, all the contentious issues preventing a breakthrough in the negotiations between the US and Russia must be tackled: **missile defence** and in particular the European Adaptive Phased Approach (still perceived by Russia as a threat to its retaliation capability and thus to strategic stability); weaponization of **outer space** (related to missile defence capabilities with anti-satellite potential); **conventional imbalances** to the advantage of NATO, a reversal of the Cold War situation (and the related value of Russian tactical nuclear weapons); Russian fears about US conversion of submarine-launched nuclear-tipped missiles to conventional warheads or the development of **new conventional**

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* US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev met in the Icelandic capital in October 1986. Although the discussed ambitious disarmament plan was not finalized because of the disagreement on missile defence (Strategic Defense Initiative), it found some expression in the 1987 Treaty on the elimination of intermediate-range nuclear forces in Europe (INF Treaty).

**weapons** (such as the Prompt Global Strike)[7] that could be even more destabilizing than nuclear weapons especially if they substituted them in the future.

In order to make progress in the adoption of a new paradigm of cooperative security, the US and Russia should revive and update their **Cooperative Threat Reduction Program** which has already contributed to a substantial elimination of surplus armaments in Russia. They should also offer their expertise and support to other countries, including the identified regional conflict areas, in jointly implementing arms elimination programmes following the experience of the **G-8 Global Partnership** against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. Sharing in particular good practices and lessons learnt about on-site inspections within disarmament agreements may have a broad confidence-building effect.[8]

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4. The fourth step towards cooperative security to facilitate nuclear disarmament will be the **adoption of new security doctrines** by all current nuclear-weapon states, which they will be able to share with the rest of the world. This will be based on the explicit understanding that, in a 21st century globalised world, the concept of security has dramatically evolved. It has moved **away from the sole protection of states** (meaning often regimes or governments) **against external threats by military means to ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals** (some of whom may be threatened even by their own state or government), **confronted by multi-faceted transnational challenges.** These challenges facing both states and individuals can be traditional "hard security" threats such as terrorism, arms proliferation, organised crime or political violence, requiring effective law enforcement and occasional military instruments. But they are only partial security issues and encompass broader dimensions (social, economic, environmental) like pandemics, climate change, financial crises, uncontrolled migration, technological developments, uneven access to energy, food, water, or natural resources; such challenges necessitate comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approaches within states and, more importantly, multilateral or regional cooperation among states. In any case, **none of the above-mentioned threats can be deterred or combated with nuclear weapons.** Such weapons are thus increasingly condemned to irrelevance.

The other dimension of the new security environment compared to the one having led to the development of nuclear weapons is the fact that it is **less state-centric** and relies more on the contributions of **non-state actors or factors** that can be positive (civil society organisations, private sector, academic or scientific institutions) but also negative (criminal or terrorist organisations, traffickers, industry involved in irresponsible arms trade, uncontrolled

private security companies, etc.). Today, there would not be treaties banning antipersonnel landmines or cluster munitions, and tomorrow hopefully an Arms Trade Treaty, without the initiative of and a decisive push from civil society organisations. The implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) would be impossible without the cooperation of the world chemical industry. To prevent the use of biological agents as weapons, cooperation between states, the industry and the scientific community is being developed. In order to launch national debates in nuclear-weapon states on the irrelevance of nuclear deterrence, it is good that former high-ranking military and political leaders now campaign in that direction and express credible views based on experience; more of such debates are needed especially in the countries where nuclear policy has been kept away from public scrutiny.[9] In the end, **civil societies will demand more and more transparency, empowerment, and oversight,** as can be seen in the countries undergoing revolutions and transitions. This will be an important component of decision-making towards nuclear disarmament: any particular lobby, whether in the political sphere or the military-industrial establishment, must be aware of the will of the vast majority of people nationally and internationally and should give up the arrogant ambition of ensuring uneducated or uninformed people's security against their own will. Of course, **the real challenge is to convince as a priority the civil society of the nuclear-weapon states and their allies,** since in the other states, a majority is already persuaded of the irrelevance and dangers of nuclear deterrence. Needless to say, **wherever lobbies have vested interests in maintaining nuclear deterrence, such interests will have to be catered to,** by conversion to conventional or civilian work as it was largely done in the Russian industrial-military complex or in South Africa. Costs of such conversion could be shared internationally in the spirit of the G-8 Global Partnership, the results being in the interests of the whole international community.

## 4. The Conditions for a World without Nuclear Weapons

Once the process has started along these four tracks, it should be easier, especially for nuclear-weapon states and their allies benefiting from extended deterrence to **consider that most of the *"conditions for a world without nuclear weapons"*** mentioned in the UN Security Council resolution 1887 **have effectively been fulfilled.** In that sense, the nuclear-weapon states would not be credible if they continued to affirm that their ultimate security could still be achieved only with nuclear weapons. The above-mentioned "conditions" would then indeed appear as pre-conditions for moving ahead towards nuclear disarmament.

How to translate this situation into **legally binding commitments** that would ensure adherence by all the relevant states? Here again, two parallel tracks can be pursued.

- A **Convention banning nuclear weapons** has been proposed and endorsed by the UN Secretary-General, but is so far rejected by the US, Russia and France. It is true that nuclear-weapon states can have the legitimate impression that one puts the cart before the horse while they conceive nuclear disarmament as an incremental and conditional process. However, in 2008, a worldwide poll showed support for a Convention by 76% of the respondents, including those in nuclear-weapon states.[10] Without entering into the detail of the pro and con arguments, one can refer to the

precedent of chemical and biological weapons despite the specific nature of nuclear weapons. There was first a prohibition of use in war in the 1925 Geneva Protocol; it was of course deemed insufficient and weakened by reservations, but there is no doubt that this prohibition played an important role in limiting the actual resort to such weapons. And the second, much later step was the prohibition of development and possession, in 1972 for biological weapons and 1993 for chemical weapons. It took time to elaborate effective mechanisms, especially for chemical weapons, to ensure confidence in the implementation of the obligations by all states parties. But in the meantime, the universal condemnation of use as well as decreasing military relevance of those weapons convinced most states not to acquire them or to renounce them. The same process could take place with regard to nuclear weapons: in the first phase, a **general prohibition of use** accepted by all nuclear-weapon states (including the non-NPT parties) would allow temporary possession until sufficient **verification of elimination** would be negotiated and put into place. International safeguards, for instance on de-alerting or non-deployment of weapons, could be introduced.

- Revival of the **concept of general and complete disarmament** (GCD) is occasionally proposed.[11] To the disarmament community, this concept may sometimes seem outdated or completely obsolete if not totally utopian. The fact is that, in Article VI of the NPT, all states parties *"undertake to pursue negotiations in good faith"* not only on *"effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament"* but also *"on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."* It is important to stress that this obligation covers both aspects and that there is no conditionality between the former and the latter. After unsuccessful negotiation attempts during the Cold War, the goal of GCD was put on the agenda of the UN General Assembly in 1959, and appeared in the US-Soviet proposal called the McCloy-Zorin statement.[12] In that major document, GCD was defined as the **goal of ensuring that states will have only *"non-nuclear armaments, forces, facilities and establishments […] to maintain internal order and protect the personal security of citizens and to […] support […] a United Nations peace force."*** This common goal was eventually adopted at the UN General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament in 1978.[13] But the Cold War environment and disagreements as the sequence (disarmament first or peace first?) prevented actual negotiations on a single treaty and the route of "**partial measures**" or the piecemeal approach was chosen, leading to separate multilateral agreements (the Partial Test Ban Treaty, the NPT, the Seabed Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Environmental Modification Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons – CCW, – the CWC, the CTBT). This whole construction complemented the bilateral and regional disarmament treaties (including the nuclear-weapon free zones, or the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty). In the multilateral framework, further progress was made in the adoption of Protocols to the CCW and the treaties banning antipersonnel and cluster munitions, as well as the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, some aspects of which have led to global or regional treaties. However important gaps remain: **not all states are party** to all instruments and some are non-compliant with

their commitments, which may undermine the effectiveness of the treaties (e.g. in the case of the NPT); **some critical armaments are not covered,** such as missiles, which can be both conventional weapons and delivery vehicles of WMD but are subject only to voluntary transparency measures in the far-from-universal Hague Code of Conduct; **military expenditures and arms sales continue to increase,** often stimulated by the defence industry and/or state suppliers.

One advantage of reviving the concept of GCD would be to offer a comprehensive and holistic view of all the current and potential **categories of weapons likely to be used for offensive or destabilizing rather than defensive purposes,** and all the interrelationships between them. It could defeat the argument consisting in refusing to deal with one category of weapon because other categories are deemed more threatening or destabilizing. This would force cooperation between policy makers and practitioners as well as non-state stakeholders dealing with only one category or one aspect, which often leads to deadlocks. It would also allow all sorts of **mutual concessions and gains** across the spectrum of security tools. If Israel felt less threatened by missiles from Iran, it could envisage more easily giving up its nuclear capability; in return, Syria and Egypt could join the ban on chemical weapons and Iran could accept limits of its nuclear programme. Similarly, if Russia felt less threatened by NATO's conventional superiority and missile defence capabilities, it would be encouraged to reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons, and NATO Allies could in return agree to the withdrawal of US tactical nuclear weapons from Europe while continuing to benefit from extended deterrence in the transition towards nuclear disarmament.

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Eventually, the GCD approach would also allow the UN Security Council to fulfil one of its roles according to Article 26 of the UN Charter, i.e. the *"establishment of a system of regulation of armaments"* "[i]*n order to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources."* In sum, it would in fact amount to ensuring for **all states defensive capabilities at the lowest possible level of armaments.**

## 5. Conclusion

The world is **already moving towards a new paradigm of cooperative security** leading states, out of necessity, to cooperate to meet health, environmental and financial challenges. Interdependence means that success by one or a few benefits all, and failure by some endangers many. For this reason, in order to achieve cooperative security, major **changes in the governance of the international system** will need to be accelerated. Regional security architectures will need strengthening and a long-overdue reform of the UN Security Council will finally render it capable of implementing the concept of *collective security* which is at the heart of the UN Charter, along with peaceful settlement of disputes and an end to the "scourge of war."

Ultimately, in such a win-win situation, all states and all stakeholders (apart from the spoilers) would acquire a feeling of global security, much stronger and more sustainable than mere national security dependent on unilateral choices, some of which, like nuclear deterrence, would appear irrelevant or an aberration in cost-effectiveness. This would be the best way of bridging the gap between the **realist** approach based only on national interests and the **multilateralist** approach promoting common goods.

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## Notes

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