

VII Roles Currently Played by the United Nations, Other International Bodies, Agreements and Regimes in Contributing to International Peace and Security

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Introduction

Until quite recently, the concept of arms control was almost totally voluntary and usually resulted from bilateral, and in some cases multilateral, arrangements. There is now a trend emerging wherein arms control forms part of intrastate arrangements that are monitored and/or enforced by a third party, usually but not necessarily an impartial party. In almost all cases, the United Nations has played a lead role, either in the creation of new instruments or in the modification of existing ones. This leadership has also begun to have resonance in regional organizations, including those beyond Europe, who recognize more and more how region-specific approaches can replace or reinforce the global to better advantage. In addition, the evolving "new world order" has given rise to reviews of existing treaties, agreements and regimes related to non-proliferation with the aim of determining their interrelationships, effectiveness and relevance in today's situation. Further, there is a growing need to find the right balance between the discriminatory aspects of supply-side controls and the positive aspirations of, in particular, developing states seeking "equitable and responsible access."

This chapter reviews the roles of these bodies in the context of arms control and disarmament, both voluntary and enforced. Where possible, it discusses the implementing agency that actually carries out the arms control and disarmament role; for example, the International Atomic Energy Agency carries out the verification of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. This review should then allow further exploration of possible areas of harmonization and synergy.

The United Nations

With respect to arms control and disarmament, the roles of the United Nations are executed through its organs and related institutions. The General Assembly, through its resolutions, has lent moral weight and political will to various approaches and arrangements. The

Security Council has reinforced that weight and will through its prestige and the implicit understanding of the possibility of enforcement. The creation of situation-specific arrangements and/or organizations, for example, peacekeeping missions, or instruments such as the Register of Conventional Arms, is the result of decisions taken by the Council or the Assembly.

The General Assembly. This body is currently engaged with the Security Council in a certain amount of "creative tension" in the whole area of international peace and security. While the Charter is clear that the Security Council has primary responsibility, the Assembly, in the face of a rejuvenated, proactive Council, is trying to ensure its own voice is heard. At the root of the tension are differences among states as to what constitutes a threat to international peace and security, and what actions are suitable, bearing in mind the provisions of the Charter, especially concerning sovereignty. The Assembly is more conservative or traditional in its actions in comparison with the Security Council. The vast majority of states who for whatever reason have concerns about an activist UN are represented only in the Assembly, and they want to keep a tight definition on "threat." They are wary of the veto in the Council, believe its membership is no longer relevant or representative and, in sum, feel there is too much power vested there. The co-ordination now being exercised there by the P-5 (the five permanent members), the influence being exercised by the P-3 (United States, United Kingdom and France) and the ultimate power of the United States are all seen as threatening by some.

The Assembly will generally adopt resolutions that are concerned with voluntary confidence-building measures, for example, the Register of Conventional Arms, but is very hesitant when it comes to more intrusive regimes of verification and enforcement. The Assembly can be counted on to provide overall support to the Council and the Secretary-General, but it will move slowly and with deliberation. In the area of security, it will be more reactive than proactive, except

