

Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation in the 21st Century

Arms control strategies, agreements and institutions are credited with playing a significant role for the preservation of peace, over the roughly half a century of a high-stakes bipolar confrontation. Behind the negotiations, treaties, verification mechanisms and associated international institutional constructs, a whole new discipline and theory was created in the study realm of International Relations: that of Arms Control, with its Disarmament and Non-Proliferation associated extension.

Today the international arms control establishment is under stress and the associated conceptual approach and academic discipline is under the pressure of adaptation to a new context. The driving forces of change are: a new geopolitical reality and a ground-braking, dynamic technological wave with an unparalleled potential of weaponization, conduct of warfare and implicitly upon international security and stability. Arms Control is needed today as ever before but in a modern, adapted, more complex framework adapted to the new context.

The Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation in the 21st Century addresses the theoretical construct, associated policies and strategies, the historical context and driving forces for development of ground-braking international legal instruments, implementation rules and institutional frameworks which defined the evolution and remarkable accomplishments of the 20th century international arms control regime. The course and seminar focused on the understanding of the historic context, political motivations and strategic dilemmas, the prevailing driving forces, which determined the negotiation and adoption of the key international agreements, their impact and limitations, as well as relevant correlation.

This inquisitive approach towards the treaties, conventions, protocols, verification instruments and institutions, is used as a foundation for a critical analysis on the potential of revival, adaptation and reconfiguration of an arms control regime for the 21st century, characterised by the erosion of trust and of the rules-based international order, a geopolitical shift towards a more complicated multipolar world, impactful private sector driven dual-use technological developments, the temptation of weaponisation of everything, the blurring of demarcation line between war and peace in the context of “hybrid” confrontation tactics below the threshold of “armed attack”, but with strong destabilizing effects. All these elements are presented from a policy practitioner’s point of view, reflecting many years of experience in international organisations.

Given the approach reflected in the lines above, the course and seminar are aimed at training and preparing the new generation of arms control policy experts with a strategic mix on historic, policy, strategy and tech-geopolitics perspective, therefore equipped to address the challenges of a arms control “remake” adapted to the realities of the 21st century.