

Arms Control in Crisis: An Assessment of Contemporary Trends

Sufian Ullah*

Abstract

Arms control regime has witnessed severe setbacks in recent years. This paper addresses the question that despite acknowledged benefits of arms control for peace and stability, the major powers are currently turning against arms control. By analyzing the reasons behind ongoing arms control crisis, the paper takes into account contending perspectives of major powers to map the emerging trends in arms control. The mere existence of nuclear weapons does not encourage the states to adopt restraint measures, rather it is their perception about the risks and challenges to their security that compel them to go for arms control. The ongoing geo-political competition, also exhibited in the form of strategic rivalries at global level, and advanced military-technological developments sans any consensus on mutual vulnerabilities shape the understanding of nuclear armed states for strategic stability. They are the two primary drivers behind the evolving arms control crisis. Recently, United States has veered away from its bilateral commitments that signifies the collapse of arms control arrangements between Washington and Moscow which originally served as a stabilizing factor in their adversarial relations. Prevailing disagreements on the constituents of strategic stability, concerns about other state's compliance and transparency, and accentuating differences in military capabilities are the defining features of how major states currently pursue arms control. In the absence of consensus on what threatens strategic stability among adversaries, any prospects for new arms control measures remain bleak. This factor also diminishes the prospects of any trilateral arms control agreement among U.S., Russia and China.

Keywords: Arms Control, Collapse, Bilateral Commitments, Strategic Stability, Consensus

* The author is PhD Candidate at the Department of Defence and Strategic Studies (DSS), Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), Islamabad, Pakistan. He can be contacted at: sufianullah@gmail.com: