

Diplomatic Communication and Resilient Governance Problems of Governing Nuclear Weapons

By Markus Kornprobst,

Abstract. This article examines the resilience of governance. My descriptive argument identifies variations of resilience by analysing the evolution of contestation and decontestation of governance-constituting institutions in the foreground and background layers of governance. My explanatory argument distinguishes different modes of diplomatic communication, ranging from coercion (most closed) via declaration, haggle, and problem-solving to polylogue (most open). While the occurrence of none of these modes is inconsequential, producing resilience in the foreground and background layers does not become possible unless problem-solving and polylogue, respectively, come to dominate communicative encounters. My abductive analysis of nuclear weapons governance underlines the plausibility of this conceptual framework and elaborates on it further. In the past two decades, communicative practices sidelined open modes of communication. This made the resilience of nuclear weapons governance decline. This study makes three contributions: It provides more details on how to describe governance resilience, shows that additional explanatory power is to be gained by looking at the breadth of communication employed by diplomats, and contributes to a better grasp of what keeps nuclear governance together and what threatens to tear it apart.

Keywords: communication, diplomacy, governance, pragmatism, resilience, nuclear weapons.

Acknowledgments. I would like to thank the anonymous referees, the editors of JIRD, Corneliu Bjola, Costas Constantinou, for very helpful feedback on this study. Furthermore, I am deeply indebted to Martin Senn. Our collaborative work has shaped my thinking about background and foreground institutions as well as how to apply it to the nuclear weapons field in a profound manner.

Last draft before final version and publication in *Journal of International Relations and Development* 23/1, 2020.

Full bibliographical details: Kornprobst, Markus. "Diplomatic communication and resilient governance: problems of governing nuclear weapons." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 23.1 (2020): 164-189.

Introduction

Much of the literature on global governance studies how governance comes into being or how it develops further. Authors often provide compelling evidence for such processes. Global disaster governance (Tierney 2012), humanitarian governance (Barnett 2013), and international financial governance (Frieden 2016), for instance, have moved forward in recent years. We should not take it for granted, however, that all governance mechanisms grow stronger and stronger. Some do and *some do not*. A decade ago, for instance, the European Union's economic governance appeared to be rock-solid and the long-time poster child of a supranational regional organization seemed even to move towards more and more security governance. Amidst the sovereign debt crisis, war in the Middle East and North Africa, the refugee crisis, and the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom, however, maintaining governance has become something that scholars inquire into rather than assume (Majone 2014; Phinnemore 2015).

Put into more scholarly language, the *resilience* of governance should be subject to inquiry. Is a governance mechanism able to 'absorb or buffer disturbances and still maintain its core attributes' (Armitage 2008, 15)? Not much is written on this question yet. But most existing studies stress an important concept. Resilient governance is adaptive governance. Governors do not block any kind of changes but allow governance to be adapted in the face of external and internal pressures again and again (Young 1999, 133-162; Armitage 2008, 15; J. Schmidt 2015; V. Schmidt 2016; Root 2017).

This article delves into resilience in more depth. It does so descriptively and explanatorily. On the descriptive level, I contend that analysing contestation and decontestation of principles and norms (foreground) as well as underlying epistemic

understandings and rules of the game (background) helps map the evolution of governance resilience. Contestation about some of these governance-constituting institutions is always to be expected. Yet resilient governance is not just about contestation. It is also about decontestation. Some convergences on governance-constituting institutions stay in place over a long period of time, and some divergences on these institutions are transformed into convergences on *governance-reconstituting* – i.e. adapted – institutions.

On the explanatory level, this study focuses on diplomats and their communicative interaction with one another. I develop a spectrum of modes of diplomatic communication, ranging from *coercion* (closed) via *declaration*, *haggle* and *problem-solving* to *polylogue* (open). I argue that communicative encounters always consist of mixtures of these modes. Some of these *configurations* of modes make producing governance resilience possible while others do not. Producing resilience remains out of reach in communicative encounters in which coercion, declaration and/or haggle dominate. It becomes possible in encounters in which problem-solving and polylogue come to prevail over more closed modes. Problem-solving provides opportunities to reach convergences in the foreground layer, and polylogue even in the background layer.

The empirical part of this study conducts an abductive analysis of the resilience of nuclear weapons governance. Applying the descriptive part of the theoretical framework confirms what many practitioners have been alarmed about for a while. Nuclear weapons governance has become less and less resilient. Contestation about governance-constituting institutions has increased significantly while the ability of governors to convergence on governance-reconstituting institutions has decreased equally significantly. In recent years, this worrisome development has no longer been confined to the foreground. It has reached

the background, i.e. some of the long-time non-reflected intersubjective foundations upon which nuclear weapons governance rests.

Prevailing configurations of communicative modes have a lot to do with these problems. In 1995, when diplomats converged on governance-reconstituting agreements for the last time, many of their encounters moved beyond the usual mix of coercion, declaration and hagggle. Communicative encounters came to be more and more dominated by problem-solving. This made it possible for diplomats to shake up preference-rankings and generate convergences that reconstituted several principles and norms. Since then, diplomats have fallen back upon communicative practices that marginalise problem-solving, not even to speak of polylogue. This makes it impossible for diplomats to settle divergences on the very pillars upon which nuclear weapons governance is built. On the very contrary, these practices fuel more and more contestation on these pillars.

This study makes three contributions. First, its descriptive framework builds on the literature's key insight that governance resilience is about institutional adaptability. It does so by identifying governance-constituting institutions in the foreground and background layers, and by linking adaptability to processes of contestation and decontestation. Second, its explanatory framework goes beyond existing studies, many of which either neglect communication or focus on a single mode of communication. Scrutinising the breadth of communication employed by actors provides something akin to a 'bird's eye view' of which outcomes become possible and which ones do not. Third, this study shows that nuclear weapons governance is becoming less resilient. It also provides evidence that this development is underpinned by deeply entrenched communicative practices of sidelining

modes of communication that could leave a mark on preferences, not even to speak of more deeply taken-for-granted ideas.

I develop my argument in six steps. First, I discuss the concept of governance resilience, and develop the descriptive part of my conceptual framework. Second, I deal with the literature on diplomatic communication and governance, and arrive at the explanatory part of my theoretical framework. Third, I provide an overview of the research design of my empirical study on nuclear weapons governance. Fourth, I conduct the descriptive analysis of nuclear weapons governance. Fifth, I move to the explanatory analysis. Finally, the conclusion elaborates on my findings and discusses its implications.

Describing Governance (Non-)Resilience

Having emerged only in recent years, most contributions to the small literature on governance resilience share two important insights (Young 2010; Fligstein 2013, 41; V. Schmidt and Thatcher 2014; Bednar 2016, 169-170): First, governance is constituted by social institutions. For all the contestation among governors, there are some social institutions around which they converge and that structure their interaction. Second, resilient governance is not about non-variation. Resilient governance is a never-ending process of adapting the institutions that constitute governance.

What, then, are these institutions? The burgeoning governance literature tends to focus on either foreground or background institutions. When rationalist authors write about hard law and soft law (Abbott and Snidal 2000), for example, or when eclectic researchers list 'agreed upon principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programs that govern the interactions of actors' (Young 1997, 6), they address the foreground. Institutions

located in this layer are out in the open. Actors find it easy to discern them and reflect upon them.

Background institutions, by contrast, are naturalised. Being deeply internalised, actors find it much more difficult to spell them out and reflect upon them. Searle (1995, 129) defines the background as ‘the set of nonintentional or preintentional capacities that enable intentional states of function’. Adler and Bernstein (2005, 295), building upon Searle, liken the background to those institutions that make ‘people classify their reality the way they do’. Many constructivists address the background in depth. They write about epistemes (Ruggie 1993), doxa (Pouliot 2008), lifeworlds (Risse 2000), and so on.

Authors examining the resilience of governance tend to focus on either the foreground or the background. Young (2010), for example, inquires into the foreground, while V. Schmidt (2016) analyses the background. Both makes for path-breaking research in an area in which systematic inquiry has only just began. Foreground and background, however, are best understood as *layers* of governance. Writing on order more generally, von Hayek (1979) made this case very well some time ago. He showed convincingly that any kind of order consists of foreground and background layers. He labelled them taxis and cosmos, respectively.¹

Contestation and decontestation happen in both layers (Wiener 2014; Kornprobst and Senn 2016a). What matters is whether these processes affect institutions that form the very architecture of governance or not. In order to get at such *governance-constituting institutions*, it is useful to focus on *principles* and *norms* (foreground) as well as the underlying *epistemic understandings* and *rules of the game* (background). Principles and norms are more general than other institutions that Young writes about. They form

something akin to the visible Constitution of a governance mechanism. *Epistemic understandings and rules of the game*² capture the substantive and procedural classifications that underpin any governance structure. They classify issues to be governed and the governors to be in charge in certain ways. Together, these classifications are reminiscent of a lens through which actors look at the world.

It is a matter of empirical analysis to examine which principles, norms, epistemic understandings and rules of the game remain uncontested, which ones come to be contested, and, when it comes to the latter, which ones are so successfully adapted that they come to be uncontested again.

Explaining How Diplomatic Communication (Un-)Makes Governance Resilience

Explaining the (un-)making of governance resilience is not an easy task. It is in the very nature of governance that there is an array of different governors and processes that shape governance. This study confines itself to focusing on a particular type of governor and category of interaction. How does diplomatic communication make the production of governance resilience possible?³ I choose this focus for three reasons: Diplomats are important governors of global governance (Cooper, Hocking, and Maley 2008). Communication is at the core of processes that mould governance (Bang 2003, 7-23; Kooiman 2003, 38). Diplomacy revolves around communication (Watson 1982; Neumann 2005).

On the one hand, finding analytical clues for how diplomatic communication makes governance more or less resilient is hampered by two shortcomings of the literature: First, there is an analytical gap. Literature on governance is as hesitant to address diplomacy as

literature on diplomacy is to deal with governance. Only few authors bridge this gap (Cooper, Hocking, Maley 2008; Mitzen 2015; Leguey-Feilleux 2017) but they hardly address the resilience of governance. Second, there is an analytical incompatibility. While the governance literature embraces the multidimensional nature of governance (Rosenau 1992; Kooiman 2003), literature on diplomacy tends to reduce diplomatic communication to more narrowly confined aspects (see discussion below). Such narrow understandings of the broad phenomenon of diplomatic communication, however, only go thus far in explaining the resilience of the similarly broad phenomenon of governance.

On the other hand, the literature's tendency to do in-depth rather than in-breadth research also has its virtues. Existing research has uncovered a number of important insights on at least five distinct forms of diplomatic communication: coercion, declaration, haggle, problem-solving and polylogue. Studies on coercion come in two different ontological variants. Some scholars focus on how diplomacy signals preparedness to use force. Schelling (1966, iv) refers to this as the 'diplomacy of violence'.⁴ Other writers put under scrutiny the use of language to force an actor by rhetorical means. Schimmelfennig's work on shaming, for instance, is widely cited (Schimmelfennig 2001).⁵

Declaration is about how diplomats present their positions. On the one hand, authors examine how diplomats make the state they represent appear in a good light. Diplomats are eager to embellish their countries' actual foreign policies, and, at times, seek to make it appear stronger than it actually is (Lambeth 1984, 266; Zwick 1988, 85-94). Literature on public diplomacy, too, addresses such appearances (Gilboa 2005; Schatz and Levine 2010). On the other hand, the cheap talk literature addresses how diplomats exchange information

in pre-bargaining stages. Information about bottomlines, for example, helps diplomats then reach agreements in the bargaining stages (Ramsay 2011; Trager 2011).

Many authors deal with haggling, broadly understood. Exchanging bids involves plenty of strategic communication (R. Putnam 1988, 459; Zartman and Faure 2005). Scholars dealing with bargaining tend to link this aspect of communication to threats to use force, the presentation of positions, or problem-solving. The conceptual linkage of bargaining and threats is at the core of studies on costly signalling that Schelling spearheaded. Research on shaming, although underpinned by an ideationalist rather than a materialist ontology, links usages of rhetorical force to negotiations, too. Students of cheap talk inquire into how costless signalling affects bargaining dynamics. What Hopmann (1995) refers to as 'problem-solving' adds yet another aspect of communication that helps get at these dynamics.

The more eclectic negotiation literature revolves around such problem-solving. It examines how communication succeeds or fails to nudge the positions and even the preferences with which diplomats enter negotiations into different directions. The key insight of this literature is that some communicative moves have the potential to shake up negotiations (Jönsson 1990; Morley and Stephenson 2015). Deviating from rules of procedure and putting together new package deals, communicators can break deadlock. Conference chairs play a particularly important role in shaking up communicative encounters. They may organise smaller negotiation circles with fewer parties, create package deals themselves, put time pressure on the parties, etc (Steiner 2004, Odell 2009; Coleman 2011). To put this into different words, skilful negotiators do not take the negotiation situation for granted. They seek to transform it in order to reach agreements (L. Putnam 2010).

Finally, there are studies on what I refer to in this study as polylogue⁶. It addresses how diplomatic communication changes preferences and an array of taken-for-granted ideas, ranging from norms to world views, in more fundamental fashion. This cluster of research also comes in two variants. There are authors who show that diplomats, sometimes joining civil society initiatives, can be strategic advocates who are able to convince others to adopt new ideas (Price 1998; Krause 2002). This line of research is related to explorations of studies on how diplomats make their state appear in a good light, discussed above. The ultimate purpose of such attempts is persuasion. There are also scholars who examine dialogues among diplomats. The free exchange of ideas makes sure that the better argument wins (Risse 2000; Lynch 2002).

Taken together, these communicative categories identified by the literature can be depicted on a spectrum from closed to open communication. They vary in what Bonham, Jönsson, Persson and Shapiro (1987, 1) refer to as 'discursive space', i.e. communicators are more or less inclined to debate the priors with which they enter the communication. *Coercion* is about closing discursive space. Diplomacy is reduced to transmitting unequivocal messages about threatening to use material force or resort to rhetorical force. *Declaration* increases the discursive space. Diplomats elaborate on their positions. This may include informing one another of their bottomlines for negotiations. In a *haggle*, diplomats put these positions to use by exchanging bids with one another. Exploring possibilities to meet in the middle, they are open to amending their positions as long as this does not violate their preferences. *Problem-solving* is embarking on practical steps to nudge the preferences of diplomats closer together. The ranking of what diplomats seek to get out of a communicative encounter moves into the discursive space. *Polylogue* is reflecting upon rules

and more deeply-seated ideas together. It moves into the discursive space what usually remains unquestioned.

Communication is always multi-dimensional. This important insight underpins the pragmatist turn in Communications (Craig 1999; 2007) as well inclusive studies of communication in International Relations (Deutsch 1952; Crawford 2009). The five clusters of the literature, therefore, are best understood as different *modes* of communication, ranging from closed to open, that the actors we study employ. This helps us appreciate the breadth of communication in any given encounter among actors. Instead of focusing on a single mode *a priori*, occurrences and dominances of modes become a matter of analysis.

What mixtures – or perhaps better put *configurations* – of modes of communication make governance more or less resilient? When authors such as Zeno (in Cicero 1994: II[VI]) distinguish between the open hand and the closed fist, Aristotle (1926: I[i]) elaborates on the deliberative genre of communication, and Burke (1973) differentiates between communicators who congregate and those who segregate, they share – their otherwise very different understandings of communication notwithstanding – an important insight. Communication cannot achieve much if the communicators shield all their priors from the communicative encounter. Converging on something usually requires revisiting some of the priors together with others. This applies especially to convergences on the very pillars of interaction. These are not easily reached.

Communicative encounters, therefore, in which coercion, declaration and/or haggling feature more prominently than more open modes stand in the way of producing governance resilience. Coercion can be a useful device to force a few outliers to accept governance-reconstituting institutions. But governance is not hierarchical to an extent that one player

could force everything upon all others. It is in the very nature of governance that authority is not exclusively centred on one actor (Rosenau 1992; Kooiman 2003). Declaration and haggle are important diplomatic modes of communication. By themselves, however, their transformative potential is too limited as to allow for convergences on governance-reconstituting institutions. They cannot mould priors such as preferences, not even to speak about more deeply taken for granted ideas.

Communicative encounters in which *problem-solving* prevails over haggle, declaration and coercion make it possible for diplomats to produce resilience by converging on governance-reconstituting *foreground* institutions. Problem-solving is transformative. It allows diplomats to reach convergences even if the preferences they started out with did not allow them to do so. Preferences can move closer together, which reconfigures the haggling. At the same time, more closed communicative modes are not inconsequential in this configuration. Occurrences of declarations and haggling help seize upon the opportunities brought about by preferences that have moved together more closely. Negotiations about new foreground institutions can be successfully concluded. Coercion is useful to deal with outliers. But the momentum required to arrive at governance-reconstituting institutions has to come from more open modes of communication. Note also that a communicative mix including problem-solving is not sufficient for creating governance-reconstituting institutions located in the background layer. Epistemic understandings and the rules of the game remain unaddressed.

Communicative encounters in which *polylogue* features more prominently than coercion, declaration, haggle and problem-solving makes it possible for diplomats to produce resilience by converging on governance-reconstituting *background* institutions.

Diplomats have opportunities at their disposal to revisit even the most taken-for-granted understandings of how to govern together. Again, occurrences of more closed communicative modes are important, too. Coercion can talk some recalcitrant actors into something against which they otherwise would speak out. Declaration, haggle and problem-solving are important in processes through which some aspects of the new background institutions are made explicit in agreements. They are also of salience for processes through which the adaptation of background institutions translates into the adaptation of foreground institutions. Background changes often prompt foreground changes (Wildavsky 1987, 81).

Since this is a novel way of looking at the juncture of diplomatic communication and governance, it is worth concluding this section with a clarification. Configurations of communicative modes make for a *paradigmatic explanation* (Sewell 2005: 332). Much of the existing literature conducts in-depth research on a particular mode of communication. Informed by a pragmatist understanding of communication, by contrast, this study aims for a ‘bird’s eye view’ on the relationship between the many facets of diplomatic communication on the one hand and governance resilience on the other. The hallmark of open modes of communication (above all problem-solving and polylogue) is that governors do not foreclose avenues through which interaction could affect their priors, and this opens up opportunities – rhetorical theory refers to these as *kairos* (Sipiora 2002) – to converge on governance-reconstituting institutions that otherwise do not exist.

Research Design

How does this theoretical framework fare empirically? The remainder of this paper conducts an abductive analysis of nuclear weapons governance. Since the descriptive and explanatory

frameworks introduce novelty, abduction makes for a promising research design. It probes the plausibility of the framework while, at the same time, remaining open to amending it inductively (Morrow 1994, 251–252).

There are two reasons for the case-selection: First, the governance of nuclear weapons is a highly important case in its own right. The resilience of this governance mechanism to reproduce itself may, ultimately, be a matter of to be or not to be for humankind. Second, while research on resilience has made inroads into studying how actors govern the global environment (Adger 2000; Young 2010), economics (Armitage 2008; J. Schmidt 2015; V. Schmidt 2016) and development (Levitsky and Murillo 2009), our knowledge of the resilience of global security institutions, especially nuclear weapons governance, remains anecdotal.

The governance of nuclear weapons is a broad field. It encompasses multilateral treaties such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), bilateral treaties such as the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), international agencies such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), international fora ranging from the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to the Conference for Disarmament (CD), and many more sets of institutions. Yet it is the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) that plays the most central role in this field. Parties to the NPT review the implementation of the treaty every five years, discussing how to improve the performance of the NPT.

My research scrutinises communicative encounters at these quinquennial Review Conferences (RevCons)⁷ as well as Preparatory Committees (PrepComs) and less formalised preparatory meetings for these RevCons from 1993 to 2015.⁸ I rely on the following sources: (1) statements by the parties (states and groupings of states); (2) published accounts by

participating diplomats, including all Presidents of these RevCons, about these communicative encounters; (3) twelve elite interviews with high-ranking diplomats from nuclear weapons states⁹ (NWS) and non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS) who participated in the analysed review cycles; and (4) final documents of RevCons.¹⁰

My empirical investigations proceed in two steps. First, I conduct a descriptive analysis that identifies convergences and divergences on governance-constituting institutions as well as convergences on governance-reconstituting institutions in the foreground and background layers. The time frame ranges from 1993, when the PrepComs for the 1995 Review and Extension Conference (RevExCon) started, to 2015, when the latest RevCon took place. The outcome of this analysis is a detailed description of the evolution of the resilience of the NPT. Has it grown more or less resilient over time?

Second, I follow up with my explanatory analysis. What explains the evolution of resilience identified in the descriptive analysis? I examine (a) *how* diplomats talk and (b) *what* they talk about in order to determine the occurrence of communicative modes. Senders transmitting messages to a receiver that threaten to sanction opposing behaviour and/or resort to rhetorical force engage in coercion. Senders transmitting elaborations of their positions to receivers make use of the declaratory mode. Haggling involves diplomats exchanging bids about what is to be on the agenda to negotiate and how issues on this agenda are formulated in outcome documents. Problem-solving is about key players moving to *ad hoc* communicative fora and reflecting together about the stakes of negotiations. Polylogue involves reflecting together about fundamental ideas that were previously simply taken for granted.

In order to get at the dominance of modes, I look for (a) *how often* and (b) *by whom* communicative modes are put to use. The former – ‘repetitive episodes’ as Boden and Zimmerman (1991, 13) refer to this – indicates the prevalence of a mode in a communicative encounter. The key about the latter is whether a communicative mode remains confined to a sub-grouping of actors or whether it is used more broadly across different sub-groupings. Given my abductive research design, I remain open to empirical evidence that allows me to add to the theoretical framework. This applies especially to evidence about the generative mechanisms that link communicative modes and governance resilience.

The Declining Resilience of Nuclear Governance

This section describes the evolution of the resilience of nuclear weapons governance. There was a worrisome development. Since the mid-1990s, more and more governance-constituting institutions came to be contested. At the same time, governors found it increasingly difficult to produce governance-reconstituting institutions.

The last time, governors converged around governance-reconstituting institutions dates back to 1995. The RevExCon was successful in forging convergences on three foreground institutions: *additional safeguards*, *indefinite extension* and *extended review*. Article 3 of the NPT stipulates that NNWS conclude safeguards agreements with the IAEA in order for it to verify that they do not try to acquire nuclear weapons. Starting in 1993, more and more NNWS (and, in much less intrusive fashion, also NWS) accepted that they would also prepare Additional Protocols that make a more thorough verification possible. By mid-2015, Additional Protocols with 126 states had entered into force. Twenty more states had signed an Additional Protocol but the Protocol had not been in force yet. Additional

Protocols became a widely accepted standard. Iran, for instance, signed an Additional Protocol already in 2003, i.e. a time in which it was a very outspoken critic of NWS.¹¹

Indefinite extension made sure that the NPT did not expire. Originally agreed upon for the duration of 25 years, the parties agreed to do away with a 'sell by date' for the NPT. Strengthened review was another important adaptation. From then on, PrepComs and RevCons were to look back to the previous five years, scrutinising 'the results of the period they are reviewing, including the implementation of undertakings of the States parties under the Treaty.' Furthermore, they were to look forward to the next five years and 'identify the areas in which, and the means through which, further progress should be sought in the future (...) and 'address specifically what might be done to strengthen the implementation of the Treaty and to achieve its universality.'¹² This extended review process generated detailed Final Documents in 2000 and 2010.

The post-1995 pattern, however, looked very different. There were no more convergences on governance-reconstituting institutions. Instead, there was more and more contestation on more and more governance-constituting institutions. There were major divergences on a number of foreground institutions. The meaning of *non-proliferation* (Article 1 of the NPT) was contested. Practices of nuclear sharing between some NWS and their NNWS allies (e.g. the United States and Germany), however, prompted sharp criticism by many NNWS.¹³ Major diplomatic clashes occurred about *security assurances*. The Preamble of the NPT postulates security assurances by NWS. Yet the issues of negative security assurances (NWS not threatening a NNWS with nuclear weapons) and positive security assurances (NWS assisting NNWS when threatened or attacked by another NWS) always gave rise to major disagreements.¹⁴ The principle of *peaceful use*, according to many

developing NNWS, was nothing but dead letter. Articles 4 and 5 of the NPT stipulate that NWS provide technical support to NNWS lacking nuclear expertise to reap the civilian benefits of nuclear energy. The Non-aligned Movement (NAM) was particularly critical, accusing nuclear suppliers of discriminating against some NNWS while being very forthcoming to help others. In order to overcome this problem, they advocated moving technical support from the realm of bilateralism to the realm of multilateralism. Proposals for a fuel bank, for instance, have been on the table for decades. Yet there were no governance-reconstituting agreements on these suggestions.¹⁵

Contestation about *nuclear disarmament* assumed almost epic proportions. Outspoken NNWS, and again especially NAM, considered NWS in flagrant violation of Article 6 of the NPT. To them, NWS are legally obliged to embark on concrete steps towards nuclear disarmament. NWS, however, persistently refused to agree to commit to tangible steps. They came close to doing so in the 13 Steps of the 2000 RevCon Final Document and the 22 Steps of the 2010 RevCon Final Document but even here they did not agree on a timeline.¹⁶ NNWS pushed for the CTBT for decades, but the treaty did not enter into force.¹⁷ Discussions about a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) failed to produce any tangible results. Ever since the PrepComs for the 1995 RevExCon, proposals for establishing a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (WMDfz) in the Middle East were discussed again and again. Egypt was a major driving force in these discussions. The 2010 RevCon provided more details on the first tangible step towards this goal, i.e. a Middle East conference in 2012. This conference, however, never took place. This was the most explosive issue during the 2015 review cycle. It prompted Egypt to walk out of the PrepComs, and it was the issue that contributed the most to the failure to produce a Final Document in 2015. In the aftermath of

this review cycle, NNWS moved towards negotiating a new convention that outlaws nuclear weapons.

The background layer had long been immune to major contestation and the governance-constituting agreement on the *perils of nuclear technology* remained very much in place. Given their enormous destructiveness, nuclear weapons are in a class of their own. It is a weapons category that needs to be tightly controlled.¹⁸ Other long decontested governance-constituting agreements, however, became more and more contested from about 2010 onwards. For decades, it was widely taken for granted by the governors that the *state* is the reference object of security. The point of nuclear weapons governance, in this reading, is to make states more secure. The Humanitarian Initiative (HI), however, rejected this reference object, arguing for *human* security instead: 'We pledge to follow the imperative of human security for all.'¹⁹ Most NPT parties signed the 2015 Humanitarian Pledge. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Pledge in GA RES 70/48 (2015) with the overwhelming majority of 83 percent of states represented at the General Assembly.²⁰ Negotiations to prohibit nuclear weapons started in March 2016 in New York.

HI also rejected another former orthodoxy. Not only states ought to be governors in the nuclear weapons field but also *civil society actors*. HI practices the inclusion of non-state actors such as academics, eye witnesses (Hiroshima and Nagasaki), and civil society organisations.²¹ This added to more long-standing challenges of the rules of game that revolve around asymmetric rights and obligations of parties to the NPT (Wisnumurti (1995)). A Latin American diplomat elaborates on this: '[T]he inherent imbalance and discrimination are part of the original sin of the NPT.'²²

In sum, nuclear weapons governance became less resilient over the past two decades. Governors contested more and more governance-constituting institutions. At the same time, they found it more and more difficult to converge on governance-reconstituting institutions. This problem is no longer confined to the foreground layer. It spilled over into the background layer. What explains this worrisome record? The remaining sections of this article inquire into the salience of modes of diplomatic communication. Do configurations of communicative modes make for a plausible explanation? I address the salience of one mode after the other, moving from most closed (coercion) to most open (polylogue).

Coercion

Although coercion was never a dominant mode of communication, there were numerous coercive attempts to forge convergences on institutions, including governance-reconstituting ones. Some involved carrots and sticks; even more applied rhetorical force. Coercion did not always facilitate the making of governance-reconstituting institutions. If it did, it did so in conjunction with other communicative modes.

In the last decade, more and more NNWS – and occasionally even some NWS – resorted to trying to shame the United States into taking a more pro-active stance on disarmament and peaceful use. This made little difference. At the 2005 RevCon, Iran delivered its most acerbic criticism against the United States as yet, which culminated in branding Washington ‘extremist’ (Zarif 2005). Egypt (Fathalla 2005) and even China (‘Van 2005) cautioned Washington not to break its promises. The 2007 US-India Deal, in which Washington agreed to deliver nuclear technology for peaceful use to New Delhi, marked a major escalation of forceful rhetoric. A non-party to the NPT got what many parties to the

NPT did not get, although they felt entitled to it by the NPT. At the 2007 PrepCom for the 2010 RevCon, the usually rather balanced Malaysia branded the deal as ‘a gross violation of the spirit and letter of the Treaty [NPT, mk]’ (Hamidon 2010). At the 2015 RevCon, coercive rhetoric exacerbated again. Even South Africa, usually also a moderate NNWS, criticised NWS, including the United States, for breaking the NPT’s provisions on disarmament and peaceful use. It invoked a strong historical analogy. Given the discrimination between NWS and NNWS, nuclear governance amounts to an apartheid system (see Wan 2015).

Again, this did not change things around. Washington – and NWS in general – could not easily be coerced. Perhaps less expectedly, NWS also experienced their difficulties trying to coerce NNWS. When Egypt walked out of the 2013 PreCom, it did so despite Washington’s misgivings. When Cairo continued to pursue its proposal for a WMDFZ in the Middle East at the RevCon, including a deadline, it did so very much despite strong criticism by the American delegation and its renewed dependence on aid from Washington.²³

Sometimes, coercion made a difference. The 2010 RevCon was concluded successfully not only because parties put to use more open modes of communication but also because they coerced an obstinate NNWS. Ahmadinejad’s Iran was determined to use the 2010 RevCon as a stage for its strong demarcation from the United States. It even looked as if Iran would stand in the way of a Final Document. But then the pressure on Iran mounted. The pressure by fellow NAM members was particularly important. Being ‘fed up with Iran’, they juxtaposed Teheran’s past constructive stances for a stronger nuclear governance mechanism, especially on matters of disarmament and peaceful use, with its destructive role in 2010.²⁴

On rare occasions, coercion even helped to generate governance-reconstituting agreements. At the 1995 RevExCon modes of communication other than coercion featured much more prominently. But these agreements would not have been possible – or at least would have looked rather differently – without some coercion of some recalcitrant states. The primary coercer was the United States, which at times unapologetically translated its economic capabilities into coercive power. In some cases, this made sure that diplomats with too determined a record for opposing indefinite extension were no longer present during the haggle. During the RevExCon, Venezuela’s equally outspoken Adolfo Taylhardat was replaced with a more docile colleague from Lima. The latter performed a u-turn of Venezuela’s position and supported indefinite extension.²⁵ Mexico’s similarly critical diplomat Miguel Marin Bosch was ‘marginalized under U.S. pressure’ (Dhanapala 2010, 62). The Egyptian delegation had been determined to prevent indefinite extension until Clinton called up President Mubarak. Washington threatened Egypt with ‘reviewing American aid (\$2.2 billion per year) in light of the Egyptian threats to obstruct NTP extension’ (Steinberg 2001, 239).

In short, coercive communication sometimes helped to reach convergences and sometimes it did not. As the sections below show, this variation had a lot to do with its interplay with other, more open modes.

Declaration

Declaration was the dominant communicative mode in most communicative encounters. There were interesting nuances. Phases in which declarations defending positions prevailed alternated with those that indicated some willingness to compromise. The former gave rise

to more and more contestation whereas the latter facilitated decontestation, including convergences on governance-reconstituting institutions.

Declaratory communication was never more closed than in 2005. Prior to the RevCon, Washington downplayed the legal status of the 13 Steps agreed upon in 2000 (Rademaker in Boese and Pomper 2005). At the actual RevCon, the opening statement came down heavily on non-proliferation and said very little about disarmament. There was no mentioning of the 13 Steps (Rademaker 2005). Most NNWS²⁶ were adamant that the task of the 2005 RevCon was to review the progress NWS had made in implementing the 13 Steps. Their declarations criticised NWS for failing to fulfil obligations under the NPT and more detailed provisions agreed upon in the 1995 RevExCon and the 2000 RevCon, most importantly on disarmament and peaceful use (Albar 2005). In 2015, declaratory communication was similarly closed. Diplomacy was again, above all, about exchanging declaratory salvos – this time about the 22 Steps – without indicating any meaningful room to manoeuvre. While the United States rejected that it had violated the 22 Steps, in particular the provisions for a WMDFZ in the Middle East (Kerry 2015), Egypt and other NAM states were adamant that it did.²⁷

During the PrepComs for the 2000 and 2010 RevCons, diplomats largely confined themselves to reiterating their positions, too. Rauf and Simpson (1999, 122) sum up the former well when they write that it ‘consisted mostly of a series of national statements of position, rather than interactive debate.’ The run-up to the 2010 RevCon was similar until Obama’s 2009 Prague Speech indicated Washington’s willingness to compromise on a range of disarmament issues, including to ‘negotiate a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with the Russians’, seek the ‘ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty’, and work

towards 'a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials intended for use in state nuclear weapons' (Obama 2009). At the actual RevCons, declaratory communication was more open. Statements of a number of key players explored ways of meeting in the middle (Baali in Rauf 2000; Natalegawa 2010).

In the years 1993-1995, this openness of declaratory communication extended beyond the actual RevCon. It was a dominant mode of communication in numerous encounters at PrepComs as well. During the 1994 PrepCom for the 1995 RevExCom, NAM did not reject the indefinite extension of the NPT. But it put many demands on the table. Most of these were about disarmament, including a WMDFZ in the Middle East and the CTBT. Security assurances and peaceful use featured prominently as well.²⁸ The NWS campaigned for an indefinite extension. But they signalled their willingness to compromise on a range of issues. In 1993, the United States started to back the idea of a FMCT at the General Assembly, which was a step towards nuclear disarmament long demanded by many NNWS. A few weeks prior to the RevExCon, the NWS agreed to UNSC 984 (1995), which strengthened the security assurances made to NNWS part of the NPT. At the beginning of the RevExCon, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States promised to 'pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament', and to 'negotiate intensively, as a high priority, a universal and multilaterally and effectively verifiable comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty'. They addressed security assurances and peaceful use as well.²⁹ The signatories of the letter reiterated these pledges in unilateral declarations.³⁰ China's proposals went further.³¹

Together with other, more open modes of communication, these declaratory exchanges contributed to a RevExCon that even succeeded in converging on governance-

reconstituting institutions. But it could not have done so without two other modes of communication that featured very prominently at different stages of the negotiations as well, i.e. haggling and problem-solving.

Haggle

Although declaratory communication was even more frequent than haggling, the latter was also almost omnipresent and at times prevailed over declaration. Again, two different forms may be distinguished. There was procedural wrangling and substantive negotiation.³² The former closed communication to a considerable extent and fuelled more contestation whereas the latter opened it up more and facilitated decontestation, including convergences on governance-reconstituting institutions.

During the PrepComs leading up to the 2005 and 2015 RevCons, there was very little substantive negotiation. Instead, parties were pre-occupied with procedural wrangling about what makes it onto the agenda and what does not. The PrepComs, therefore, became vehicles for the parties to maintain what Duarte (2006, 4) criticised as their 'intransigence'. During the actual RevCons, substantive negotiation took a backseat, too. Declarations rehashing positions prevailed. This problem was most pronounced in 2005. Critical substantive issues were put out in the open by declarations but the parties never proceeded to negotiate about them (Simpson and Nielsen 2005). In 2015, parties started at least to negotiate these issues, most of all the Middle East WMD/FZ. But they did so only towards the end of the RevCon. Egypt, supported by many NNWS inside and outside the Middle East, unequivocally demanded a conference to be held by March 2016. Washington, supported by

Ottawa and London, rejected what they considered an 'arbitrary deadline' (Wan 2015). This rejection marked the end of the haggling in 2015.

Haggling at the PrepComs prior to the 2000 and 2010 RecCons was also primarily about procedural wrangling. There was haggling about what to include and what to exclude on the agenda. And there was even plenty of haggling about the procedures through which to determine what was to be included and excluded (or shelved for future communicative encounters). But there was very little substantive negotiation (Rauf and Simpson 1999, 123-125; Amano 2009, 19-21). At the RevCons, however, there was quite a bit of substantive negotiation. This eventually yielded Final Documents when haggling came to be coupled to problem-solving (see below), although many agreements were merely tentative convergences. Ambiguities and suspensions were woven into these convergences, which caused major difficulties again in later review cycles. There were plenty of ambiguities in provisions about disarmament, such as the 13 Steps and, even more so, the 22 Steps (including the provisions for a WMDFZ in the Middle East). Other contentious issues were simply shelved for future discussions, such as a nuclear fuel bank.³³

From 1993 to 1995, haggling was more open than thereafter. As Dhanapala (2005, 27) points out, the preparation for the 1995 RevExCon was exemplary when it came to addressing substantive issues. This does, of course, not mean that there was no procedural wrangling. But this wrangling often spilled over into preliminary negotiations about substance. Negotiations, therefore, had time to build momentum. At the RevExCon, parties were rather successful to seize this momentum. Yet it is important to stress two qualifications of this haggling success: First, the decisions and resolution adopted by the RevExCon suffer from similar problems of ambiguity and suspension as the 2000 and 2010

Final Documents. The 1995 Resolution on the Middle East endorsed the aim of such a zone but it remains vague about the 'practical steps' for attaining this goal.³⁴ The idea of a FMCT found entry into a decision but shelved the question about how to negotiate such a treaty. Second, haggling alone would not have yielded success. Neither would have a configuration of coercion, declaration and haggling. Success required the dominance of problem-solving at critical junctures. This is addressed in the next section.

Problem-solving

Occurrences of problem-solving are much less frequent than declaration and haggling. But there were encounters, especially towards the end of RevCons, in which problem-solving became a dominant mode of communication. Without this moving up the ladder of communicative openness, no RevCon could have ended successfully. This very much includes the RevExCon and its production of governance-reconstituting institutions.

Every RevCon President tried to employ problem-solving techniques. He or she tried to use procedural tricks to make parties meet in the middle, proposed novel packaging deals, used smaller *ad hoc* fora, and so on. Parties, however, did not always reciprocate these attempts to reinvigorate communication. In 2005, they relied so much on re-stating their positions (closed declaration) and procedural wrangling (closed haggle) that there was simply no room for joining problem-solving endeavours (Duarte 2006, 7-13). In 2015, this problem was almost equally pronounced. Parties reiterated their 'entrenched positions on key issues pertaining to nuclear disarmament' (Feroukhi 2015) rather than allowing for meaningful communication about these positions.

At the 2000 and 2010 RevCons, powerful parties reciprocated the efforts of Presidents to employ problem-solving moves. Meeting in small but heterogeneous *ad hoc* groupings and debating about new package deals proved particularly important. Abdallah Baali, President of the 2000 RevCon, underlines the importance of negotiating package deals in *ad-hoc* fora: 'This format made it more difficult for the NWS and the NAC to hold rigidly to their positions and thus to continue the deadlock' (Baali in Rauf 2000, 7). Libran Cabactulan, President of the 2010 RevCon, successfully put this re-packaging and reconvention in more informal settings to use, too (Potter et al. 2010).

At the 1995 RevExCon, problem-solving was not just dominant towards the very end of the RevCon but at several critical junctures in the midst of this conference as well. Jayantha Dhanapala, President of the 1995 RevExCon, selected two proposals, made by states with some clout across parties to the NPT, as starting points of a package deal he put forward. South Africa, enjoying plenty of authority for having foregone nuclear weapons, proposed an affirmation of NPT principles (disarmament, peaceful use, non-proliferation) and a strengthened review process for monitoring the parties' compliance with these principles. Canada – close to the United States but also a respected player in arms control – advocated for an indefinite extension of the NPT. Then, Dhanapala sidelined the main committees of the conference, especially the one on disarmament. This committee was, in the words of observers, 'a disaster from the outset. The debate on nuclear disarmament was carried out in the stilted and confrontational manner of a bygone era' (Rauf and Johnson 1995, 29). Instead, Dhanapala opened up a new forum for discussion. This forum, which he baptised 'Presidential Consultations', shook up the debate.

About 25 state delegations, representing different positions and geographical regions, found it much easier to open up to one another in this *ad hoc* format. This soon generated an important effect. Reflecting together upon the stakes of the negotiations, diplomats came to put strong emphasis on their shared interest in strengthening the NPT. The 'collective preference' of arriving at a deal came to dominate the 'individual state preferences' (Essis 2005, 536). In this new spirit, they discussed possibilities for a compromise. Dhanapala presented them with the compromise formula of 'indefinite extension plus'. There would be an indefinite extension of the NPT. But there would also be additional agreements, including a strengthened review (Dhanapala 2013). All delegations represented in the 'Presidential Consultations' actively participated in attempts to flesh out a compromise (Goosen in Welsh 1995, 3). The break-through eventually happened at a joint dinner, when the parties agreed upon a blueprint for such a compromise (Graham 2002, 289).

Problem-solving had put haggling back on track. With the blueprint being in place, communication moved more and more again beyond the 'Presidential Consultations'. Haggling came to dominate again towards the very end of the RevExCon. But this haggling took place within the new parameters set by the problem-solving. The latter was of crucial importance. Looking back to the RevExCon, participating diplomats concur that no agreements would have been possible without problem-solving. This applies to diplomats representing NWS (Earle, quoted in Crossette 1995; Delpech, quoted in Welsh 1995, 19), NNWS who introduced the original proposals³⁵ (Goosen, Westdal, all quoted in Welsh 1995, 3-4), and even NNWS whose original proposals were marginalised (Wisnumurti, Bosch, all quoted in Welsh 1995, 6-7).

Polylogue

There is very little question about it that polylogical modes of communication were highly important for creating nuclear weapons governance in the first place. It was experts starting with scientists involved in the Manhattan Project and other civil society actors (Baruch 1946; Masters, Dexter and Way 2007 [1946]) who advocated hard for controlling and abolishing nuclear weapons. This left its marks on the NPT. Furthermore, there is very little question about it that polylogues are required to keep nuclear governance afloat. Practitioners write about the need for 'constructive dialogue' (Duarte 2006, 10). Scholars emphasise that 'empathy and imagination [are] needed to understand other governments' interests, incentives and constraints' (Esberg and Sagan 2012, 105).

It is not that there were no occurrences of polylogues in the analysed time period. Confined to communication within sub-groupings of like-minded states, this communicative mode showed its potential even to change even the deep background. The evolution of the HI is highly suggestive in this regard. A 2010 speech by Jakob Kellenberger, Swiss career diplomat and President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, sparked a debate about some of the very foundations of nuclear governance. At the core of it is a 'moral argument'³⁶: human security instead of state security and exclusive (state) governance versus inclusive (state and civil society) governance. HI actors were open to revisit deeply ingrained ideas about the images of nuclear governance. They imported many elements for this moral argument from other arms control mechanisms, especially landmines and cluster munition (Sauer and Pretorius 2014). HI conferences featured many more actors, different kinds of actors and more interactive formats of debate than NPT RevCons. HI succeeded in

sharpening its agenda in the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Open-ended Working Group, which was created by the General Assembly. Within three years, HI had become the 'largest cross-national group of states ever to deliver a joint statement on a matter concerning the NPT' (Johnson 2013). The 2015 Humanitarian Pledge is something akin to a blueprint for the convention to ban nuclear weapons.

Polylogical communication, however, remained confined to sub-groupings such as HI (and also NAC, NAM and others). NWS, for instance, did not engage with HI in any meaningful fashion at all.³⁷ Given the lack of communicative encounters capable of opening up the debate across the spectrum of governors, there was not much diplomats could do except for declaring their differences, haggling about nuances, at times even resorting to problem-solving, and then, once a deal was concluded, fall back to declaration to defend their positions about how to interpret the deal. This diplomatic trench warfare came at a high price. It decreased the resilience of nuclear governance. Diplomats representing very different state groupings are very much aware of this problem. As a diplomat from an outspoken NAM member put it, there are 'serious cracks. I would not be surprised if, one day, the regime would fall.'³⁸ A retired diplomat from a NATO member concurs: '[T]he NPT is under great strain' (Meyer 2009, 464).

Conclusion

This paper developed descriptive and explanatory arguments. How can we, as analysts of governance, find out whether governance is more or less resilient? On the one hand, I followed the literature. Governance resilience is about the ability of governors to adapt the steering mechanism that structures their interaction. On the other hand, I went beyond the

literature by linking institutional adaptability to contestation and decontestation in foreground (principles, norms) and background (epistemic understandings, rules of the game) layers of governance. This yielded a worrisome description of the evolution of nuclear weapons governance from 1993 to 2015. More and more governance-constituting institutions came to be contested while less and less governance-reconstituting institutions came to be decontested. From the early 2010s onwards, this pattern was no longer confined to foreground institutions but reached the background as well.

How can we explain the making and unmaking of governance resilience? My explanatory argument, too, is grounded in the existing literature. Diplomatic communication makes a difference for governance. Building upon the literature on diplomatic communication, I identified different configurations of modes of communication. Closed modes of communication are not insignificant. By themselves, however, they do not make the generation of governance-reconstituting institutions possible. When problem-solving prevails over more closed modes of communication, it becomes possible for actors to converge around governance-reconstituting foreground institutions. When polylogues does, it becomes even possible for them to converge around governance-reconstituting background institutions.

Inquiring into causes of the declining resilience of nuclear weapons governance yielded empirical evidence for the salience of these configurations of communicative modes. Coercion occurred regularly. Declaration and haggle were omnipresent. These closed modes, however, only contributed to the making of governance-reconstituting foreground institutions when problem-solving came to dominate. Problem-solving generated momentum towards reaching convergences that remained unmatched by closed modes.

Polylogue can generate such a momentum even for reaching convergences on background institutions. During the two decades under scrutiny in this article, however, this mode was sidelined from debates across like-minded states. Governors, therefore, could only contest but not decontest background institutions.

The empirical findings also allow for the further elaboration of my explanatory argument. Two points are especially noteworthy. First, there are important nuances when it comes to some of these modes of communication. Some declaratory exchanges are statements about immutable positions while others open up further and signal room for compromise. Haggling is sometimes confined to procedural wrangling. Bidding on procedural matters is a vehicle for preventing substantive negotiation. Yet sometimes haggling moves towards substantive negotiation fairly quickly. In the empirical analysis, the closed variations of declaration and haggle gave rise to more and more contestation whereas the more open variations laid some of the groundwork for reaching convergences. Second, configurations of communicative modes often amount to practices, more precisely rhetorical practices (De Certeau 1980). When it comes to nuclear governance, most diplomats are, above all, too accustomed to exchanging salvos of immutable declarations across groupings of states, putting procedural wrangling ahead of substantive negotiation, and sidelining problem-solving, not even to speak of polylogue. Yet there is an interesting twist here. While these rhetorical practices often appear to be as non-reflected as Bourdieu-inspired scholarship suggests (Kuus 2014; Pouliot 2016), some actors, ranging from RevCons Presidents to the protagonists of HI, do reflect upon them. This reflection prompts them to call for departing from iterated doings.

At first glance, the descriptive and explanatory contributions of this study may appear all too theoretical and removed from the world of practitioners. But it is interesting to note that the gist of my contention – the resilience of nuclear weapons governance has declined and overly closed modes of communication brought this about – is not all that different from what leading practitioners argue. They, too, are concerned about the state of nuclear weapons governance. And they, too, call for shaking up communicative encounters, in order to allow more open modes of communication to come to the fore. Feroukhi (2015) postulates to ‘revisit the review process’ (Feroukhi 2015). Kimball (2015) advocates putting UN fora to use. Kissinger et al. (2013) call for nuclear disarmament summits. Cabactulan (2010) postulates a summit to prepare a Nuclear Weapons Convention (similar to chemical and biological weapons). HI calls for a much stronger input from civil society organisations.³⁹

Much more research on diplomatic communication and governance resilience is warranted. Three items for an agenda for further research come immediately to mind. First, communicative modes have material underpinnings. These range from technological innovations that reconfigure channels of communication to military and economic capabilities that shape coercion and bargaining power. More research is required – this is very much a broader ontological challenge (Sewell 2005) – on the intersection of material and intersubjective worlds. Second, studies on embedding diplomats in additional streams of communication are very much warranted. Communicative encounters on the domestic level, for instance private communication among leaders and their advisors as well as public communication between leaders and civil society actors, have repercussions for how open or closed diplomats are in international encounters. Third, we need more in-depth knowledge on how actors generate failures and successes of polylogues. This communicative mode is

best understood as what political theorists (Bächtiger et al. 2010) label deliberation type II, i.e. communication that features deliberative components alongside strategic ones. This kind of communication contributes its fair share to whether governance, as postulated by the Commission on Global Governance (1995, 5) is 'flexible enough to respond to new problems and new understanding of old ones.'

Notes

¹ I thank Martin Senn for introducing me to the work of Hayek. See also Kornprobst and Senn (2016a).

² Bourdieu (interviewed in Lamaison 1986) employs this metaphor in order to capture something much more fundamental than the rules Young writes about. Rules of the game are located in the doxa.

³ On these 'how possible' questions, see Laffey and Weldes (1997).

⁴ For more recent contributions, see Sartori (2002) and Jakobsen (2011).

⁵ Similar work, employing more sociological micro-foundations, includes Krebs and Jackson (2007) and Adler-Nissen (2014).

⁶ I choose the term polylogue because it highlights heterogeneity (Kristeva 1977) as well as transcends some of the divide between research on strategic communication (e.g. advocacy literature) and truth-seeking (Habermasian-inspired) communication. Some authors using the term tend more towards strategic communication (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2004), whereas others (Wimmer 2004) approximate the truth-seeking end of the spectrum.

⁷ The 1995 Conference was both a Review and Extension Conference (RevExCon).

⁸ The PrepComs for the 1995 Review and Extension Conference started in 1993. This was the first review cycle in the new, post-Cold War era. This is why I chose 1993 as the starting year of my analysis. The most recent RevCon took place in May 2015.

⁹ I conducted the semi-structured interviews in Vienna and New York from 2013 to 2015. Taken together, they helped me generate novel insights for the entire time period under scrutiny.

¹⁰ While my descriptive analysis relies heavily on 4, my explanatory analysis draws from 1-3. In addition to these sources, I also attended several informal meetings in the 2010-2015 review cycle. I use the insights I gained from this as background knowledge.

¹¹ An overview of states having signed Additional Protocols can be found at <https://www.iaea.org>.

¹² Decision 1 (7) of the 1995 RevExCon, NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part 1), Annex.

¹³ Even in the very constructive atmosphere of the 2010 RevCon, this issue was very controversial (Badr 2010).

¹⁴ At the 2013 NPT PrepCom in Geneva, for instance, disagreements on security guarantees featured prominently: NPT/CONF/.2015/PC.II/WP.24; NPT/CONF/.2015/PC.II/WP.15; NPT/CONF/.2015/PC.II/WP.38. These documents, all well as all others cited below without a web-address, are available at www.reachingcriticalwill.org.

¹⁵ Art 57, NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I, Part I).

¹⁶ Art 30, NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I, Part II).

¹⁷ Without the ratification of the United States and China, the treaty cannot enter into force.

¹⁸ Preamble, NPT. On this governing imperative more generally, see Kornprobst and Senn (2016b; 2017).

¹⁹ Humanitarian Pledge, Vienna, December 2015; available at <http://www.icanw.org>.

²⁰ After the analysed time period, HI gained even further momentum. In October 2016, the First Committee decided to convene in 2017 a United Nations conference to negotiate the prohibition of nuclear weapons (A/C.1/71/L.41).

²¹ See, for instance, the programme of the Vienna Conference, which is available at <http://www.bmeia.gv.at>.

²² Delegate of a Latin American NNWS, interviewed in Vienna on 4 June 2013.

²³ Opportunities for economic coercion are built into the FY2015 Consolidated Appropriations Act. One of the strings attached to aid is that Egypt 'is sustaining the strategic relationship with the United States'. See Sharp (2015) for further details. For a subtle application of this provision see Gottemoeller (2015).

²⁴ Delegate of a Latin American NNWS, interviewed in Vienna on 4 June 2013.

²⁵ Former delegate of a North American NNWS, interviewed in Vienna, 8 July 2013.

²⁶ NNWS under the US nuclear umbrella or hoping to move under it, have defended Washington and, to some extent, NWS more generally. Delegate of a large Euroasian NNWS, and delegate of a small Euroasian NNWS, both interviewed in New York, 17 February 2015.

²⁷ The declaratory salvos already started in the first PrepCom (Delegate of a Middle Eastern NNWS, interviewed in Vienna, 21 March 2013).

²⁸ Document on Substantive Issues submitted by Indonesia on Behalf of the Group of Non-aligned and Other States. Preparatory Committee, Geneva, 12-16 September 1994. Available at <http://cns.miis.edu>

²⁹ Letter dated 17 April 1995 from the Representatives of France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America Addressed to the Secretary-General of the 1995 RevExCon. Available at <http://www.un.org>.

³⁰ See, for instance, Christopher (1995).

³¹ Letter dated 17 April 1995 from the Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China to the Secretary-General of the 1995 RevExCon. Available at <http://www.un.org>.

³² I borrow this distinction from Sergio de Queiroz Duarte (2006, 5), who was the President of the 2005 RevCon.

³³ Art 11, NPT/CONF.2000/28 (Part I); Art 57, NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I, Part I).

³⁴ Resolution on the Middle East, Conference, NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), Annex.

³⁵ South Africa and Canada.

³⁶ Delegate of a European NNWS, interviewed in Vienna, 4 April 2013.

³⁷ Contestations about images are akin to paradigmatic scholarly debates. Meaningful communication is rare. Shouting matches are the rule.

³⁸ Delegate of a Middle Eastern NNWS, interviewed in Vienna, 4 April 2013.

³⁹ Humanitarian Pledge, Vienna, December 2015; available at:

http://www.icanw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/HINW14vienna_Pledge_Document.pdf.

References

Abbott, Kenneth W., and Duncan Snidal (2000) 'Hard and Soft Law in International Governance', *International Organization* 54(3): 421-456.

Adger, W. Neil (2000) 'Social and Ecological Resilience: Are They Related?' *Progress in Human Geography* 24(3): 347-364.

Adler, Emanuel and Steven Bernstein (2005) 'Knowledge in Power: The Epistemic Construction of Global Governance' in Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, eds., *Power in Global Governance*, 294-318, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Adler-Nissen, Rebecca (2014) *Opting out of the European Union: Diplomacy, Sovereignty and European Integration*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Albar, Syed Hamid (2005) *Statement on Behalf of the Group of Non-Aligned States Parties*, General Debate, NPT Review Conference, New York, 2 May.

Amano, Yukiya (2009) 'Making the Agenda Stick: Lessons Learned From the 2007 NPT PrepCom', *Nonproliferation Review* 16(1): 15-24.

Armitage, Derek (2008) 'Governance and the Commons in a Multi-level World', *International Journal of the Commons* 2(1): 7-32.

Baali, Abdullah (2000) *Closing Remarks by the Conference President*, 19 May.

Bächtiger, André, et al. (2010) 'Disentangling diversity in deliberative democracy: Competing theories, their blind spots and complementarities', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 18(1): 32-63.

Badr, Hisham (2010) *Statement of the Group of Non-Aligned States Parties*, Main Committee I, New York, 7 May.

Bang, Henrik (2003) 'Governance as Political Communication' in Henrik Bang, ed., *Governance as Social and Political Communication*, 7-23, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Barnett, Michael (2013) 'Humanitarian Governance', *Annual Review of Political Science* 16: 379-398.

Baruch, Bernard (1946) *The Baruch Plan*, available at <http://www.atomicarchive.com>.

Bednar, Jenna (2016) 'Robust Institutional Design: What Makes Some Institutions More Adaptable and Resilient to Changes in Their Environment Than Others?' In David S. Wilson and Alan Kirman, eds., *Strüngmann Forum Reports IXX*, 167-184, Cambridge: MIT Press.

Boden, Deirdre and Don H. Zimmerman (1991) 'Structure-in-action: An Introduction' in Deirdre Boden and Don H. Zimmerman, eds., *Talk & Social Structure: Studies in Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis*, 3-21, New York: Wiley.

Boese, Wade and Miles Pomper (2005) *Interview with Assistant Secretary of State Stephen Rademaker*, 19 April, available at <http://www.armscontrol.org>.

Bonham, G. Matthew, et al. (1987) 'Cognition and International Negotiation: The Historical Recovery of Discursive Space', *Cooperation and Conflict* 22(1): 1-19.

Burke, Kenneth (1973) 'The Rhetorical Situation' in Lee Thayer, ed., *Communication: Ethical and Moral Issues*, 263-275, New York: Gordon and Breach.

Cabactulan, Libran (2010) *Keynote Address on the Occasion of the Conference 'From Aspiration to Reality: Nuclear Disarmament After the NPT Review'*, 14 September.

Cicero, Marcus T. (1948) *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Coleman, Katharina (2011) 'Locating Norm Diplomacy: Venue Change in International Norm Negotiations', *European Journal of International Relations* 19(1): 163-186.

Commission on Global Governance (1995) *Our Global Neighbourhood*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cooper, Andrew, Brian Hocking, and William Maley, eds. (2008) *Global Governance and Diplomacy: Worlds Apart?* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Craig, Robert T. (1999) 'Communication Theory as a Field', *Communication Theory* 9(2): 119-161.

Craig, Robert T. (2007) 'Pragmatism in the Field of Communication Theory', *Communication Theory* 17(2): 125-145.

Crawford, Neta (2009) 'Homo Politicus and Argument (Nearly) All the Way Down: Persuasion in Politics', *Perspectives on Politics* 7(1): 103-124.

Crossette, Barbara (1995) 'Man in the News', *New York Times*, 14 May.

De Certeau, Michel (1980) 'On the Oppositional Practices of Everyday Life', *Social Text*, no. 3: 3-43.

Deutsch, Karl W. (1952) 'On Communication Models in the Social Sciences', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 16(3): 356-380.

Dhanapala, Jayantha (2005) *Multilateral Diplomacy and the NPT: An Insider's Account*, Geneva: UNIDIR.

Dhanapala, Jayantha (2010) 'The Management of NPT Diplomacy', *Daedalus* 139(1): 62.

Dhanapala, Jayantha (2013) *Multilateral Diplomacy and the NPT: An Insider's Account*, Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

Duarte, Sergio (2006) 'Keeping the NPT Together: A Thankless Job in a Climate of Mistrust', *Nonproliferation Review* 13(1): 1-16.

Esberg, Jane, and Scott D. Sagan (2012) 'Negotiating Nonproliferation: Scholarship, Pedagogy, and Nuclear Weapons Policy', *Nonproliferation Review* 19(1): 95-108.

Essis, Essoh (2005) 'From Individual State Preferences to Collective Decisions: An Analytical Account of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference', *International Negotiation* 10(3): 513-539.

Fathalla, Ahmed (2005) *Statement at the General Debate*, NPT Review Conference.

Feroukhi, Taous (2015) *Address to the First Committee of the 70th UN General Assembly*, 21 October.

Fligstein, Neil (2013) 'Understanding Stability and Change in Fields', *Research in Organizational Behavior* 33: 39-51.

Frieden, Jeffrey (2016) 'The Governance of International Finance', *Annual Review of Political Science* 19: 33-48.

Gilboa, Eyton (2005) 'The CNN Effect: The Search for a Communication Theory of International Relations', *Political Communication* 22(1): 27-44.

Gottemoeller, Rose (2015) *Remarks at the Conclusion of the 2015 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference*, New York, 22 May.

Hamidon, Ali (2007) *Statement to the First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference*, Vienna 1 May; available at <http://www.un.org>.

Hayek, Friedrich A. (1979). *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hopmann, P. Terrence (1995) 'Two Paradigms of Negotiation: Bargaining and Problem Solving', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 542(1): 24-47.

Jakobsen, Peter Viggo (2011) 'Pushing the Limits of Military Coercion Theory', *International Studies Perspectives* 12(2): 153-170.

Johnson, Rebecca (2013) 'NPT and Risks to Human Survival: The Inside Story', *openDemocracy*, 29 April.

Jones, James L. (2010) *Statement on the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference*, 28 May.

Jönsson, Christer (1990) *Communication in International Bargaining*, London: Pinter.

Kerbrat-Orecchioini, Catherine (2004) 'Introducing Polylogue', *Journal of Pragmatics* 36(1): 1-24.

Kerry, John (2015) *Remarks at the 2015 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference*, New York, 27 April.

Kimball, Daryl G. (2015) *Statement to the 25th UN Conference on Disarmament Issues*, Hiroshima, 27 August.

Kissinger, Henry, Sam Nunn, William Perry, and George Shultz (2013) 'Next Steps in Reducing Nuclear Risks', *Wall Street Journal*, 5 March.

Kooiman, Jan (2003) *Governing as Governance*, London: Sage.

Kornprobst, Markus, and Martin Senn (2016a) 'Introduction: Background Ideas in International Relations. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 18(2): 273-281.

Kornprobst, Markus and Martin Senn (2016b) 'A Rhetorical Field Theory: Background, Communication, and Change', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 18(2): 300-317.

Kornprobst, Markus and Martin Senn (2017) 'Arguing Deep Ideational Change', *Contemporary Politics* 23(1): 100-119.

Krause, Keith (2002) 'Multilateral Diplomacy, Norm Building, and UN Conferences: The Case of Small Arms and Light Weapons', *Global Governance* 8(2): 247-263.

Krebs, Ronald R., and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson (2017) 'Twisting Tongues and Twisting Arms: The Power of Political Rhetoric', *European Journal of International Relations* 13(1): 35-66.

Kristeva, Julia (1977) *Polylogue*, Paris: Seuil.

Kuus, Merje (2014) *Geopolitics and Expertise: Knowledge and Authority in European Diplomacy*, London: Blackwell.

Laffey, Mark and Jutta Weldes (1997) 'Beyond Belief: Ideas and Symbolic Technologies in the Study of International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations* 3(2): 193-237.

Lamaison, Pierre (1986) 'From Rules to Strategies: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu', *Cultural Anthropology* 1(1): 110-120.

Lambeth, Benjamin S. (1984) 'The Political Potential of Equivalence', in Steven E. Miller, ed., *Strategy and Nuclear Deterrence*, 255-272, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Leguey-Feilleux, Jean-Robert (2017) *Global Governance Diplomacy: The Critical Role of Diplomacy in Addressing Global Problems*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Levitsky, Steven and María Murillo (2009) 'Variation in Institutional Strength', *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 115-133.

Lynch, Marc (2002) 'Why Engage? China and the Logic of Communicative Engagement', *European Journal of International Relations* 8(2): 187-230.

Majone, Giandomenico (2014) *Rethinking the Union of Europe Post-Crisis: Has Integration Gone Too Far?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Masters, Dexter and Katherine Way (2007 [1946]). *One World or None: A Report to the Public on the Full Meaning of the Atomic Bomb*, New York: The New Press.

Mitzen, Jennifer (2015) 'From Representation to Governing: Diplomacy and the Constitution of International Public Power' in Ole Jacob Sending, Vincent Pouliot, and Iver B. Neumann, eds., *Diplomacy and the Making of World Politics*, 111-139, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Morley, Ian and Geoffrey Stephenson (2015) *The Social Psychology of Bargaining*, Hove: Psychology Press.

Morrow, Raymond A. (1994) *Critical Theory and Methodology*. London: Sage.

Neumann, Iver B. (2005) 'To Be a Diplomat', *International Studies Perspectives* 6(1): 72-93.

Obama, Barack (2009) *Prague Speech*, 5 April. Available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov>.

Odell, John (2009) 'Breaking Deadlocks in International Institutional Negotiations. The WTO, Seattle, and Doha', *International Studies Quarterly* 53(2): 273-299.

Phinnemore, David (2015) 'Crisis-ridden, Battered and Bruised: Time to Give up on the EU?' *Journal of Common Market Studies* 53(S1): 61-74.

Potter, William et al. (2010). 'The 2010 NPT Review Conference: Deconstructing Consensus', *CNS Special Report*, 17 June.

Pouliot, Vincent (2008) 'The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities', *International Organization* 62(2): 257-288.

Pouliot, Vincent (2016) *International Pecking Orders: The Politics and Practice of Multilateral Diplomacy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Price, Richard (1998) 'Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines', *International Organization* 52(3): 613-644.

Putnam, Linda (2010) 'Communication as Changing the Negotiation Game', *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 38(4): 325-335.

Putnam, Robert (1988) 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The logic of Two-level Games', *International Organization* 42(3): 427-460.

Rademaker, Stephen G. (2005) *U.S. Statement at the 2005 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference*, available at <http://2001-2009.state.gov>.

Ramsay, Kristopher W. (2011) 'Cheap Talk Diplomacy, Voluntary Negotiations, and Variable Bargaining Power', *International Studies Quarterly* 55(4): 1003-1023.

Rauf, Tariq and Rebecca Johnson (1995) 'After the NPT's Indefinite Extension: The Future of the Global Nonproliferation Regime', *Nonproliferation Review* 3(1): 28-42

Rauf, Tariq, and John Simpson (1999) 'The 1999 NPT Prepcom', *Nonproliferation Review* 6(2): 118-133.

Rauf, Tariq (2000) 'Interview with Abdallah Baali', *Nonproliferation Review* 7(1): 146-161.

Risse, Thomas (2000) 'Let's Argue! Communicative Action in World Politics', *International Organization* 54(1): 1-39.

Root, Hilton L. (2017) 'Network Assemblage of Regime Stability and Resilience', Comparing Europe and China. *Journal of Institutional Economics*, online first, pp. 1-26.

Rosenau, James (1992) 'Governance, Order, and Change in World Politics', in James Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, eds. *Governance Without Government: Order and Change in World Politics*, 1-29, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ruggie, John G. (1993) 'Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations', *International Organization* 47(1): 139-174.

Sartori, Anne E. (2002) 'The Might of the Pen: A Reputational Theory of Communication in International Disputes', *International Organization* 56(1): 121-149.

Sauer, Tom, and Joeliën Pretorius (2014). 'Nuclear Weapons and the Humanitarian Approach', *Global Change, Peace & Security* 26(3): 233-250.

Schatz, Edward and Renan Levine (2010) 'Framing, Public Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism in Central Asia', *International Studies Quarterly* 54(3): 855-869.

Schelling, Thomas C. (1966) *Arms and Influence*, New Haven: Yale.

Schimmelfennig, Frank (2001) 'The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union', *International Organization* 55(1): 47-80.

Schmidt, Jessica (2015) 'Intuitively Neoliberal? Towards a Critical Understanding of Resilience Governance', *European Journal of International Relations* 21(2): 402-426.

Schmidt, Vivien A., and Mark Thatcher (2014) 'Why Are Neoliberal Ideas so Resilient in Europe's Political Economy?' *Critical Policy Studies* 8(3): 340-347.

Schmidt, Vivien A. (2016) 'The Roots of Neo-liberal Resilience: Explaining Continuity and Change in Background Ideas in Europe's Political Economy', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 18(2): 318-334.

Searle, John R. (1995) *The Construction of Social Reality*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Sewell Jr, William H. (2005) *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sharp, Jeremy (2015) *Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations*. Washington: Congress Research Service, 24 July.

Simpson, John, and Jenny Nielsen (2005) 'The 2005 NPT Review Conference: Mission Impossible?' *Nonproliferation Review* 12(2): 271-301.

Sipiora, Phillip (2002) 'Introduction: The Ancient Concept of Kairos', in Phillip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin, eds., *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essay in History, Theory, and Praxis*. Albany. SUNY Press, pp. 1-22.

Spring, Richard (1995) *Statement by Ireland*, Summary Record of the 2nd Meeting, NPT Review and Extension Conference.

Steinberg, Gerald (2001) 'The Impact of the Egyptian-Israeli debate on Arms Control on the Middle East peace Process' in Steven L. Spiegel, Jennifer D. Kibbe and Elizabeth G. Matthews, eds., *The Dynamics of Middle East Nuclear Proliferation*, 229-260, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen.

Steiner, Barry H (2004) 'Diplomacy and International Theory', *Review of International Studies* 30(4): 493-509.

Trager, Robert F. (2011) 'Multidimensional Diplomacy', *International Organization* 65(3): 469-506.

Tierney, Kathleen (2012) 'Disaster Governance: Social, Political, and Economic Dimensions', *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 37: 341-363.

'Van, Zhang (2005) *Statement of China*, General Debate, NPT Review Conference.

Wan, Wilfred (2015) Why the 2015 NPT Review Conference Fell Apart, *Nonproliferation*, 28 May.

Watson, Adam (1982) *Diplomacy: The Dialogue Between States*, London: Eyre Methuen.

Welsh, Susan B. (1995) 'Delegate Perspectives on the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference', *Nonproliferation Review* 2(3): 1-24.

Wiener, Antje (2014) *A Theory of Contestation*, Berlin: Springer.

Wimmer, Franz M. (2004) *Interkulturelle Philosophie: Eine Einführung*, Vienna: Wiener Universitätsverlag.

Wisnumurti, Nugroho (1995) Verbatim Record of the 19th Meeting, 1995 RevExCon, available at <http://www.un.org>.

Young, Oran R. (1997) *Global Governance: Drawing Insights From the Environmental Experience*, Cambridge: MIT Press.

Young, Oran R. (1999) *The Effectiveness of International Environmental Regimes: Causal Connections and Behavioral Mechanisms*, Cambridge: MIT Press.

Young, Oran R. (2010) 'Institutional Dynamics: Resilience, Vulnerability and Adaptation in Environmental and Resource Regimes', *Global Environmental Change* 20(3): 378-385.

Zartman, I. William and Guy O. Faure (2005) The Dynamics of Escalation and Negotiation, in I William Zartman and Guy O. Faure, eds. *Escalation and Negotiation in International Conflicts*, 3-20, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zarif, Mohammed (2005) *Concluding Statement*, NPT Review Conference.

Zwick, Peter R. (1988) 'American-Soviet Relations: The Rhetoric and Realism', William P. Snyder James J. Brown, eds. *Defense Policy in the Reagan Administration*, 83-113, Washington: National Defense University Press.

Final version submitted on 15 October 2017.

Biographical Note

Markus Kornprobst holds the Chair of Political Science and International Relations at the Vienna School of International Studies. Previously, he held positions at the Ohio State University, University of Oxford, and University College London. His research appears in leading journals in International Relations, including the *European Journal of International Relations*, *International Studies Review*, *International Organization*, *International Theory*, and the *Review of International Studies*. He is the author of *Irredentism in European Politics*, co-author of *Understanding International Diplomacy*, as well as co-editor of *Metaphors of Globalization* and *Arguing Global Governance*. Currently, he is working on monographs on nuclear governance and the co-management of international crises.