

Abstract

Since the Trinity test, and, in particular, after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki catastrophes, several important steps have been taken to reduce the number of nuclear warheads, despite the deterrence ghost, always around the corner, both in diplomatic fora and beyond. By protecting almost entirely the Southern hemisphere from potential nuclear detonations, Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs) are one of the most efficient arms control and disarmament instruments, which still remain rather understudied under the academic and theoretical lenses. For this reason, the author decided to counter the realist view, rather simplistic in describing the rationale behind the establishment of these security arrangements championed by non-nuclear weapon states, and combine NWFZs with Adler and Barnett's unorthodox approach based on constructivist principles. In doing so, rather than focusing on the tangible distribution of nuclear capabilities in the realist understanding, the research focused on the intersection between the NWFZs' institution and metaphysical factors, such as common identities, norms, transactions and ideas, bringing a fresh approach to the 'academic' table. Through six qualitative one-to-one ultra-elites interviews and the selection of two explanatory case studies, namely Latin America and Southeast Asia, the author aimed to answer the following research questions: "To what extent do these NWFZs constitute two distinct 'security communities', a concept forged by Deutsch and then expanded upon by Adler and Barnett?", "Can these NWFZs fall under one of the following labels describing their development path: 'nascent', 'ascendant' or 'mature' security communities?", "What is the role of collective identities, shared ideas, and norms within the NWFZs in shaping the international behavior of the state parties?". As a result, after applying the 'three-tier' model and analyzing the case studies' development paths, Latin America and Southeast Asia can thus be considered 'loosely tied security communities' in their 'mature' stage, namely regional mechanisms able to create dependable expectations of peaceful change and to maintain long-lasting (nuclear) peace in areas that otherwise could be subject of a nuclear attack.