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Unrestricted trade of arms and dual-use products leads to security threats and human rights violations. For that reason, states have come up with arms export controls (Achilleas, 2017). In a world with non-restricted trade, all products and services can move freely between countries. However, this would mean that dangerous goods and sensitive technology may be purchased by anyone. Thus, states balance the benefits of free trade with their security objectives. As a result, trade in military products and technology is restricted by treaties, counter-proliferation measures, and non-proliferation regimes (Achilleas, 2017).

The system of non-proliferation regimes is an important instrument to prevent the proliferation of both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. However, the regimes are not flawless; they are currently facing multiple challenges. In the presentation, structural challenges as well as recent challenges will be discussed. Besides, the opportunities that follow from these challenges will be elaborated on.

Several structural drawbacks of these regimes can be identified in literature. First, most countries are unwilling to give up some of their sovereignty by engaging in binding agreements on this matter. As a result, the regimes are informal, and their measures are non-binding upon states. The regimes have no official organs or enforcement mechanisms. They have, thus, hardly any power to act if countries choose to ignore the guidelines set by the regimes (Beck and Bahlaut, 2003). Second, the regimes consist of a selective group of countries, with this excluding some dominant arm exporting countries (Beck and Jones, 2019). On the one hand, a lower number of participating countries eases consensus-based decision-making. On the other hand, the non-universal character hampers the effectiveness of the regimes because only a restricted number of countries act by the principles established by the regimes (Joyner, 2009).

While the aforementioned challenges of the international export control regimes remain, this century raises new challenges for arms export control that are scarcely addressed in literature. New technology is rapidly changing the military field. 3D-printing makes it possible to produce weapons from a distance, artificial intelligence is increasingly used in weapon

systems, and advancing biotechnology creates possibilities for biological weapons (Brockmann, 2018). Further, most of the regimes were designed in times of the so-called 'Westphalian paradigm' with states being the most important international actors. Many regime measurements are aimed at states instead of individuals (Beck and Jones, 2019). Currently, however, other actors, such as terrorist organizations, play an ever-growing role in the international field (Bailes, 2013). Another factor that raises a new challenge is the emergence of several densely populated Asian countries, such as China, resulting in a slow shift in the world order (De Graaff and Van Apeldoorn, 2018). The United States has often taken the lead since the establishment of the regimes (Bailes, 2013). It is unclear how the regimes will advance with the multipolar world order of the twenty-first century. All of these new developments could lead to the proliferation of weapons, making efforts to prevent proliferation more relevant than ever.

There are several opportunities for the current non-proliferation regimes to keep up with contemporary challenges. First, increased dialogue and transparency between the regimes would help them to be more aware of new technologies (Brockmann, 2019). Besides, it might reduce the willingness of countries to ignore the guidelines when there is more transparency.

Second, cooperation may help the regimes to manage the rapidly evolving technology as well. The regimes share characteristics, and they all try to accomplish the non-proliferation of weapons. Currently, every regime separately lists sensitive products and technologies (Achilleas, 2017). Cooperation between the regimes would improve efficiency, and thus help the regimes to swiftly respond to new technological developments. (Brockmann, 2018). A more profound measure would be to merge the four regimes (Beck and Jones, 2019).

Further, a shared enforcement mechanism may give the non-proliferation regimes more power in case countries choose to ignore the guidelines set by the regimes. On the one hand, the most recent effort to prevent the proliferation of conventional weapons, the Arms Trade Treaty, shows the willingness of countries to work together in this field. However, this binding instrument does not have any enforcement mechanism. On the other hand, over the past years, there has been a tendency to move towards more informal approaches to prevent the proliferation of WMD (Daase, 2013). Therefore, increased cooperation and dialogue are the most likely measures to face the challenges.

It is suggested to submit the presentation under the Working Group Defence Management and Economics or the Working Group Security and Defence Policy.

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