Absence urgent action, the NPT will soon collapse, argue many. The perceived origins of such calamity include: 
- unfulfilled disarmament pledges
- incessant proliferation efforts
- selective favoritism towards countries unwilling to ratify the NPT
- the diffusion of sensitive nuclear technologies
- the use of illegitimate force as a counter-proliferation instrument
- or the right to withdraw from the treaty. At the end of the day, all contend a certain instrument of illegitimate force as a counter-proliferation model is an insufficient instrument for assessing a particular state’s future proclivity towards accepting the NPT prohibitions. In addition, the NPT allowed the few who wanted to keep their options open to acquire the necessary technology.

Other constrains and incentives played a significant role in states’ decision to accede to the treaty: states valued the system of mutual restraint or powerful allies pressured them towards accession or the NPT could be used as an instrument in regional politics.

Once in the NPT framework, states pursue a more convoluted set of goals than is often assumed. Nuclear disarmament is likely to be less central to most: nuclear arsenals pose a significant material threat to only very few and large sacrifices for normative fairness are unusual among states.

Most have a strong interest in the status quo: the system of restraint suits many well while specific states might have a particular interest in weakening certain constraints of the treaty, most are likely to work towards maintaining the system as a majority also seems to derive other benefits from membership, like showing their support for the United States or improving their relations with developing countries.

Therefore, the numerous pessimist expectations derived specifically from this theory appear unwarranted.

Potential Scenarios for Collapse

The second part of this research combines insights from nuclear scholarship with historical assessments of the dynamics and contexts that led comparable treaties and regimes to collapse. It advances specific testable breakdown scenarios, and evaluates the likelihood of these scenarios playing out in the foreseeable future.

First, what will be the impact of reactive proliferation? Additional nuclearisation is likely to generate only limited emulation — recent case-study research suggests widespread contagion is unlikely — prestige or bureaucratic inducements of additional proliferation will be narrow and even if some will leave, many will have to renege for the treaty to become obsolete.

Second, will significant actors challenge the existing architecture? This research argues both that the broader international system is relatively stable and that a few potentially rising powers seem prone to challenge the nuclear order.

Third, will the treaty’s enforcement be soon diluted by the US abandoning its protective role? The answer is no: Washington’s global ambitions have been served well by the NPT system — the US is unlikely to abandon its position of primacy and commit to retraction, even assuming a less engaged America, protecting the NPT seems an enduring interest.

In conclusion, there is little evidence substantiating the assertions that the NPT is likely to face fatal threats any time soon.