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Enlightenment and nuclear order

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Abstract

Applying the method of enlightenment correctly to the area of nuclear non-proliferation would require a major effort to critically evaluate ideologies. Liberal arms control—despite its many successes and merits—has devised over the years a whole set of ideological tenets and attitudes. Some of them

have been transformed into beliefs that could be termed myths. The most prominent ideological myth of the liberal arms control school is the notion that the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty of 1968 (NPT) was in essence a disarmament agreement, not a non-proliferation treaty. To depict the negotiations as a premeditated effort of enlightenment, where the governments of this world came together to solemnly decide that some of them would be allowed to have some nuclear weapons for an interim period while the others would renounce their possession immediately, is pure. It would be equally wrong to qualify the 'grand bargain' as one between the nuclear haves and the nuclear have-nots. Another myth of the liberal arms control school is the notion that—in order to gain support for the NPT—the superpowers had altered their nuclear weapons strategy in the 1960s. Again, this contention is not borne out by the development of nuclear strategies and doctrines. The third myth is the contention that there was an abrupt shift in US non-proliferation policy as George W. Bush came into power. The major changes in US non-proliferation policy had already started during the Clinton administration and some of them can be traced back to the tenure of President George W. H. Bush senior. They all reflected the changed international environment and represented necessary adjustments of the non-proliferation strategy. The Clinton administration left some of the traditional paths of arms control and rightly undertook some changes that were necessary because traditional instruments of arms control were no longer adequate. The Bush administration continued that policy, but in a more radical way.

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