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NATIONAL ROLE CONCEPTIONS AND NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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NATIONAL ROLE CONCEPTIONS AND
NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT: A COMPARATIVE
STUDY

A Master's Thesis

by
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Ankara
May 2025

To my family



NATIONAL ROLE CONCEPTIONS AND NUCLEAR
DISARMAMENT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

Bilge Yürük

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ABSTRACT

NATIONAL ROLE CONCEPTIONS AND NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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This thesis aims to explore how South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus decided to give up their nuclear weapons. While much attention has been given to why states build nuclear weapons, less is known about how elites' role conceptions influence the decision to disarm. Using role theory, this study aims to show how leaders' national role perceptions influenced their decisions to disarm. This research relies on speeches, letters, press conference records, interviews, and academic studies to examine these cases and highlight common patterns and differences in leadership decisions. Falling within the scope of comparative analyses in foreign policy studies, this study aims to provide insights into the individual-level decision-making dynamics behind nuclear disarmament decisions.

Keywords: Nuclear Disarmament, Role Theory, National Role Conceptions, Foreign Policy Analysis

ÖZET

ULUSAL ROL KAVRAMLARI VE NÜKLEER SİLAHSIZLANMA: KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR ÇALIŞMA

Yürük, Bilge

Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

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Bu tez, Güney Afrika, Ukrayna, Kazakistan ve Belarus'un nükleer silahlarından vazgeçme kararlarını nasıl aldıklarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ülkelerin neden nükleer silah elde etmek istediğine dair çok sayıda çalışma bulunmasına rağmen, elitlerin rol tasavvurlarının silahsızlanma kararlarını nasıl etkilediği konusunda daha az bilgi bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, rol teorisini kullanarak liderlerin ulusal rol algılarının bu kararlar üzerindeki etkisini ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir. Bu tez, ilgili konuşmalar, mektuplar, basın toplantısı kayıtları, röportajlar ve akademik çalışmalardan yararlanarak vakalar arasındaki benzerlik ve farklılıkları ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Karşılaştırmalı dış politika analizi alanına dahil olan bu çalışma, nükleer silahsızlanma kararlarının bireysel düzeyine dair bir bakış açısı sunmayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Nükleer Silahsızlanma, Rol Teorisi, Ulusal Rol Kavramsallaştırmaları, Dış Politika Analizi

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC: African National Congress

CTR: Cooperative Threat Reduction

FPA: Foreign Policy Analysis

MFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NNWS: Non-Nuclear Weapon State

NPT: The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

NRC: National Role Conception

NWS: Nuclear Weapon State

RFE/RL: Free Europe/Radio Liberty

START I: Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

The presence of nuclear weapons has usually been associated with power and survival in the anarchical international system, as they are considered the ultimate weapon. Since their introduction in the mid-twentieth century, nuclear weapons have re-shaped global politics, security paradigms, and international relations due to their immense destructive capability and the existential threat they pose. Within the context of the international relations discipline, these weapons were not only considered as strategic tools in the militaristic sense but also symbols of power and influence, and they altered global discourse on security, influencing international politics in ways that extend beyond traditional military considerations.

Nuclear weapons have had an impact not only on military strategy but also on the structure and norms of the international system. The central assumption of deterrence, especially during the Cold War, rested on the logic that the mere

possession of nuclear weapons could prevent conflict between countries through the concept of mutually assured destruction. This doctrine posited that the catastrophic consequences of nuclear war would prevent rational actors from initiating conflict, thereby establishing a new form of stability between nuclear-armed states, most notably the United States and the Soviet Union. However, concerns have grown about the potential widespread proliferation of nuclear weapons, given that the risks regarding misunderstandings, miscalculations, technical failures, and accidents could lead to devastating consequences. In response to the potential dangers of further proliferation, the international community has sought to regulate nuclear proliferation through diplomatic, economic, and strategic means, and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was made available to countries to sign in 1968 as a result. This treaty, which remains the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime, rests on three main pillars: preventing the spread of nuclear weapons beyond the five recognised nuclear-weapon states (non-proliferation), requiring these nuclear-weapon states to reduce and eventually eliminate their arsenals (disarmament), and ensuring access to nuclear technology for civilian use under international oversight (peaceful use) (Carlson, 2019).

There have been four cases in the world where states chose to relinquish their nuclear weapons, which is considered the greatest achievement of the NPT. Understanding these cases is crucial not only for the theoretical aspects but also for the global disarmament efforts. The decision to disarm raises questions about the reasons and motivations behind such choices. Why would a state voluntarily give up its nuclear weapons? What conditions, incentives, or beliefs make this possible? What do these cases say about the role of identities regarding nuclear policy?

For years, the literature on nuclear weapons has mostly focused on the reasons why states seek to acquire them. In particular, Sagan's (1996) framework has shaped much of the debate. According to Sagan (1996), states are driven by security considerations in the face of external threats (security model), internal bureaucratic and domestic political factors (domestic politics model), or normative and symbolic desires to attain status (norms model). These models have been refined and expanded in many studies across different contexts. While extensive literature has aimed to explore the motivations driving states to acquire nuclear capabilities, relatively few studies have aimed to understand the dynamics of nuclear de-proliferation, particularly voluntary disarmament. The question of why states would willingly relinquish nuclear weapons, an instrument often perceived as the ultimate security guarantee and symbol of national prestige, presents an interesting puzzle within international relations and security studies.

The cases of South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus stand out in this regard. South Africa dismantled a nuclear arsenal it had developed, while Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus relinquished nuclear arsenals inherited following the Soviet Union's dissolution. Each of these cases has drawn scholarly interest on its own context, often focusing on the material or strategic contexts that made disarmament feasible. Explanations have ranged from security reassurances and economic incentives to changes in regional dynamics and domestic political transformations. However, a question still remains underexplored: What kinds of self-understandings and identity narratives underpinned the decision to disarm?

This thesis approaches this question through the lens of role theory, a framework within foreign policy analysis that places the perceptions, expectations, and identity of decision-makers at the centre. Role theory enables researchers to consider how

state leaders perceive their country's place in the world, what responsibilities they believe their state should assume, and how these beliefs turn into foreign policy behaviours. The concept of national role conceptions (NRCs), introduced to the international relations literature by K.J. Holsti (1970), is of great importance in this regard. According to Holsti (1970), decision-makers operate with an image of their state's role, and these images help shape what kind of actions are considered appropriate. Given that nuclear arsenals are seen as strategic assets, studying voluntary disarmament requires going beyond the traditional security frameworks, and role theory is a useful tool, especially in this regard.

The objective of this research is to understand how NRCs shaped the decision of South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus to relinquish their nuclear arsenals. While previous research has highlighted material incentives and external pressures, this thesis aims to show how leaders' perceptions of their countries' international roles contributed to these decisions. In other words, this study seeks to identify and analyse the role conceptions expressed by the leaders regarding their decision to disarm. This approach shifts analytical focus from material factors alone to incorporate an examination of identity-based narratives and perceptions that underpin disarmament choices.

The thesis is centred around the following research question: How do national role conceptions influence the decisions regarding nuclear disarmament? With this question, the study focuses on the narratives that leaders constructed about their states' identities in the international arena by examining the cases of South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. It aims to examine whether these narratives contributed to building an identity incompatible with possessing nuclear weapons and how these conceptualisations were reflected in foreign policy decisions.

This thesis proposes an individual-level understanding of disarmament by bringing role theory into the analysis. Building on Chafetz, Abramson, and Grillot's (1996) comparative role theory analysis of Belarus and Ukraine's nuclear disarmament process, this study aims to broaden the scope by adding South Africa and Kazakhstan and shift the focus to the common patterns among these cases.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on nuclear proliferation and disarmament, as well as the development of role theory in international relations. Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical framework and methodological approach. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the qualitative content analysis and discusses the findings of the study. Lastly, Chapter 5 concludes the thesis with recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a literature review on role theory and the nuclear de-proliferation processes of South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. It begins by outlining the theoretical background and conceptual framework of foreign policy analysis and role theory to provide a foundation for understanding national role conceptions (NRCs). Next, it explores the background and existing literature on the four countries that chose to relinquish their nuclear weapons.

2.2 Foreign Policy Analysis and Role Theory

Foreign policy analysis (FPA) is a subfield of international relations (IR) that focuses on examining the human agency and decision-making processes to analyse states'

foreign policy behaviours. Emerging in the 1950s, FPA diverged from traditional IR theories by emphasising the role of human decision-makers, whether individuals or within groups, in shaping foreign policy outcomes (Hudson, 2002, 2016; Özdamar, Halistoprak & Sula, 2014). This actor-specific focus distinguishes FPA from other approaches of IR, which often prioritise structural factors such as anarchy or power distribution within the international system (Adigbuo, 2007; Hudson, 2002, 2016). Rather than viewing states as rational unitary actors, as is common in other IR theories such as neorealism or neoliberal institutionalism, FPA examines the human agency of decision-makers that leads to foreign policy behaviours.

As Özdamar et al. (2014) state, FPA aims to fill the gap between theory and practice with its actor-specific emphasis. Role theory, introduced to the IR discipline by K. J. Holsti (1970) with his prominent work on NRCs, has been instrumental in this sense. Moreover, the descriptive, organisational, and explanatory values of role theory in foreign policy analysis have also been emphasised by Stephen G. Walker (1987); descriptively, role theory provides a vocabulary of images that helps analyse foreign policy behaviour at multiple levels, offering a multidimensional perspective, while organisationally it allows analysts to cross and bridge levels of analysis through both structure- and process- oriented approaches to understanding state behaviour, and explanatorily, its adaptability facilitates integration with or being informed by other theoretical approaches (Thies, 2009; S. G. Walker, 1987).

Long before Holsti introduced role theory in IR, other disciplines, such as sociology or social psychology, used role theory to study how roles influenced social behaviour (Holsti, 1970). As the term role suggests, those disciplines approached role theory through a lens of theatrical metaphor, comparing social behaviours to the actors following scripts in a play (Biddle, 1986). In the sociological approach, role theory

suggests that individuals are influenced by both their own expectations and those of others, which are shaped through social interactions and experiences, ultimately leading to behaviour patterns or roles (Biddle, 1986; Nabers, 2011).

At this point, it is important to conceptualise the term role. From the sociological perspective, it can be understood that roles emerge as a result of the interplay between one's own and others' expectations. In line with this understanding, Rosenau (1990) defines roles as "attitudinal and behavioural expectations that those who relate to its occupant have of the occupant and the expectations that the occupant has of himself or herself in the role" (p. 212).

From this definition, two different concepts can be observed: expectations from others and expectations of the self. While introducing role theory to the FPA, Holsti (1970) differentiated these concepts by 'role prescriptions' and 'role conceptions', respectively. Then, defining the concepts that help integrate role theory into FPA becomes important. Holsti (1970) marks four important concepts about role theory that help researchers analyse foreign policy decisions: role performance, NRCs, role prescriptions, and position.

Role performance, also named role enactment in the literature in some cases, refers to the behaviours exhibited by an actor while fulfilling a role, often studied as the dependent variable in role theory studies and manifested through decisions and actions (Harnisch, 2011; Holsti, 1970).

Role conceptions can be described as an individual's understanding of their position, functions, and behaviours that are thought appropriate for fulfilling them (Holsti, 1970). Starting from this definition of role conception, it is also important to define NRCs specifically regarding FPA studies. Holsti (1970) defines NRCs as follows:

We may now define national role performance as the general foreign policy behavior of governments. It includes patterns of attitudes, decisions, responses, functions and commitments toward other states. From the observer's point of view, these patterns or typical decisions can be called national roles. A national role conception includes the policymakers' own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems. It is their "image" of the appropriate orientations or functions of their state toward, or in, the external environment (pp. 245-246).

According to this definition, it can be said that the concept of NRCs claims that decision-makers' perception regarding their state's role in the global arena is significant when analysing their foreign policy behaviours.

Following the concepts regarding role theory underlined by Holsti (1970), in order to apply role theory in FPA, role prescription refers to the expectations that come from the alter, the external environment. Lastly, the position is defined as a "system of role prescriptions" (Holsti, 1970, p. 240).

While introducing role theory into FPA, Holsti (1970) makes another important point, claiming that role conceptions have a greater impact on states' foreign policy behaviours than role prescriptions. Holsti (1970) attaches this situation to the concept of state sovereignty, claiming that expectations from other governments, legal norms, and enforcement mechanisms are weak and vague compared to those within an integrated society.

It should be noted that this is not to say role prescriptions regarding international context are non-existent or completely unimportant. It is claimed that it is a matter of difference in the degree of influence between role prescriptions and role conceptions, concluding that NRCs are one of the three key factors in shaping foreign policy behaviours of states, along with needs and demands regarding the domestic sphere and the key events taking place in the external environment (Holsti, 1970). Given that NRCs play a crucial role in shaping foreign policy decisions and actions, role performances, studying them is essential in order to examine these outcomes.

At this point, it is also important to mention the debate regarding role contestation and “black-boxing the elites,” as Cantir and Karboo refer to (2012, p. 8). For a long time in the literature, role theory used elite role conceptions to determine the role conceptions of the states. Two justifications have been given regarding the use of elite NRCs; one argued that roles are intersubjective as they have social origins and are “shared even most of the individuals within a state” (Chafetz et al., 1996, p. 733). This argument claims that the role conceptions of the elites reflect the role conceptions of the majority within a state. The second justification is, even if this is not the case and roles are not shared among the majority on the national level, it is the foreign policy elites that are behind the decisions regarding how their state should behave on the international stage (Adigbuo, 2007; Chafetz et al., 1996).

However, Cantir and Karboo (2012) challenge these justifications and claim that two types of role contestation can occur within a state that can affect foreign policy decisions and actions: horizontal and vertical. Horizontal contestation arises among political elites themselves, while vertical contestation occurs between elites and the masses (Cantir & Karboo, 2012). It is claimed that research in FPA highlights significant disagreements among domestic elites regarding foreign policy decisions

and actions in horizontal contestation and between elites and the public on the roles of the state in vertical contestation, with the latter being a more complex phenomenon since public opinion can be manipulated by the elite and is not necessarily a constraint on foreign policy decisions (Cantir & Karboo, 2012). This focus on role contestation is important to understand how complex and dynamic national roles can be. For a better understanding, it is helpful to go back to Holsti's (1970) work, which laid the foundation for examining how policymakers define their state's roles in the international system and how these roles influence foreign policy decisions.

In order to develop a typology of NRCs, Holsti (1970) conducted a content analysis of 972 sources, which included speeches, official statements, parliamentary records, and press conferences across 71 different governments between January 1965 and December 1967. As a result, he identified 17 different foreign policy roles. In other words, those 17 different NRCs represent the perception of foreign policy decision-makers regarding the position of their states in the international arena (Holsti, 1970).

Along with helping to examine states' foreign policy decisions and behaviours, NRCs are also important in providing states with guidelines and a sense of identity. Returning to the theatrical metaphor in sociology regarding the role theory and the term role, it suggests actors play parts of a written script, guiding them in their performance (Biddle, 1996).

This situation is also examined in the FPA literature, claiming that NRCs provide lasting guidelines, norms, and standards of behaviour for states that shape the decision-making process, and this longevity is beneficial when one attempts to examine the patterns of behaviour over time (Breuning, 2011a; Wish, 1980). For

instance, in his study, Adigbuo (2007) points out that between 1975 and 1990, the Nigerian government adhered to several NRCs regarding the Southern African liberation issue, namely 'active independent', 'defender of the faith', 'developer', 'regional protector', 'liberation supporter', and 'regional leader', and maintained these roles for 15 years despite changes in the regime. This study shows that it is possible to examine the long-term behaviour of states' foreign policies by applying role theory.

Another point of debate on role theory and NRCs is regarding the sources of NRCs. In his prominent work, Holsti (1970) listed various sources, including the location and geographical features of the state, its resources and capabilities, socio-economic needs and demands, interest groups, national values, public opinion, and the personalities or political priorities of key policymakers. Afterwards, the sources of NRCs are usually thought of in two categories: ideational sources and material sources. Ideational sources refer to the decision-maker's understanding of the state's identity, cultural heritage, and domestic audience, while material sources are about the perceptions regarding the state's capabilities, such as resources relative to other states and opportunities to act (Breuning, 2011a; Harnisch, 2011).

While talking about role theory, it is also important to talk about role conflict. In sociology, role conflict is mainly described as a situation where the person suffers from opposing demands caused by two or more conflicting expectations about how they should behave (Biddle, 1996). This situation manifests as 'inter-role conflict' in FPA studies (Harnisch, 2011). Holsti (1970) also addressed this issue by presenting a table of incompatible NRCs, such as the 'faithful ally' role conflicting with the 'independent' role, but he also noted that seemingly incompatible NRCs can coexist as orientations toward different relationships, exemplified by Syria and Iraq being

‘faithful allies’ in the Middle East regarding Israel while remaining ‘independents’ in the Cold War context.

Moreover, role conflict may also refer to the situations where one state’s articulated foreign policy roles are not accepted by another state, where this another state attempts to pull the first state in other role directions in return (Özdamar, 2024). This type of role conflict between states may lead to role altercasting. Role altercasting is described as the situation where the existing members of the international system not only define their own roles but also impose roles to novice states, which serves as a socialisation mechanism to integrate novice states into the system (Thies, 2009).

In conclusion, NRCs play a significant role in understanding states’ foreign policy behaviours, as they highlight policymakers’ perceptions regarding their state’s appropriate functions and actions in the international arena. Introduced to FPA by Holsti (1970), NRCs provide a framework for analysing how human agency shapes foreign policy.

The next section of this chapter will explore the literature regarding the de-proliferation processes of South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, the countries that relinquished the nuclear weapons that they either inherited or developed. It will also examine the various arguments presented in the literature that seek to explain their decision to disarm.

2.3 South Africa

The case of South Africa regarding its nuclear proliferation remains an interesting case. It is one of the few countries that developed not only its own nuclear weapons but also the only one to have voluntarily dismantled the nuclear arsenal that it had

built itself, marking the first case of nuclear rollback in world history in this regard (Babbage, 2004; De Villiers, Jardine & Reiss, 1993).

South Africa's nuclear program has its origins in the rich uranium reserves of the country, which were sought after by the United States and Britain for the Manhattan Project and served as a source of raw materials for nuclear development (Burgess, 2006; De Villiers et al., 1993). As South Africa showed itself as a dependable supplier of the mineral, it engaged in technical exchanges with the West, primarily through the U.S. Atoms for Peace program, which provided training that enabled the country to acquire nuclear expertise, especially on uranium enrichment techniques (Burgess, 2006; Pretorius, 2024).

In 1969, South Africa built the Y Plant near Pretoria, a uranium enrichment plant which was meant to test the technology on an industrial scale; however, it also allowed the production of weapons-grade uranium for nuclear weapons, which highlights the dual-use nature of nuclear research (Burgess, 2006; De Villiers et al., 1993; Liberman, 2001).

In 1971, the Minister of Mines approved initial research on nuclear explosives, and by 1974, Prime Minister John Vorster approved developing this capacity regarding nuclear explosives, authorising funding for a test site (Babbage, 2004). Although Soviet satellites detected testing in 1977 on the Kalahari Desert, which led to the site's abandonment, the research continued in secrecy (Babbage, 2004; De Villiers et al., 1993).

By the next year, South Africa had completed two nuclear devices, dismantling one for parts while setting the other aside for an underground test, and was moving forward with plans for six more, as advised by a committee formed under Prime

Minister P. W. Botha, who succeeded Vorster in 1978 (Babbage, 2004; De Villiers et al., 1993; Liberman, 2001). Armscor, the South African Department of Defence's arms procurement agency, took charge of developing and producing the nuclear devices, manufacturing the first bomber-deliverable weapon in 1982 and the second in 1987 (Babbage, 2004; Liberman, 2001).

South Africa's deterrence strategy, officially approved in 1978, was structured in three phases: the first phase was about maintaining strategic ambiguity by refusing to confirm or deny possession of nuclear weapons; then, in the case of facing an external military threat, discreetly revealing its nuclear capabilities to Western governments, and finally, if this failed to prompt an intervention against an external attack, openly declaring its nuclear weapons (De Villiers et al., 1993; Long & Grillot, 2000; Pretorius, 2024).

When F. W. De Klerk was elected as president in September 1989, succeeding Botha, who had become president in 1984, he launched major political reforms in order to rebuild South Africa's international reputation, including the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, the removal of the ban of the African National Congress (ANC), which had fought against apartheid, and the start of negotiations with opposition groups (Albright & Stricker, 2016; Pretorius, 2024).

Two weeks after his election, De Klerk formed a committee of experts and assigned them the task of assessing whether the country should maintain a nuclear deterrent or not and the possible implications of joining the NPT, and the committee ultimately advised that the government should both dismantle the program and its nuclear weapons (De Villiers et al., 1993; Liberman, 2001). By February 1990, South Africa had shut down the Y plant, and the complete dismantlement of the nuclear deterrent

was finished by early July 1991, and the country joined the NPT later that month (Babbage, 2004; De Villiers et al., 1993; Liberman, 2001). In a 1993 joint parliamentary address, De Klerk revealed to the public that South Africa had developed six nuclear weapons for deterrence purposes but had dismantled them before acceding to the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state (NNWS) (Babbage, 2004; Das, 2022).

There have been numerous explanations for South Africa's decision to nuclearize, which can be categorised as threat removal, improving international standing, and preventing a possible ANC-led government from getting their hands on the bomb. The first explanation, threat removal, focuses on the changes regarding South Africa's security and its need for nuclear deterrence. South Africa's external security threats mainly came from the Soviet Union's support for communism in Africa, specifically the presence of 50,000 Cuban troops in Angola (De Villiers et al., 1993; Long & Grillot, 2000; Spence, 1981). Towards the end of the 1980s, these threats were largely removed as the Cold War came to an end. In 1988, the ceasefire between South Africa, Cuba, and Angola led to the withdrawal of Cuban troops in exchange for Namibia's independence, and the Soviet Union significantly reduced its aid to Angola (Albright & Stricker, 2016; Burgess, 2006; Long & Grillot, 2000). This argument mainly claims that since the main threats to South Africa's security were removed, nuclear deterrence was no longer needed.

The second argument centres on South Africa's desire to improve its international standing and its relations with the West. With the decline of Soviet threats and a growing sense of international isolation due to its apartheid policies and raised suspicions regarding its nuclear program, South Africa's nuclear weapons shifted from being a potential leverage over the West to a diplomatic burden (Long &

Grillot, 2000). Unable to use its nuclear weapons as leverage against the West, South Africa saw relinquishing them and joining the NPT as a means to re-integrate into the international community, with De Klerk believing that growing international opposition to nuclear weapons would make accession to the NPT beneficial for the country (Albright & Stricker, 2016; De Villiers et al., 1993; Long & Grillot, 2000). In sum, these arguments mainly attribute the decision to relinquish nuclear weapons to improve South Africa's standing in the international arena and rebuild its relations with the West.

A third explanation is about the domestic political dynamics within the country. It has been argued that De Klerk's government was worried about a future ANC-led government gaining control of nuclear weapons (Babbage, 2004). Although members of De Klerk's government denied that the decision to dismantle nuclear weapons was driven by a desire to keep them out of a potential ANC-led government's hands, it has been suggested that many people in the government feared a debate on the future of the weapons and the program could be destabilising during South Africa's political transition, and that they may have been concerned about whether a future multi-party administration could effectively manage shared control over the nuclear arsenal (Albright & Stricker, 2016). The main point of this argument is that relinquishing the nuclear arsenal before significant domestic political change was seen as a way to prevent potential conflicts between domestic parties, which played a role in the De Klerk government's decision to denuclearise.

2.4 Ukraine

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 had many consequences for world politics, one of them being an unprecedented challenge to nuclear non-proliferation.

Among the newly independent states that emerged as a result of the dissolution, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus inherited a significant portion of the Soviet nuclear arsenal alongside Russia.

This issue of inheritance reversed the usual order of events regarding nuclear proliferation. In this case, newly independent states found themselves in possession of nuclear weapons first and had to decide their course of action second (Budjeryn, 2022). Among those newly independent states with a nuclear arsenal, Ukraine particularly stood out as it had the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal within its borders, as well as a considerable amount of highly enriched uranium (Budjeryn, 2022). This situation was a major security concern, particularly for the U.S., with a focus on the issue of succession since Russia was seen as the only legitimate successor of the Soviet nuclear weapons, which made the nuclear arsenal on the territories of the other states a proliferation problem (Egeland, 2022; Gak, 2004).

The problem became evident in the statements of government officials; the U.S. Secretary of State, James Baker, made it clear that the U.S. did not want to see an increase in the number of nuclear weapon states (Schadlow, 1996). The issue was so important to the U.S. that some of the officials suggested recognising Ukraine only if they immediately removed the nuclear arsenal from their territory (Schadlow, 1996; Wolczuk, 1999). However, the U.S. still recognised Ukraine before it removed the nuclear weapons from its territory in order to make sure that it would not become a nuclear weapon state, justifying this involvement by emphasising its role as a promoter of the NPT and point out to the financial assistance provided through the Nunn-Lugar Act, later renamed the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR), which granted \$400 million annually from its defence budget to support the newly emerges states in dismantling their inherited nuclear arsenals (Budjeryn, 2022; Miller, 1994;

Riabchuk, 2009). Although the U.S. ultimately recognised Ukraine, it continued to emphasise that Ukraine's acceptance into the international community would still be obstructed if it kept the nuclear arsenal on its territory (Gak, 2004).

The early discussions between Ukraine and the U.S. revolved around the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I). Before the Soviet Union was dissolved, they had signed this treaty with the U.S, which put constraints on strategic offensive weapons (Riabchuk, 2009). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the treaty became a multilateral one as Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus joined as signatories since the U.S. officials wanted to secure their adherence to the terms of the treaty (Schadlow, 1996; Yost, 2015). Even though Ukraine formalised its accession to START I by signing the Lisbon Protocol in 1992, the specifics of the disarmament process itself remained unsettled as their main concerns, which were about ensuring a stable security environment concerning Russia and getting financial compensation for the dismantling costs, remained unsolved (Miller, 1994; Riabchuk, 2009; Wolczuk, 1999).

The Ukrainian Parliament ratified both the START I and the Lisbon Protocol in 1993, but this ratification included a reservation stating that Ukraine would not yet accede to the NPT as an NNWS (Long & Grillot, 2000; Schadlow, 1996). This reservation mainly came from Ukraine's demand for greater financial compensation, especially for highly enriched uranium, and binding security guarantees and the country would refuse a non-nuclear status until those concerns were addressed (Budjeryn, 2015; Martel, 1998; Riabchuk, 2009).

These issues ultimately formed the foundation of the 1994 Trilateral Statement, signed by the U.S., Russia, and Ukraine, which established a framework for

transferring Ukraine's nuclear weapons to Russia, compensation for its highly enriched uranium, and security assurances in return for Ukraine's full accession to the NPT and accepting the NNWS status (Schadlow, 1996). Following the Trilateral Statement, the Ukrainian Parliament approved the NPT accession in November 1994, and in December 1994, former Soviet Union states that inherited nuclear weapons signed the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances with Russia, the U.S., and the United Kingdom, which as about the commitments regarding the respect for their independence and sovereignty in addition to the security assurances granted to all NNWSs under the NPT (Yost, 2015).

The reasons behind Ukraine's decision to denuclearise are widely discussed in the literature, and four primary reasons are highlighted: security, economic considerations, national identity, and diplomatic relations. Starting with the reasons associated with security concerns, the main issue was the risk of a potential pre-emptive action by Russia since keeping the nuclear arsenal might have triggered Russia and increased the likelihood of a military intervention (Einhorn, 2015; Martel, 1998). Moreover, the inherited arsenal posed other challenges as well. It is highlighted that Russia possessed a deep knowledge of the nuclear arsenal on Ukrainian territory, including their vulnerabilities, capabilities, and locations, which would compromise the effectiveness of those weapons (Miller, 1993).

Economic considerations also played an important role in Ukraine's decision. At the time of its independence, Ukraine was among the poorest states of the former Soviet bloc and holding onto nuclear weapons would have caused further financial strains since their upkeep would result in considerable expenses (Martel, 1998; Yost, 2015). Moreover, choosing the nuclear path would also have risked being subject to economic sanctions, suspension of direct foreign aid, and the loss of Russian

subsidies on oil (Solingen, 1994). These arguments claim that, given Ukraine's already fragile economy, the financial costs associated with nuclear weapons would have exacerbated its already precarious economic situation.

National identity is another important factor. Since Ukraine was a newly independent state, it was still shaping its national identity and holding onto the inherited nuclear arsenal would have contradicted the image it wanted to present as a member of the Western, liberal community of states (Long & Grillot, 2000). Furthermore, keeping the inherited nuclear weapons on its territory inevitably meant remaining tied to Russian infrastructure, which would further compromise its goal of full sovereignty and establishing a separate identity apart from Russia (Budjeryn, 2022; Gak, 2004). This argument focuses on the fact that by relinquishing its nuclear arsenal, Ukraine was able to assert itself as an independent nation and strengthen its national identity as independent from Russia.

The literature also points out that diplomatic considerations influenced Ukraine's decision as well. Even though Ukraine's nuclear diplomacy attracted global attention, this negative attention damaged its reputation and raised doubts among Western states regarding its reliability as a potential ally (Miller, 1994). Nuclear proliferation would most likely have led to international isolation, as major powers, particularly the U.S., were keen on preventing any nuclear-armed states from emerging (Einhorn, 2015; Miller, 1993; Riabchuk, 2009). Therefore, relinquishing the weapons on its territory was essential for Ukraine in order to improve its diplomatic standing on the international stage and secure stronger ties with Western states.

2.5 Kazakhstan

The importance of Kazakhstan in terms of nuclear politics goes back before the country inherited a nuclear arsenal. Kazakhstan played an integral part in the Soviet nuclear weapons program long before its dissolution, as the Soviet military built a nuclear testing site in the eastern region near Semipalatinsk between 1947 and 1949, and the program also heavily depended on Kazakhstan's uranium resources (Kassenova, 2014; 2024). Over the next forty years, the Soviet Union carried out 456 nuclear tests at the Semipalatinsk site, including 116 above-ground tests, including the first Soviet hydrogen bomb explosion in 1955, with the site ranking second in the world in terms of both explosive yields, after the Marshall Islands, and in total number of tests, after the Nevada test site (Budjeryn, 2022; Werner & Purvis-Roberts, 2006). By the late 1980s, due to the severe impact of extensive nuclear testing, the Semipalatinsk site had become Kazakhstan's Chernobyl, which led Kazakh writer Olzhas Sulimenov to found the Nevada-Semipalatinsk Anti-Nuclear Movement and gather thousands in protests, ultimately leading to the shutdown of the site in August 1991 (Budjeryn, 2022; Kassenova, 2024). The impacts of the testing site and the anti-nuclear sentiments among the public influenced Kazakhstan's nuclear policy over the following years.

In December 1991, Kazakhstan was the last Soviet republic to declare independence and inherited a substantial amount of the Soviet nuclear arsenal as the Union collapsed, including 108 SS-18 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and 1,410 warheads (Ayazbekov, 2014; Kassenova, 2024). During the first six months of its independence, Kazakhstan's stance on its inherited nuclear arsenal remained ambiguous as the country repeatedly shifted between disarmament and keeping the weapons (Ayazbekov, 2024; Budjeryn, 2022). Kazakhstan argued that since nuclear

weapons had been deployed on its territory long before 1967, a key criterion of the nuclear-weapon state (NWS) status under the NPT, it qualified as a nuclear weapons state, but at the same time, it proposed a new classification as a temporary NWS, stating its intention towards future denuclearisation (Ayazbekov, 2024; Budjeryn, 2022):

The literature suggests that Kazakhstan's insistence on its temporary nuclear status may have been a strategic move to gain leverage in achieving security assurances during negotiations with the U.S., and the country signed START I and the Lisbon Protocol in 1992, its Parliament voted to accede to the NPT in 1993, and they ultimately obtained security assurances through the 1994 Budapest Memorandum (Budjeryn, 2022; Kassenova, 2014). By the mid-1990s, Kazakhstan had not only dismantled or removed all nuclear weapons from its territory but also took further non-proliferation steps by establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone in Central Asia in 2006, committing to additional responsibilities such as compliance with the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Additional Protocol and the Convention for the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, while also joining the U.S.-led Nuclear Security Summit process in 2010 to enhance nuclear material security (Kassenova, 2014).

Kazakhstan's disarmament policy can be examined in three main reasons, which were discussed in the literature: the anti-nuclear sentiments stemming from the Semipalatinsk site, diplomatic relations, and economic considerations. Starting with the anti-nuclear sentiments, one should examine the consequences of the intensive nuclear tests. Within a few years of the nuclear tests beginning, residents of villages, towns, and cities in Eastern Kazakhstan began experiences severe health and mental issues, including cancer, stillbirths, birth defects, and suicides, with approximately

1.6 million people exposed to high levels of radiation (Kassenova, 2024; Werner & Purvis-Roberts, 2006). Therefore, it is argued that those devastating consequences created a strong societal push towards eliminating both nuclear weapons and materials.

Another argument highlights the importance of diplomatic ties with the rest of the world. Despite seeing the non-proliferation regime as unfair due to its division between NWS and NNWS, Kazakhstan chose to adhere to its norms to avoid being seen as a pariah (Kassenova, 2024). The literature points out that Kazakhstan saw the dissolution of the Soviet Union as a chance to shape its own identity and chose to be recognised as a respected newcomer in the international arena rather than a disruptor of the international order (Kassenova, 2024). So, the desire to preserve diplomatic ties with the rest of the international community and be respected as a new state also influenced the decision to disarm.

The literature also notes the role of economic considerations. It is stated Kazakhstan's commitment to disarmament was further enabled by the clear message from the U.S. Secretary of State, James Baker, that international aid, particularly through the CTR program, was contingent on addressing the weapons issue and Kazakhstan needed foreign aid as a new state (Laumulin, 1995; Werner & Purvis-Roberts, 2006).

2.6 Belarus

Similar to Ukraine and Kazakhstan, Belarus was also born nuclear after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It held the fourth-largest nuclear arsenal among the newly formed Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), following Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, possessing approximately five per cent of the nuclear

warheads deployed by the former Soviet Union (Paznyak, 1995a). However, the nuclear politics of Belarus go back to before the collapse of the Soviet Union, as it is deeply related to the Chernobyl accident.

The literature emphasises that Belarus, called the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic back then, was the country most affected by the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, as the nuclear plant was located just ten kilometres from its border with Ukraine (Budjeryn, 2022). As a result, the country suffered severe consequences that continued to shape its nuclear politics in the following years. The widespread contamination of land caused by radioactive fallout led to the loss of human and animal life, severe agricultural destruction, and lasting environmental damage (Paznyak, 1995a; Stevens, 2018). Paznyak further states that over 2.2 million people, nearly one-fifth of the population, were affected, while 18% of the most fertile agricultural lands and 20% of all forests suffered contamination, resulting in economic losses equivalent to ten times the republic's budget in 1990 prices (1995a).

Therefore, when Belarus adopted its declaration of state sovereignty in July 1990, it emphasised that its aim was to make its territory a nuclear-free zone and establish itself as a neutral state (Budjeryn, 2022; Paznyak, 1995a). Belarus maintained its nuclear stance after the Union's collapse, showing no intention of keeping the nuclear weapons; even though they insisted on having a say in all nuclear-related decision regarding the arsenal on its territory until disarmament was complete, joining with Ukraine and Kazakhstan in pushing for START I to turn into a multilateral agreement (Budjeryn, 2022). By spring 1992, all the tactical nuclear weapons had been removed from Belarusian territory, and in July 1993, its first post-Soviet leader, Stanislau Shushkevich, led the country to become the first to join the NPT with inherited nuclear arms, though disarmament was later delayed after

Lukashenko's 1994 election, this was driven by a desire to secure security commitments from Russia rather than having nuclear ambitions for itself (Budjeryn, 2022; Paznyak, 1995b).

The literature emphasises that Belarus did not see the nuclear weapons on their territory as theirs at any point of the denuclearisation process; therefore, they did not have to be coerced into giving up their nuclear arsenal (Buderjyn, 2022; Paznyak, 1995a). Shushkevich addressed this issue in 1992 by stating that "nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus are Russian, they are under the Russian jurisdiction, and the problem of our nuclear disarmament is to repatriate them onto the territory of Russia" (cited in Paznyak, 1995a, p. 161).

The country's decision to denuclearise without any serious obstacle or objection is mainly tied to two main reasons: the aftermath of Chernobyl and the country's relations with Russia. As stated above, Belarus suffered a great deal from the Chernobyl accident. It is important to note that Shushkevich, who was the head of the nuclear physics department at Belarusian State University when the accident happened, entered politics through Chernobyl activism and argued that the disaster was a lasting trauma for Belarusian society that would persist as long as the country kept the inherited nuclear weapons (Budjeryn, 2022).

Therefore, it can be stated that there would also be significant backlash from the public if Belarus decided to keep the nuclear arsenal. It is claimed that the Chernobyl disaster made Belarusians deeply distrustful regarding nuclear issues, causing the presence of nuclear-phobia and anti-nuclear sentiments among the society, and any pro-nuclear decision would have caused mass public protests since anything nuclear is directly associated with devastation and death (Paznyak, 1995a; W. Walker, 1992).

Another point highlighted in the literature is the relations between Belarus and Russia and their effect on the decision to disarm. Even after Belarus declared its independence, Russia continued its role as a big brother, just as it had during the Soviet era, with a Belarusian parliament member even asserting that “Russia and Belarus are a single body” (cited in Budjeryn, 2022, p. 161). Since many Belarusians could not think of themselves apart from Russians, mainly due to a lack of national identity as a sovereign and an independent state, and any decision towards nuclear armament would have been perceived as anti-Russian, it was not possible for Belarus to consider keeping the arsenal on its territory (Paznyak, 1995a; Zaprudink, 1994). Moreover, Belarus was also dependent on Russia in terms of military assistance and trade, and pursuing a nuclear path would not only harm Belarus in terms of a deterioration in relations regarding those areas but also might have led to economic sanctions by Russia (Paznyak, 1995a). This line of argument also explains why Belarus neither attempted to use the nuclear arsenal as bargaining chips nor asserted any claims over them, instead stating that they were Russian weapons (Budjeryn, 2022; Paznyak, 1995a). Ultimately, this argument claims that the close ties of Belarus with Russia, not only in terms of dependency but also identity, made holding onto nuclear weapons not a possibility and led to their decision to give them up without any serious obstacle.

CHAPTER 3:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Topic and The Theoretical Framework

This study aims to examine the role of NRCs in nuclear de-proliferation by applying role theory to four cases of nuclear disarmament: South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. While previous research has explored various political, economic, and security-related factors influencing these decisions, as seen in Chapter 2, this study aims to expand the scope by investigating whether the perceived national roles impacted the nuclear relinquishment decisions in these states.

This study builds on the work of Chafetz et al. (1996), who used role theory to compare the nuclear disarmament processes of Belarus and Ukraine. While their research focused on the differences between Belarus and Ukraine regarding their de-proliferation processes, this study takes a different approach by including the cases of South Africa and Kazakhstan and focusing on the similarities between those four countries that have given up their nuclear arsenal. This study aims to explore whether

they shared similar NRCs and how these role conceptions may have influenced their decisions to relinquish their nuclear weapons. Role theory was first introduced to international relations by K. J. Holsti (1970) as an actor-specific framework for understanding state behaviour and foreign policy decisions. It emphasises how state behaviour and foreign policy decisions are influenced by internal and external expectations regarding a state's identity, functions, and place in the international order (Thies, 2009; Walker, 1987). NRCs refer to the self-perceived, internal role conceptions of states regarding their places in international affairs, which are considered more important than role prescriptions coming from the alter because of the concept of state sovereignty (Holsti, 1970).

NRCs can also provide an explanation for continuity regarding foreign policy decisions, as they provide decision-makers with a cognitive framework through which they interpret their state's place in the international arena (Wish, 1980; Adigbuo, 2007). Furthermore, role theory also allows for an analysis of foreign policy decisions by integrating both agency and structure, making it possible to assess how actors act upon the roles they perceive within a broader international context (Hudson, 2016).

This study seeks to answer the following question: What is the relationship between national role conceptions and the decision to relinquish nuclear weapons? NRCs help explain how states perceive their responsibilities and places within the international system and how these perceptions shape their foreign policy choices, including the decision to disarm. This study argues that states construct their nuclear policies not only based on strategic, economic, or security considerations but also in response to their perceived roles within the global order.

This study aims to contribute to both the role theory and nuclear proliferation literature by broadening the empirical application of role theory and examining how certain NRCs might influence nuclear policies. Additionally, this study also aims to show how identity-based factors play a role in state behaviour regarding the decision to relinquish nuclear weapons. Understanding how states perceive their international roles may offer insights into their willingness to comply with the international order on nuclear non-proliferation.

This section outlines the theoretical foundation of the study, the question it aims to answer, and how it aims to contribute to the literature. The following sections in this chapter outline the hypotheses, data, and the method used to answer how NRCs influence nuclear disarmament decisions.

3.2 Hypotheses

In order to develop hypotheses about the relationship between NRCs and nuclear de-proliferation, this study draws on Holsti's (1970) and Chafetz et al.'s (1996) research. Chafetz et al. (1996) categorised national roles into three types regarding nuclear policies: roles that encourage states toward, roles that discourage states from, and roles that are indeterminate concerning adherence to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. They identified four roles associated with nuclear proliferation: 'regional leader', 'global system leader', 'regional protector', and 'anti-imperialist', and seven roles that push states away from proliferation: 'mediator-integrator', 'example', 'protectee', 'regional subsystem collaborator', 'global system collaborator', 'bridge', and 'internal developer' (Chafetz et al., 1996). So, based on this categorisation and Holsti's (1970) argument regarding how NRCs influence foreign policy decisions, this paper argues the following hypothesis;

Hypothesis 1a: States that express the national role conceptions of ‘example’, ‘global system collaborator’, or ‘internal developer’ are more likely to lean towards nuclear disarmament.

Building on this hypothesis, it is important to identify which roles influence the decision to denuclearise within the scope of this study. From the literature review and historical context, three key roles were chosen for analysis in four cases of nuclear de-proliferation: ‘example’, ‘global system collaborator’, and ‘internal developer’. These roles were selected because they are directly connected with the decision-making processes related to relinquishing nuclear weapons. While Chafetz et al. (1996) describe various other roles that may drive states away from nuclear proliferation, these three roles are specifically relevant for the examined states based on the literature review and the political context.

The decision to focus on the roles of ‘example’, ‘global system collaborator’, and ‘internal developer’ is based on their particular relevance to the question of nuclear disarmament in the four cases examined. These roles reflect the motivations frequently highlighted in the literature, such as building an international reputation, conforming to global norms, and prioritising domestic concerns about development. While other roles identified in the typology by Chafetz et al. (1996) could also be meaningful in different foreign policy contexts, these three appeared most directly connected to the disarmament-related dynamics explored in this study. For instance, the ‘example’ role overlaps with arguments about states wanting to be considered responsible international actors, while the ‘internal developer’ role relates closely to economic concerns. Similarly, the ‘global system collaborator’ role is related to engagement with the broader international regime, including the NPT.

This choice is not to suggest that the other roles identified in the typology are irrelevant, but rather, they were less immediately suited to the aims of this study. For instance, roles such as ‘bridge’ or ‘mediator-integrator’ concern broader diplomatic positioning and were not closely aligned with the disarmament choices examined here. For the sake of analytical focus and clarity, this study concentrated on those roles that appear most likely to shed light on how NRCs can influence decisions regarding nuclear weapons.

Starting with the ‘example’ role, Holsti (1970) states that this role is about the importance of promoting prestige and gaining influence through policies.

Considering that an important part of the literature attempts to explain the reasons for relinquishing nuclear weapons regarding reputation and the image they want to present to the world (Albright & Stricker, 2016; Long & Grillot, 2000; Pretorius, 2024), it is plausible that this role is influential regarding nuclear policies as countries may seek prestige by relinquishing nuclear weapons in order to show that they are a good member of the international community.

Hypothesis 1b: States that express the ‘example’ role are more likely to relinquish their nuclear weapons.

‘Global system collaborator’ is a role introduced by Chafetz et al. (1996), stating that its primary functions revolve around commitments to work with other countries to support the global order. This role conception is important since not being seen as a disruptor of the international order is an important factor driving nuclear disarmament (Kassenova, 2024). By denuclearising, these four states not only upheld but also strengthened the non-proliferation regime. Among them, Kazakhstan took further steps to strengthen this regime by taking on additional responsibilities

(Kassenova, 2014). Therefore, it can be expected that the functions related to the ‘global system collaborator’ role are important regarding the decision to disarm.

Hypothesis 1c: States that express the ‘global system collaborator’ role are more likely to relinquish their nuclear weapons.

The last role that this paper argues has an effect towards nuclear disarmament is the role of an ‘internal developer’. This role differs from the previously mentioned roles, which emphasise good citizenship and adherence to international norms. Instead, as outlined by Chafetz et al. (1996), this role is particularly relevant to states whose main objective is to secure support for domestic economic development. Holsti also states that the primary focus of this role is on the viewpoint that governmental efforts should primarily target internal development issues (1970). Considering that a significant part of the literature is based on the explanations regarding economic considerations, whether they be about the costs related to maintenance of the weapons (Martel, 1998; Yost, 2015) or securing economic assistance in exchange for relinquishing the nuclear arsenal (Laumulin, 1995; Werner & Purvis-Roberts, 2006), this is an important role to examine. Economic incentives and considerations were important parts of the decision to disarm, and therefore, it can be argued that this role is significant for nuclear de-proliferation.

Hypothesis 1d: States that express the ‘internal developer’ role are more likely to relinquish their nuclear weapons.

On the other side of the coin, the roles that push states toward nuclear proliferation are also important in studying the importance of NRCs. Therefore, this study argues that the ‘global system leader’ role cannot be observed in the states that relinquished their nuclear arsenal. The reason for choosing this role is that nuclear weapons can be

perceived as a symbol of leadership within the context of recognised nuclear states within the NPT (Chafetz et al., 1996). Considering that there was an issue of succession and legality within three of four cases of de-proliferation, this is an important role to examine within the scope of this study.

Hypothesis 2: States that relinquish their nuclear weapons do not express the role of ‘global system leader’.

3.3 Data

In this study, the role of NRCs in the nuclear de-proliferation decisions of South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus is studied by examining the public communications of the leaders in office when the decision was taken. These leaders are F. W. De Klerk of South Africa, Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma of Ukraine, Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, and Stanislau Shushkevich of Belarus.

This study uses those leaders’ speeches, letters, press releases, and interviews, including their remarks, to determine their NRCs. However, regarding the timeline of the data collected, due to the scarcity of data specifically from the exact period of nuclear de-proliferation, the scope of the data collection extends to include later speeches and public remarks by these leaders on nuclear policies.

This methodological choice is further supported by the nature of role theory, which suggests that role conceptions serve as lasting guidelines that influence behaviour and policy decisions. By extending the timeframe of the data collected, the study seeks to not only capture the immediate responses regarding nuclear policies but also to understand the lasting impact of role conceptions on policy-making since these

conceptions establish long-term norms, guidelines, and standards (Breuning, 2011a; Wish, 1980).

3.4 Method

Content analysis serves as the primary method of this research employed in this thesis. Content analysis is a systematic method which is used to interpret messages and the content of communication, allowing for the systematic study of the meaning, themes, and patterns that emerge from the data (Hermann, 2008; Weber, 1990).

Content analysis can be divided into two main categories: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative content analysis focuses on interpreting and understanding the underlying meaning and themes of the content, and it seeks to describe variability in communication content according to qualitative criteria (Hermann, 2008).

Quantitative content analysis, on the other hand, is mainly about counting certain elements of the content and is used to statistically evaluate the presence, meanings, and relationships of such elements (Breuning, 2011b; Hermann, 2008).

For this thesis, both qualitative and quantitative content analysis are employed as they together align with the exploratory nature of this research, which aims to uncover broader themes and identify patterns related to NRCs within the context of nuclear disarmament. The qualitative approach is suitable for analysing elements embedded in communication (Schreier, 2012), such as the roles leaders perceive themselves as playing on the international stage and how these perceptions influence their policy decisions regarding nuclear disarmament. Quantitative content analysis is suitable for identifying common patterns across the four cases examined.

This research will follow the role perception typology developed by Holsti (1970) and later expanded by Chafetz et al. (1996). Based on the research procedure for

determining NRCs laid by Holsti (1970) in his prominent work, this research will involve examining the materials found, which are partial or complete texts of statements and speeches and noting the themes that demonstrate the presence of NRCs, while discarding sources if the themes or statements continue to be unclear after multiple reviews. This approach aims to systematically examine how NRCs are expressed in official communications and determine the role perceptions that influence foreign policy decisions regarding nuclear disarmament.



CHAPTER 4:

CASE STUDIES OF NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT DECISIONS

4.1 Introduction

It is important to connect the case studies to the main question this thesis is trying to explore: How do national role conceptions influence a state's decision to relinquish nuclear weapons? This question addresses a gap in the nuclear politics literature: While much of the literature concentrates on why states acquire nuclear weapons, mainly drawing on Sagan's (1996) three models, which view proliferation as a response to security threats, domestic political interests, or for normative aspirations, comparatively little attention has been paid to understanding why states choose to disarm.

The voluntary nuclear rollback of South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus offers valuable cases for exploring this question. By examining identity-driven motivations behind their decisions, this study aims to add a new dimension to the

nuclear proliferation literature, which can complement traditional explanations focusing on security threats, diplomatic relations, or economic incentives.

The theoretical backbone of this chapter is role theory, an approach within FPA that emphasises definitions of decision-makers regarding their nation's role in world affairs, which was first introduced to the IR field by Holsti (1970) as an actor-focused framework for understanding state behaviour. In other words, role theory suggests that leaders act according to what they believe their country is on the world stage. Stephen Walker (1987) also emphasises the value of role theory for FPA, noting its rich vocabulary for capturing leaders' beliefs, its ability to link different levels of analysis of the individual, state and system, and its usefulness in explaining foreign policy choices.

This chapter examines all four countries -South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus- that voluntarily relinquished their nuclear arsenal in history. What ties these cases together, as this chapter explores, is how each country's leaders saw their nation's role and how those views made holding onto nuclear weapons seem either unnecessary or at odds with that identity.

In order to probe the link between NRCs and nuclear disarmament decisions, this chapter employs content analysis of public communications of the decision-makers. Following Holsti's (1970) approach, this study looks at speeches, interviews, and official records to identify how leaders described their country's role in the international arena and what actions they saw as appropriate.

The remainder of this chapter is organised thematically around the specific NRCs identified in the methodology chapter as significant for nuclear relinquishment: 'example', 'global system collaborator', 'internal developer', and 'global system

leader’. This structure is meant to make comparing the cases easier and show how role conceptions appear in different contexts. Each section brings together materials from South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus to show how a specific NRC manifests and influences the decision-making process. Taking this thematic approach supports the goal of this study to identify shared patterns across cases, which aligns with the idea that certain NRCs tend to be more apparent in the states that decide to give up their nuclear weapons.

4.2 The ‘Example’ National Role Conception

The concept of the ‘example’ NRC, introduced by Holsti (1970) in his typology, is related to states seeing themselves as examples or models, believing their policies or characteristics should inspire or guide others in the international system. Holsti (1970) explicitly defines the characteristics of this role conception as “this national role conception (‘example’) emphasises the importance of promoting prestige and gaining influence in the international system by pursuing certain domestic policies” (p. 268). Such states position themselves as benchmarks or reference points in the international system.

Chafetz et al. (1996) further argue that the ‘example’ role conception is closely associated with a state’s inclination to move further away from actions that violate international norms, including illegal nuclear proliferation. This expectation is reasonable, as violating international norms has the potential to undermine a state’s reputation in the global arena, which was a key factor influencing the decision of all four countries to give up their nuclear weapons. As the ‘example’ role is also associated with gaining prestige and building a positive reputation on the global stage, it tends to discourage states from engaging in nuclear proliferation, as it could harm their image as responsible members of the international community.

The literature states the importance of prestige and reputation in the decisions of those four countries. Starting with South Africa, it is argued that the decision to join the NPT and dismantle its nuclear weapons and nuclear program was part of a broader effort to rebuild its international image and reconnect with the global community after years of isolation under apartheid (De Villiers et al., 1993; Long & Grillot, 2000). In this sense, giving up its nuclear weapons was not only a disarmament decision in the security sense but also a move to signal change and gain prestige, something that resonates with the idea of the 'example' NRC, where a state actively tries to present itself as a responsible model for others.

Ukraine's motivations were shaped by a different context in the post-Soviet era, but concerns about reputation and international perception were just as important. According to the literature, one of the key reasons Ukraine decided to relinquish the nuclear weapons it inherited was the fear of international isolation or being regarded as an unreliable partner by Western countries (Miller, 1993; 1994).

Kazakhstan faced a complex set of motivations. On the one hand, it viewed the non-proliferation regime as inherently unequal, particularly because of the distinction it makes between NWS and NNWSs; however, Kazakhstan's leadership also did not want the country to be seen and treated as a pariah on the world stage (Kassenova, 2024). This situation suggests that, despite some reservations about the non-proliferation regime, concerns about international image and being accepted into the global community played an important role in shaping the country's choice to give nuclear weapons on its territory.

For Belarus, while the desire for prestige is not as explicitly stated in the sources, maintaining stable diplomatic relationships, particularly with Russia, is often

highlighted as a central concern that factored into their decision to disarm (Paznyak, 1999a).

Taken together, these cases illustrate a common reason behind the decision to denuclearise. At the same time, each country had its own political context and specific motivations; the desire to be seen as a responsible and respectable actor in the international arena played a critical role. These motivations align with the core characteristics of the ‘example’ NRC, which centres on the idea that states seek to enhance their prestige by demonstrating model behaviour (Holsti, 1970). By giving up their nuclear arsenals and joining the NPT as NNWS, these countries enhanced their international standings in the community. They projected an image of good international citizenship. This situation suggests that the ‘example’ NRC offers a meaningful framework for understanding their behaviour within the global non-proliferation regime.

Four speeches and one letter related to South Africa were examined to explore how the ‘example’ role conception was expressed. Across these documents, 23 instances of the selected role conceptions were identified. Among them, the ‘example’ NRC appeared 7 times, making it the second most frequently articulated role after the ‘global system collaborator’ role, which was mentioned 10 times. While expressing this role, President De Klerk placed a particular emphasis on the aspiration that South Africa’s decision would encourage other countries to follow a similar path. For instance, in his speech on March 24, 1993, where he announced to the world that South Africa did indeed develop a nuclear deterrent at one stage, he expressed this role conception by saying:

“I sincerely trust that this unprecedented act, namely the voluntary dismantling of a nuclear deterrent capability, and the voluntary revelation of

all relevant information, will confirm this government's effort to assure transparency. I trust also that South Africa's initiative will inspire other countries to take the same steps" (De Klerk, 1993).

This statement aligns closely with the 'example' NRC. At its core, this role reflects a state's self-perception as a model of appropriate behaviour in the international system by positioning itself as a responsible actor that others might look to for guidance, embodying the essence of the 'example' role. This example shows that South Africa, the only state that dismantled nuclear weapons it had built itself, sought to present itself as a model on the global stage, thereby expressing the 'example' NRC.

Continuing with the post-Soviet cases, the analysis of Ukraine includes 3 press conference transcripts, one memorandum of a telephone conversation, and one press release document. Across these five documents, a total of 12 instances of the four role conceptions examined in this thesis were identified. Of these, 2 were references to the 'example' role conception, making it one of the least frequently expressed roles in the case of Ukraine, alongside the 'global system collaborator' role, which was also expressed 2 times. The only role conception expressed less frequently was the 'global system leader' role, which appeared just once and only in the case of Ukraine among the four countries examined.

These two instances of referencing the 'example' role were based on expressing that the other states should follow the footsteps of Ukraine regarding joining the NPT by both President Kravchuk and Kuchma, who both held office during the denuclearisation process of the country. President Kravchuk, in his speech at the World Economic Forum in 1993, said:

“We are convinced that all nuclear states without exception should follow the path of Ukraine – the path of acquiring in the future, preferably in the near future, the non-nuclear status, should conduct a single consisted policy regarding the universal application of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and accession to this international instrument of all states of the world” (Kravchuk, 1993).

This quotation reflects the ‘example’ role by portraying Ukraine’s denuclearisation and joining the NPT as a model for others, encouraging all nuclear states to follow Ukraine’s path, positioning Ukraine as a normative benchmark within the international arena, which aligns with the major function of the ‘example’ role conception.

President Kuchma, Kravchuk’s successor as the President of Ukraine, also expressed this role conception in a joint press conference alongside the U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Hennadiy Udovenko. In this press conference, Kuchma stated the following:

“First, and the main thing, Ukraine is well aware of what is safety and nuclear security for we have got Chernobyl. For that reason we have taken the considered decision to accede the NPT and we have called on all other countries of the world to do so by including those from the nuclear club so that to reduce nuclear threat all over the world” (Kuchma, 1998).

Similar to Kravchuk’s statement, Kuchma also offers Ukraine’s accession to the NPT as a model for other states and emphasises that they have called on other states to follow their path, which is an instance of expressing the ‘example’ role conception. Both these statements, voiced by different presidents, reflect a consistent expression

of the ‘example’ role despite the change in leadership, which supports the claim that NRCs provide a long-lasting guide (Breuning, 2011a; Wish, 1980), even though the ‘example’ role conception is expressed less frequently compared to the other roles examined within this study for the Ukrainian case.

Moving on to the Kazakhstan case, the analysis includes 2 speeches, one article, one letter, and one press conference transcript to identify expressions of NRCs. Across these 5 sources, a total of 15 instances where the examined role conceptions expressed were identified, with 11 of them reflecting the ‘example’ role. This situation not only makes it the most frequently expressed role in Kazakhstan’s case but also gives Kazakhstan the highest percentage of ‘example’ role references among all the countries examined.

The references to the ‘example’ role in the Kazakhstan case are mainly based on closing the Semipalatinsk test site and their further initiatives for a nuclear-free world, such as the ATOM (Abolish Testing, Our Mission) project. In order to present an example, President Nazarbayev expressed how Kazakhstan stands as an example in the international arena in his speech at the opening of the NATO Science for Peace exhibition in 2006:

“I would like to remind you that the beginning of independence of Kazakhstan we have renounced also the fourth largest nuclear arsenal in the world, and thus became an epicentre of peace where the first time in the history people who used to have a nuclear potential have renounced it voluntarily. And the fact that the nuclear test sites in Nevada, in Lobnor, in Novaya Zemlya, have been shut down after Semipalatinsk speaks of the historic significance of that decision” (Nazarbayev, 2006).

This quote reflects the primary function of the ‘example’ NRC by suggesting that by closing Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan helped pave the way for other major test sites to shut down as well, framing the country as the ‘example’ in this regard, the closing of the nuclear test sites.

Moreover, in his speech dated 2012 at the ‘From a Nuclear Test Ban to a Nuclear Weapon-Free World’ conference, the president introduced the ATOM project:

“We have the opportunity to remind the world once again of the tragic consequences of nuclear testing, to encourage the global community to more decisive actions on complete and unalterable prohibition. For this reason, today Kazakhstan is launching its international project called ATOM. The name of the project ATOM is an acronym formed of the first four letters in the English language which reads as ‘Abolish Testing. Our Mission’. As part of this project, any person in the world who stands against nuclear weapons can sign the petition to the world’s governments online to call for a complete ban of nuclear tests and thus, to facilitate a sooner adaptation of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty” (Nazarbayev, 2012).

This quote reflects the ‘example’ role by emphasising the country’s effort to influence by moral initiative. By launching the ATOM project, Nazarbayev positioned the country as a global advocate for nuclear disarmament, aiming to inspire action among other actors and set an example for others to follow.

Lastly, 3 interviews were examined for Belarus, and the analysis of these interview transcripts revealed no references to the ‘example’ NRC.

In conclusion, while the expression of the ‘example’ NRC varied across the four cases, its influence is evident in shaping South Africa, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan’s

disarmament processes, which are about presenting themselves as responsible and exemplary actors in the international system. Belarus stands in contrast to these four countries in terms of this role conception.

4.3 The ‘Global System Collaborator’ National Role Conception

The ‘global system collaborator’ role conception is introduced to the literature by Chafetz et al. (1996) along with the ‘global system leader’ conception. They stated that in his work, Holsti (1970) identified only ‘regional subsystem collaborator’ and ‘regional subsystem leader’ role conceptions as he found few instances of states expressing national roles on a global level, and they further argue that the difference between their and Holsti’s conceptualisation of national roles arises from the impact of the Cold War on NRCs; without its strict divisions leaders are able to express roles on a global system level rather than being confined to sub-systemic ones (Chafetz et al., 1996).

Therefore, it is important to examine how Holsti (1970) defines the ‘regional subsystem collaborator’ role, as it performs functions similar to those of the ‘global system collaborator’ role, with the primary distinction being the level at which these functions are carried out. Holsti (1970) defines the functions of this role as “the themes in this national role conception (‘regional subsystem collaborator’) ... indicate far-reaching commitment to cooperative efforts with other states to build wider communities” (p. 265). While this role is situated at the regional level, its emphasis on cooperation and commitment is important. Similarly, Chafetz et al. (1996) define the major function of the ‘global system collaborator’ role as “undertake far-reaching commitments to cooperate with other states to support the emerging global order” (p. 734). Although the level is different, both definitions

reflect a willingness to work with others in pursuit of a more cohesive and stable regional or international environment.

Since the states that adopt this role tend to present themselves as the actors that cooperate to uphold the global order, it can be stated that this role fosters a preference for rule-abiding behaviour. Drawing from the understanding that states embracing the ‘global system collaborator’ role are typically committed to following international norms and portraying themselves as cooperative global actors, it can be expected that those states also abide by the rules of the NPT. Since the NPT is widely regarded as the cornerstone of international peace and security, adherence to it aligns with their desire to be seen as members of the international community who emphasise cooperation with other states to support the global order.

The NPT defines NWSs as “one which has manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device prior to 1 January 1967” (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, 1968). According to this definition, the NPT recognises five countries, namely China, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Russia, as legitimate NWSs under its provisions and other states are referred to as NNWSs. The NPT also places restrictions on those NNWSs; according to the treaty, each NNWS under the treaty agrees “not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; and not to seek or receive any assistance in the manufacture of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices” (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, 1968).

Even though three of the four countries examined in this thesis did not develop nuclear weapons through traditional means but instead inherited them from the Soviet Union, there remained a strong expectation that they would relinquish those weapons and join the NPT as NNWs. This expectation was reinforced by the United

States, which has portrayed itself as the leader of the treaty, emphasising that it did not wish to see a rise in the number of nuclear-armed states (Riabchuk, 2009; Schadlow, 1996).

Therefore, since all four states, including the three that came into possession of nuclear weapons through inheritance rather than indigenous development, ultimately relinquished the nuclear weapons on their territories and acceded to the NPT as NNWs, thereby demonstrating adherence to international norms regarding the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the global order, it is expected that these states adopted the ‘global system collaborator’ NRC.

In order to assess how frequently the ‘global system collaborator’ role conception is expressed, 5 official documents concerning South Africa were examined. Across these documents, a total of 23 instances reflecting the four role conceptions explored in this thesis were identified. Of these 23 instances, 10 specifically referenced the ‘global system collaborator’ role. This situation indicated that, among the four roles analysed within the scope of this study, this particular role was the most frequently expressed for the South African case.

Their emphasis while expressing this role revolved around how strictly South Africa adheres to the requirements of the NPT and even goes beyond what is required by the treaty. For instance, in his March 1993 speech, De Klerk emphasised that:

“Any doubt that the government’s intentions with regard to nuclear matters must, and for once and all, be removed. For this reason, the government has decided to provide full information on South Africa’s past nuclear programme despite the fact that the NPT does not require this” (De Klerk, 1993).

This quote shows how South Africa reflects the ‘global system collaborator’ role by going beyond what the NPT requires to prove its commitment to international norms. The decision to fully disclose the country’s nuclear past, even though they were not obligated to, reflects an effort to show that South Africa is a cooperative actor within the global system. Moreover, even before they fully acceded to the NPT, South Africa agreed to an inspection of its nuclear facilities. In a letter written by De Klerk to George Bush in 1990, he wrote the following:

“You will know that we indicated a willingness to open all our nuclear facilities to international inspection by August 1991, irrespective of whether we may have acceded to the Treaty at that time.... All of this, we believe, should demonstrate to the Agency and the international community our commitment to adherence with Treaty objectives and responsibilities” (De Klerk, 1990).

This quote further shows that South Africa wanted to prove their commitment to the Treaty’s goals and build international trust. It reflects an effort to show that South Africa was ready to cooperate fully with the global non-proliferation regime, which aligns with the function of the ‘global system collaborator’ role conception.

Moving to the post-Soviet countries, starting with Ukraine, in the 5 official documents that have been examined, 12 instances where the four role conceptions studied were identified. Of these, 2 instances explicitly referred to the ‘global system collaborator’ role. Both Kuchma and Kravchuk expressed this role, which shows the long-lasting characteristic of the NRCs. Both instances aim to show a commitment to international norms and treaties, emphasising that Ukraine intends to meet its obligations and act in line with expectations from the international community.

Kravchuk, in a press conference with Bill Clinton in 1994, expressed the following statement:

“I am sure that this day and the forthcoming days open the way for the world for disarmament and for the elimination of nuclear weapons. And Ukraine will be committed to its obligations, and Ukraine will be the state which will not stand in the way to disarmament” (Kravchuk, 1994).

This statement reflects the ‘global system collaborator’ role conception by showing Ukraine’s willingness to support international disarmament efforts and emphasising that Ukraine will not obstruct global disarmament and will honour its obligations. By doing so, Kravchuk positions the country as a cooperative actor within the international system.

Furthermore, Kuchma also emphasises how Ukraine is a cooperative actor within the international system regarding nuclear matters. In his telephone conversation with Bill Clinton, he stated the following:

“I would also like to say that Ukraine will meet its obligations under the Trilateral Accord. It is possible to say that we are meeting all our agreements. Today, forty silos have been dismantled. 307 nuclear warheads have been transported to Russia” (Kuchma, 1994).

This quote reflects Ukraine’s efforts to be a cooperative actor within the international system through concrete actions. By highlighting the dismantling of silos and the transfer of warheads, Kuchma underscores that Ukraine is honouring its obligations and contributing to international disarmament efforts. It expresses a sense of responsibility and cooperation, which aligns with the function of the ‘global system collaborator’ role conception.

In the case of Kazakhstan, 5 documents were analysed, revealing a total of 15 instances where the role conceptions examined in this study appeared. Among these instances, 3 of them reflected the ‘global system collaborator’ role. Their narrative regarding this role emphasises the fact that Kazakhstan had the capability to become a nuclear power but made a conscious choice not to, and they further highlight their continued support for the IAEA and its initiatives. In this speech at the ‘From a Nuclear Test Ban to a Nuclear Weapon-Free World’ conference, Nazarbayev made the following statement:

“After the collapse of the Soviet Union, we had both specialists and necessary infrastructure to conduct military nuclear programs. Therefore, two decades ago the emergence of a new nuclear power in the name of Kazakhstan was only a matter of political will and time. But we showed political will and unconditionally withdrew from the membership in the Nuclear Club. In cooperation with the United States and Russia we eliminated the warheads and bombs” (Nazarbayev, 2012).

This quote reflects the ‘global system collaborator’ role by showing that, despite having the means to become a nuclear power, Kazakhstan made a deliberate choice to disarm. Nazarbayev emphasises that this decision was driven by political will and a desire to support international efforts, highlighting Kazakhstan’s commitment to cooperation, which aligns with the ‘global system collaborator’ NRC.

Moreover, in Nazarbayev’s article, he draws attention to the issue of balancing civilian use of nuclear energy and preventing the risk of further proliferation.

Regarding this issue, he stated the following in his article:

“Kazakhstan strongly shared the view of the International Atomic Energy Agency that the solution is to provide countries with a guaranteed supply of fuel to power nuclear plants. This is the aim of IAEA plans for an international low-enriched uranium bank, which we have offered to host on our territory” (Nazarbayev, 2014).

By backing the IAEA’s approach to nuclear security and offering to host the low-enriched uranium bank on their territory, Kazakhstan positions itself as a cooperative partner in strengthening the global non-proliferation regime by stepping up to support the international efforts in practice, which aligns with the ‘global system collaborator’ role.

Lastly, moving on to the case of Belarus, the analysis includes 3 interviews that were analysed in order to identify expressions of role conceptions. 4 instances were found, 3 reflecting the ‘global system collaborator’ role. This situation makes it the most frequently expressed role for Belarus and gives the country the highest percentage of references to this role among all the cases studied. The narrative surrounding the expressions regarding this role mainly focuses on Belarus agreeing to relinquish its arsenal without asking for any compensation in return. In his interview with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), former president Shushkevich expressed the following:

“On December 8, 1991, when we signed the Belavezha Accords, I said “I believe Belarus must remove nuclear weapons from its territory and I undertake to convince the Supreme Soviet of this”. On December 8. Without compensation, without any preconditions... The decision was made that we would remove nuclear weapons without compensation or preconditions” (Shushkevich, 2015).

This quote shows how Belarus commits to disarmament without asking for compensation in return or setting conditions, which can be interpreted as a willingness to support international norms and contribute to global security. Moreover, the literature also notes that Belarus's willingness to disarm was rooted in post-Soviet cooperative frameworks, with the U.S. Ambassador James Goodby saying that the accession of Belarus to the NPT was like "kicking an open door" (cited in Budjeryn, 2022, p. 66). Both statements highlight Belarus' openness to align with the international regime through cooperation rather than resistance and portray Belarus as a willing participant in the global non-proliferation regime.

4.4. The 'Internal Developer' National Role Conception

The 'internal developer' role differs from the two roles, 'example' and 'global system collaborator', which were previously discussed in this chapter. In their analyses of NRCs that indicate a shift away from illegal proliferation, Chafetz et al. (1996) note that, among these roles, the 'internal developer' stands out as the only one that does not entail notions of good citizenship at either the regional or global level, and therefore does not imply adherence to global norms or participation in regional frameworks.

Then, it becomes important to define the 'internal developer' role to understand its importance. Holsti (1970) claims that the emphasis of this NRC "is that most efforts of the government should be directed toward problems of internal development" (p. 269). Similarly, Chafetz et al. (1996) define the major function of this role conception as "direct efforts of own and other government to internal problems" (p. 734). Moreover, it is further argued that this role especially applies to states whose main objective in international affairs is to secure assistance to advance their internal economic development (Chafetz et al., 1996).

Economic concerns and the prospect of assistance played a significant role in the decision-making processes of the four countries that chose to dismantle their nuclear arsenals. Starting with South Africa, it is noted that giving up its nuclear arsenal was used as a bargaining chip to help lift economic sanctions; once the possibility of lifting the anti-apartheid sanctions became real, joining the NPT was seen as useful way to speed things up, especially to show foreign capitals that the internal changes of the country were genuine and irreversible (Lieberman, 2001).

For the post-Soviet countries, on the other hand, the connection to the ‘internal developer’ role had more to do with the high costs of keeping nuclear weapons on their territory and the economic compensations in exchange for relinquishing their nuclear weapons. For instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine noted in their analysis that the expenditures related to the nuclear missile complex could hinder the country’s ability to carry out social and economic reforms, especially in light of its current financial and economic conditions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MFA] of Ukraine, 1993). This situation shows that the problems related to internal development played a considerable role in the country’s foreign policy decisions, which aligns with the major functions of the ‘internal developer’ role.

In the case of Kazakhstan, it is noted in the literature that the country used their nuclear situation as a bargaining chip to gain maximum economic compensation from other countries (Ayazbekov, 2014). Belarus, on the other hand, refrained from using the nuclear arsenal on its territory as a bargaining chip, mainly due to the fact that it did not consider these weapons to be under Belarusian ownership but instead saw them as the property of Russia (Budjeryn, 2022; Paznyak, 1995a). However, the concerns related to internal development still played a role in their decision-making process. The literature also notes that the potential imposition of economic sanctions,

particularly from Russia, was an important factor influencing the country's decision to denuclearise, as the prospect of such measures was especially concerning given Belarus's reliance on Russia for both economic and military-logistical assistance (Paznyak, 1995a). Thus, it can be argued that the literature notes that although Belarus did not employ its nuclear arsenal as a strategic bargaining tool, considerations related to domestic development still influenced its decision-making process. These internal concerns, particularly regarding economic vulnerability and the potential for sanctions, align with the functions of the 'internal developer' role.

To assess how frequently the 'internal developer' NRC is expressed, 5 official documents concerning South Africa were examined, and the analysis revealed 23 instances of the four examined role conceptions, 6 of which referenced the 'internal developer' role. The main narrative surrounding the expression of this role in the South African case is how joining the NPT would support future development through exchanges and, more broadly, how the country should help secure foreign investment and loan capital. In his March 1993 speech, De Klerk stated the following:

“World opinion had also become increasingly opposed to nuclear weapons, and significant advantages for South Africa could be forthcoming should it accede to the NPT. Although it already had an advanced nuclear technology base and nuclear industry, accession would facilitate the international exchanges of the new technology for its future development.... In addition to this, South Africa's accession to the NPT has already led to the lifting of nuclear sanctions by the United States of America. Exchanges of visits with States in Africa have also taken place with a view to agreement on the use of medical isotopes and training programmes” (De Klerk, 1993).

This quote illustrates how South Africa viewed the NPT accession as a pathway to support its internal development. It emphasises the benefits regarding access to technology and training and the lifting of sanctions, all of which can be tied back to the ‘internal developer’ role conception.

More generally, De Klerk also emphasised the importance of foreign investment outside of nuclear policies as well. In his speech to the parliament, he stated that Southern Africa should position itself in a way that attracts investment and loan capital from industrialised countries (De Klerk, 1990). This approach reflects the ‘internal developer’ role conception, underscoring the importance of securing external financial support to advance internal development goals.

In the Ukrainian case, 5 official documents were analysed, revealing 12 instances of the four examined role conceptions. Of these, 7 referred to the ‘internal developer’ role, making it both the most frequently expressed role for Ukraine and the highest percentage among all cases studied. The main focus regarding this role in the Ukrainian case is on the economic compensation they would get in return for relinquishing nuclear weapons. Both presidents, Kravchuk and his successor, Kuchma, expressed these roles while in office. Kravchuk, in his speech at the World Economic Forum in 1993, stated the following:

“We are grateful to the United States for their offers to provide us financial and technical assistance to the amount of 175 million for the destruction of nuclear weapons. But it is evident that the above mentioned sum will hardly cover all of Ukraine’s possible expenses, and we hope that other states, particularly nuclear ones, will join the United States in this endeavour. It is with this aim that we have launched the initiative to establish special international fund for nuclear disarmament” (Kravchuk, 1993).

This quote reflects the ‘internal developer’ role conception by highlighting Ukraine’s effort to ease the economic burden of disarmament through international support. It shows a link between disarmament and development, as Ukraine seeks funding and assistance for its internal development.

Kravchuk’s successor, Kuchma, also reflected this role conception in his telephone conversation with Bill Clinton. In the conversation, Kuchma stated the following to Bill Clinton:

“I hope we will manage and we would be glad to meet with the economic advisor you mentioned. I have invited some economic advisors from Germany and France as well so we are ready for cooperation. Today Ukraine has only two ways. The first is to become an economically powerful state. The second is the destruction of Ukraine and the path of Ukraine in this way is only with Russia. I actually am against the second way, but the economic situation of the present day worries me. Knowing your role in sorting out the issues of the world, I would like the United States’ and your personal support” (Kuchma, 1994).

This quote emphasised Ukraine’s desire to become an economically strong state through international cooperation and support from other countries. It shows how economic concerns shape foreign policy choices and how Ukraine actively sought external support to strengthen its domestic development path, which closely aligns with the functions of the ‘internal developer’ NRC.

In the case of Kazakhstan, analysis of 5 official documents revealed 15 instances of the examined role conceptions, with only one referencing the ‘internal developer’

role. This reference, made by Nazarbayev during a 1994 press conference with Bill Clinton, reflects a broader context beyond nuclear policy:

“During talks, both parties confirmed their interest in an increased contribution that American businesses can make and to develop the economy of Kazakhstan.... We also believe that the setting up of the Kazakh-American Business Council for Economic Cooperation and to the Central Asian funds for small business development with the headquarters at Almaty will also contribute to obtaining the aforementioned objectives. An entirely new aspect of our cooperation will develop when American companies take part in a conversion of the defence industry in Kazakhstan” (Nazarbayev, 1994).

This quote reflects the ‘internal developer’ role conception by showing Kazakhstan’s aim to strengthen its economy through U.S. investment, business cooperation, and industrial development, which aligns with the major functions of the role conception.

In the Belarusian case, 3 interviews with Shushkevich were analysed, revealing 4 instances of the studied role conceptions, with one reflecting the ‘internal developer’ role in a more indirect, context-based manner. In an interview with RFE/RL, Shushkevich noted Belarus’s heavy dependence on Russia and the need to maintain proper relations (2015). This situation, along with the literature highlighting concerns about potential economic sanctions from Russia due to Belarus’s reliance on it for economic and logistical support (Paznyak, 1995a), shows that maintaining a good relationship with Russia was seen as important for the country’s economic situation, which aligns with the ‘internal developer’ role as the internal concerns, mainly about economics, shaped how Belarus acted in the international arena.

4.5. The ‘Global System Leader’ National Role Conception

The ‘global system leader’ role is the only role that is expected not to be expressed by the leaders whose countries relinquished nuclear weapons within the scope of this study. This role is another role introduced by Chafetz et al. (1996), which depends on Holsti’s (1970) ‘subsystem leader’ conceptualisation. As previously noted, in the absence of the strict geopolitical divisions of the Cold War, it is argued that leaders are more capable of expressing national roles at the global systemic level (Chafetz et al., 1996). Therefore, this role is considered more appropriate for analysing developments in the post-Cold War period.

Chafetz et al. (1996) define the major function of this role as the ability to “lead other states in creating and maintaining emerging global order” (p. 734). In addition to this definition, they further argue that adopting this role is linked to a tendency toward nuclear proliferation, as states may view nuclear capabilities as a symbol of leadership and status within the international system (Chafetz et al., 1996).

Considering the definition of this role and its association with a tendency toward pursuing nuclear weapons, it is expected that the four states that relinquished their nuclear arsenal would not adopt or express this role. Within this framework, the decision to relinquish nuclear weapons appears incompatible with the enactment of this role.

South Africa and its position regarding dismantling its nuclear arsenal appear to be inconsistent with the ‘global system leader’ role. South Africa not only dismantled its self-developed nuclear arsenal but also did so to recover its international image after decades of apartheid. De Klerk emphasises that nuclear weapons were morally indefensible and their existence was a barrier to South Africa’s full integration into the international community (Albright, 2016; Das, 2022). Therefore, it can be said

that South Africa deliberately moved away from the kind of status-seeking behaviour associated with the functions of the ‘global system leader’ role.

In the case of Ukraine, however, the eventual decision to denuclearise, formalised with the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, was shaped by a combination of economic concerns, security issues, and the desire to be recognised as a responsible member of the international community and a part of the Western community (Budjeryn, 2015; Gak, 2004; Long & Grillot, 2000). Moreover, Ukrainian officials recognised that clinging to a global leadership role through nuclear possession could isolate the country diplomatically. The MFA of Ukraine explicitly noted that nuclear possession would render Ukraine a pariah state, damaging diplomatic relations and hindering international recognition (MFA of Ukraine, 1993). This institutional framing indicates that Ukrainian decision-makers possibly rejected the ‘global system leader’ role.

Kazakhstan did not associate itself with any global leadership-oriented role linked to nuclear capacity. Despite inheriting one of the world’s largest nuclear arsenals, the literature does not note a link between global leadership behaviour and Kazakhstan regarding nuclear matters.

Belarus also did not express ambitions related to being a global system leader. As stated in the literature, Belarus remained closely aligned with Moscow, citing historical, linguistic, and economic ties as central to their identity (Budjeryn, 2022; Burant, 1995). The foreign policy orientation of Belarus was largely reactive and integrationist vis-à-vis Russia, as demonstrated by its early acceptance of transferring all tactical nuclear weapons on its territory without any conditions or compensation (Budjeryn, 2022). Instead of seeking leadership at the global systemic level, their

stance on nuclear matters reflects an orientation that is inconsistent with the expectations associated with the ‘global system leader’ role.

A total of 18 documents were examined across the four cases to assess the presence or absence of the ‘global system leader’ role conception. Five official documents for each of the cases of South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and three for Belarus were analysed. These documents contained a cumulative total of 54 relevant role instances: 23 from South Africa, 12 from Ukraine, 15 from Kazakhstan, and 4 from Belarus.

Indeed, three of the four countries studied, South Africa, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, did not express this role in any of the analysed documents. Their policy rhetoric aligns more closely with other role conceptions that are examined within this study, rather than the assertion of global leadership. This absence underscores the theoretical expectation that states giving up nuclear arms do so in a way that departs from status-seeking or order-shaping ambitions on a global scale. Therefore, it can be said that across this dataset, the pattern mainly supports the hypothesis of this study, that the ‘global system leader’ role conception is misaligned with the act of relinquishing nuclear weapons.

Ukraine, however, presents a subtle yet analytically significant exception. Kravchuk, in his speech at the World Economic Forum in 1993, expressed the following:

“Those obligations [the commitment by nuclear powers not to use nuclear or conventional weapons against Ukraine, not to exert economic pressure, and to respect its territorial integrity and borders] mainly reiterate generally recognised principles of international law enshrined in particular in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. But it

is important for us that they be confirmed in the context of Ukraine's future acquisition of the status of the non-nuclear weapons state. As discussion in the commission of the Supreme Rada show, until this matter is clarified a large number of deputies will not be ready for the START Treaty and the NPT to be submitted for ratification" (Kravchuk, 1993).

By relating these obligations directly to Ukraine's disarmament decision specifically, Kravchuk appears to position the country as a state that seeks to shape the terms of its disarmament in a way that reflects its own strategic priorities and national security concerns. In this framing, Ukraine's nuclear relinquishment becomes conditional not on the norms themselves but on how they are implemented and acknowledged in its specific case. This approach suggests an intent to influence the development of the international order, at least in the context of nuclear non-proliferation and post-Soviet security arrangements. Ukraine is not only complying with the universal framework of disarmament but also actively negotiating how that framework should apply to its specific case and, by extension, setting a precedent that could inform future cases. This situation within this context can be read as a modest attempt to assert agency in shaping the security environment.

4.6. Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings derived from the analysis of NRCs expressed in the nuclear disarmament decisions of South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus. By using content analysis, this study sought to examine whether and how states' NRCs align with their decision to relinquish nuclear weapons. The findings are discussed in relation to the hypotheses presented earlier in the study.

There were four identified NRCs relevant to disarmament: ‘example’, ‘global system collaborator’, ‘internal developer’, and ‘global system leader’. These roles were selected based on prior theoretical work by Chafetz et al. (1996), which suggested their relevance regarding disarmament or acquiring a nuclear arsenal. As the coding of the statements indicates, while not all of the countries expressed all three disarmament-supportive roles simultaneously, each expressed at least one of them in notable frequency. This situation can be interpreted as these roles accounting for different motivations underpinning denuclearisation.

To visualise the patterns, the bar chart below illustrates the percentage distribution of NRCs expressed in the case of South Africa:

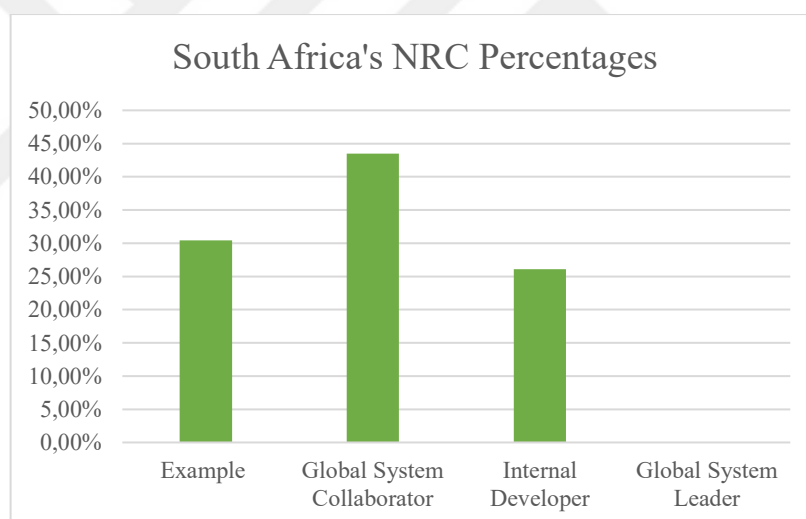


Figure 1: Percentages of NRCs expressed in the case of South Africa

In the case of South Africa, the most frequently expressed role conception was ‘global system collaborator’, which appeared in 10 of 23 instances (43.4%). This role conception was followed by ‘example’ (30.4%) and ‘internal developer’ (26.0%) conceptions. The findings suggest that South Africa’s disarmament process may have been influenced, at least in part, by an emerging self-perception as a cooperative

international actor, which is also connected with a desire to re-engage with the global community in the aftermath of apartheid.

Ukraine, by contrast, demonstrated a significantly different pattern:

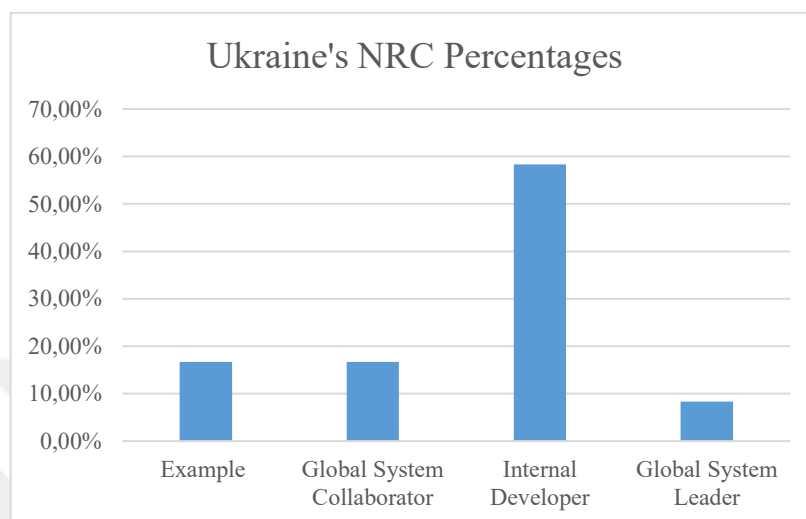


Figure 2: Percentages of NRCs expressed in the case of Ukraine

For Ukraine, 'internal developer' was the most prevalent role, appearing in 7 out of 12 instances (58.3%). Both 'example' and 'global system collaborator' role conceptions were expressed far less frequently (each at 16.6%). Ukraine's framing of denuclearisation was thus largely internally focused, consistent with its fragile economy and need for external assistance.

Kazakhstan, on the other hand, displayed the most prominent expression of the 'example' role conception:

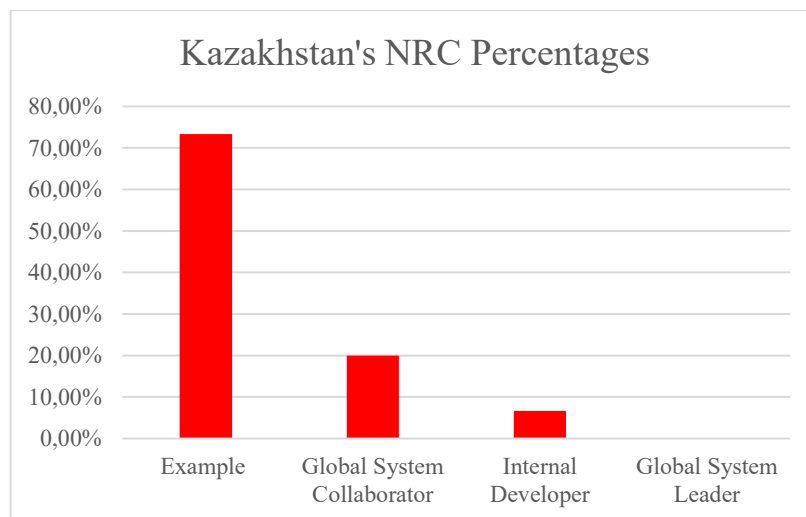


Figure 3: Percentages of NRCs expressed in the case of Kazakhstan

Of the 15 total role references, 11 (73.3%) were expressions of the ‘example’ role, followed by ‘global system collaborator’ (20%) and ‘internal developer’ (6.6%). This situation positions Kazakhstan as the state most concerned with being an example in the global non-proliferation regime. Nazarbayev’s statements about the Semipalatinsk test site consistently reflect this emphasis.

Lastly, Belarus displayed the most minimal engagement with the role conceptions examined:

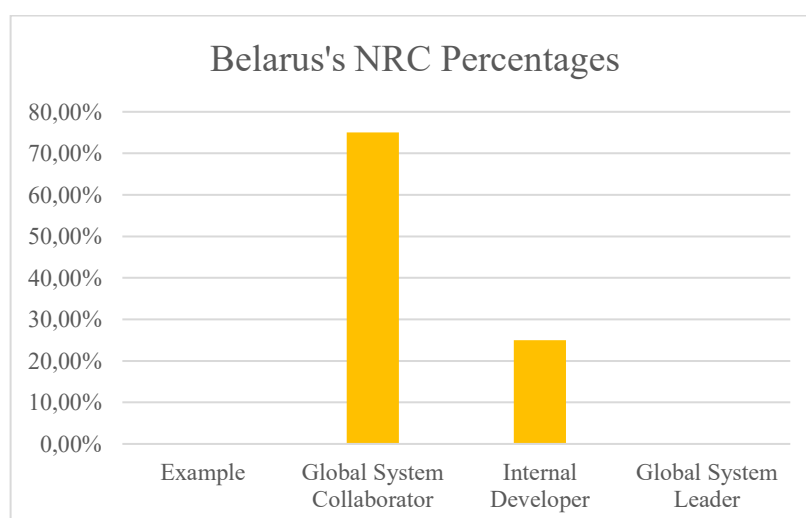


Figure 4: Percentages of NRCs expressed in the case of Belarus

Only 4 expressions were identified, 3 of which referenced ‘global system collaborator’ (75%) and one ‘internal developer’ (25%). Notably, the ‘example’ role was not expressed at all. This limited engagement with NRCs is significant in itself and aligns with Belarus’s policy of non-confrontation and reliance on Russia.

Regarding the evaluation of the hypotheses with the analysis, the data supports Hypothesis 1a (States that express the national role conceptions of ‘example’, ‘global system collaborator’, or ‘internal developer’ are more likely to lean towards nuclear disarmament). Across the four cases, NRCs relevant to disarmament (‘example’, ‘global system collaborator’, ‘internal developer’) were expressed by each country in varying combinations. Although not all of the states expressed all three roles, each expressed at least one. Therefore, it can be said that these roles help conceptualise motivations for relinquishing the nuclear arsenal.

Regarding Hypothesis 1b (States that express the ‘example’ role are more likely to relinquish nuclear weapons), it is partly supported. South Africa and Kazakhstan, both of which emphasised the ‘example’ role, appeared to approach disarmament in ways that reflected an effort to reshape how they were perceived internationally and a willingness to take initiative on global security issues. However, Ukraine and Belarus expressed this role infrequently or not at all. Therefore, it can be said that there is partial support for this hypothesis.

Moving to Hypothesis 1c (States that express the ‘global system collaborator’ role are more likely to relinquish nuclear weapons), the analysis supports this claim more consistently. South Africa, Kazakhstan, and Belarus expressed this role in a manner consistent with their behaviours in cooperating with the NPT and broader international non-proliferation norms. Ukraine also expressed this role, albeit

minimally. Thus, even limited references to this role conception appear consistent with adherence to collective international security frameworks.

For Hypothesis 1d (States that express the ‘internal developer’ role are more likely to relinquish nuclear weapons), this hypothesis also finds support, particularly in the cases of South Africa and Ukraine, where economic and domestic priorities were heavily emphasised. Ukraine’s dominant expression of the ‘internal developer’ role reinforces the importance of economic conditions in shaping its foreign policy decisions. Belarus and Kazakhstan, though less frequently, also expressed this role.

Therefore, it can be said that the data overall supports the idea that internal development concerns align with denuclearisation incentives.

Lastly, Hypothesis 2 (States that relinquished their nuclear weapons do not express the ‘global system leader’ role) is also supported. With the exception of one context-based reference in the Ukrainian case, none of the states expressed the ‘global system leader’ role. This absence is notable given that Chafetz et al. (1996) associated this role with illegal nuclear acquisition. The findings validate the assumption that aspiring to global leadership is incompatible with denuclearisation choices.

An important conclusion that emerged from the analysis is that NRCs often complement rather than substitute for one another. That is, states need not express all relevant NRCs to pursue denuclearisation; rather, each NRC frames the decision in a different light. For instance, where South Africa emphasised a willingness to work within international frameworks and norms (‘global system collaborator’), Kazakhstan focused more on setting a precedent through its actions (‘example’), and Ukraine underlined domestic needs and national development (‘internal developer’). This diversity illustrates how disarmament can be studied through different role frames shaped by domestic and international contexts.

Moreover, this explanation also helps to mitigate the theoretical challenge of explaining similar policy outcomes, which is denuclearisation, in this case, across states with different motivations. While each state articulated a different variety regarding the frequency of role conceptions, the common denominator is that each adopted at least one NRC associated with disarmament. This situation supports the general validity of NRCs in explaining foreign policy behaviour.

Also, the findings are also important regarding the relationship between the number of role conceptions and the engagement with the world order. Holsti (1970) suggested that the number of role conceptions a state expresses can be an indicator of its activity in the international system. This hypothesis aligns with the case of Belarus, which expressed the fewest NRCs, and the literature emphasises that getting Belarus to denuclearise was an easy task as they did not even see the nuclear arsenal on their territory as theirs (Budjeryn, 2022; Paznyak, 1995a), which can be evaluated as a passive standing regarding nuclear policies.

Regarding the limitations of this study, firstly, the limited number of speeches, letters, and interviews available, especially in the case of Belarus, poses a limitation. The total number of relevant documents remains modest, which may restrict the ability to capture the full range of role expressions that may have influenced the disarmament process. Moreover, this study examines four NRCs. Future research could broaden the scope by incorporating other roles, including roles less directly associated with non-proliferation, to explore their indirect influence.

In conclusion, when taken together, the four NRCs examined in this study offer a holistic understanding of how ideational motivations can help explain why states give up their nuclear weapons. Moreover, the study affirms that even in strategic decisions such as nuclear disarmament, the self-perception of state leaders matters.

CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSION

The question of nuclear weapons has long occupied a central place in the international relations field. Nuclear proliferation, often viewed as one of the most serious challenges to global security, has been the focus of scholarly attention.

Understanding the motivations behind nuclear de-proliferation is important, especially for concerns regarding the global non-proliferation regime. The NPT has been successful in limiting the spread of nuclear weapons, with its hallmark being the states giving up their nuclear arsenal. Cases of South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, where states either dismantled or relinquished their nuclear weapons, offer opportunities to examine the conditions under which disarmament becomes possible.

This thesis sought to contribute to that issue by introducing a different perspective, building on Chafetz et al.'s (1996) work. Drawing on role theory, the study explored

how leaders' visions of their countries' place and function in the international system, manifested through NRCs, can serve as a framework for understanding foreign policy choices related to nuclear policies. In this sense, this study aimed to highlight how identity narratives could facilitate a preference for disarmament alongside material factors.

The analysis of South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus highlighted the importance of NRCs in their decision to relinquish nuclear weapons. Although each case had unique historical and political contexts, a common thread across them was the articulation of a self-image that made possessing nuclear weapons incompatible with the desired national identity. In other words, the leaders of these states framed nuclear disarmament not only as a response to external pressures but also as an affirmation of their country's perceived role as a responsible, cooperative member of the international community.

While this thesis focused on ideational explanations through the lens of NRCs, it does not claim that material factors such as security considerations or economic concerns were irrelevant. These explanations have been central to much of the existing literature on nuclear disarmament, as material factors shape the environment in which decisions were made. However, material conditions alone do not account for how states framed the narrative and responded to their environment. For instance, post-Soviet countries faced economic concerns. Yet, their leaders framed disarmament not only as a financial measure but also as a reflection of their country's commitment to international norms. Similarly, South Africa dismantled its nuclear program when its security environment had improved, but this was also tied to a broader redefinition of its international image during political transition. These cases suggest that the decision to disarm cannot be fully understood without

examining how leaders interpreted material conditions through the roles they saw their state playing in the international arena. In this sense, role conceptions help explain why disarmament was not only accepted but actively pursued and framed as consistent with national identity.

South Africa's decision to dismantle its nuclear arsenal was intertwined with the broader aim of political transformation and international re-integration following the end of apartheid. Under Presidents Kravchuk and Kuchma, Ukraine's leadership portrayed denuclearisation within the context of internal development and economic assistance, which is fostered by the fragile economic situation of the country.

Kazakhstan's narrative drew heavily on the legacy of nuclear testing at the Semipalatinsk test site, framing the country as a pioneer of a nuclear-free world and seeking to be an example to other states by voluntarily giving up its inherited arsenal and closing the test site. While somewhat passive in its political stand, Belarus expressed being a collaborator of the global system of non-proliferation, emphasising close ties with Russia and a shared commitment to nuclear disarmament as a part of a broader affirmation of international norms.

These cases show that disarmament decisions were embedded in identity perceptions, tied to how leaders wanted their countries to be perceived both domestically and internationally. This situation suggests that normative and ideational factors are embedded in the making of foreign policy decisions.

This thesis aimed to make several contributions to the existing literature and provide insights. First, it aimed to contribute to the role theory literature by applying the role theory framework to the relatively understudied phenomenon of nuclear disarmament by demonstrating the utility of NRCs in providing an ideational perspective. It aimed to show how role theory can explain foreign policy decisions regarding nuclear

policies by connecting elite narratives to identity perceptions, and how certain role perceptions are inconsistent with the desire to become a nuclear weapon state.

Second, this study also aimed to contribute to the FPA literature by emphasising the importance of integrating individual-level analyses into security-related theoretical frameworks. While traditional international relations theories usually focus on structural or state-level factors, this thesis shows how individual-level factors shape state behaviour regarding the decisions related to security concerns. This study aimed to reveal how NRCs turn into foreign policy decisions by examining speeches, letters, and interviews and how perceptions of the elites can influence the decision-making process.

Third, this study also aimed to contribute to the international relations literature, especially about identity and norms. Nuclear proliferation is often studied through a materialist perspective that emphasises security and economic concerns. By integrating ideational factors into the analysis, this thesis argues for a broader understanding of security decisions by showing that norms, perceptions, and ideational narratives are embedded factors that shape important decisions, which enriches the understanding of nuclear politics.

This thesis also offers several insights in terms of policy implementations. The findings emphasise the value of taking into account how states perceive themselves and their roles within the international order when promoting global non-proliferation efforts. Global non-proliferation efforts might benefit from deeper engagement with the identity narratives of target states, rather than framing disarmament purely in terms of compliance or punishment.

While this thesis aimed to examine the individual level of nuclear disarmament, it also acknowledges its limitations. The availability of primary sources, particularly for Belarus, poses some challenges, and future research could benefit from broader access to archival materials. Moreover, while this study focused on specific role conceptions identified as most relevant to disarmament, other roles not examined here may also influence nuclear policy decisions and deserve further exploration.

Further research could also explore cases where nuclear programmes were halted before full weaponisation, such as Brazil, or where states maintain ambiguous nuclear capabilities. It would be valuable to investigate whether similar NRCs are present in those contexts as well and whether identity-based explanations can account for the reversal or ambiguity in nuclear trajectories.

In conclusion, this thesis has argued that NRCs play a significant role in shaping foreign policy decisions regarding nuclear weapons. In the cases of South Africa, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, the wish to be seen as responsible, cooperative actors and the concerns regarding internal development provided motivations for relinquishing nuclear arsenals. By highlighting the identity dimension of disarmament, this study aims to contribute to nuclear studies by providing an understanding that goes beyond merely material factors in order to consider how leaders perceive their place in the world. As global efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons continue, recognising the importance of identity and NRCs may offer new avenues for promoting disarmament and strengthening the norms that underpin international peace and security.

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APPENDIX

Below, the chart shows how the official documents used in this study were coded regarding national role conceptions. Each row represents a single document, such as a speech, letter, interview or press conference statement. This chart indicates how many times each of the four roles was expressed in that document. Alongside the coding, the table includes the date, the type of document, and where it was obtained. This clarification aims to help track patterns across countries and time and show how leaders communicated specific national roles regarding the disarmament process.

Name	Example	Global System Collaborator	Internal Developer	Global System Leader	Date	Source	Type
01. SouthAfrica	2	3	3	0	2.02.1990	F.W de Klerk Foundation	Speech
02. SouthAfrica	0	2	0	0	31.08.1990	Bush Presidential Library	Letter
03. SouthAfrica	2	2	0	0	21.10.1993	F.W de Klerk Foundation	Speech
04. SouthAfrica	1	2	2	0	24.03.1993	Wilson Center	Speech
05. South Africa	2	1	1	0	18.10.2013	F.W de Klerk Foundation	Speech
01. Ukraine	1	0	2	1	30.01.1993	Wilson Center	Press Release
02. Ukraine	0	1	1	0	1.12.1994	The American Presidency Project	Press Conference
03. Ukraine	0	0	2	0	4.03.1994	The White House Office of the Press Secretary	Press Conference
04. Ukraine	0	1	2	0	21.07.1994	Clinton Digital Library	Memorandum of Telephone Conversation
05. Ukraine	1	0	0	0	6.03.1998	The U.S. State Department	Press Conference
01. Kazakhstan	0	0	1	0	14.02.1994	The American Presidency Project	Press Conference
02. Kazakhstan	2	1	0	0	4.12.2006	NATO Online Library	Speech
03. Kazakhstan	4	1	0	0	29.08.2012	Official Website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan	Speech
04. Kazakhstan	2	1	0	0	25.03.2014	Official Website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan	Article
05. Kazakhstan	3	0	0	0	4.04.2016	UN Security Council	Letter
01. Belarus	0	1	1	0	2015	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty	Interview
02. Belarus	0	1	0	0	9.12.2016	Wilson Center	Interview
03. Belarus	0	1	0	0	23.09.2019	Arbeit an Europa	Interview

Table 1: Coding of the Official Documents