**Summary: Normative Drift and Treaty Fragility in the NPT**

This article reconceptualizes the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** not simply as a legal instrument, but as a **normative architecture**—a structure whose legitimacy depends on continuous alignment between treaty norms and member state identities, expectations, and behaviors. Drawing on **sociological institutionalism and norm theory**, Dr. Todd Robinson introduces a framework of **alignment, misalignment, and realignment** to analyze the NPT’s evolving fragility.

Initially, the NPT was sustained by a “**normative bargain**”: Non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) accepted their status in exchange for promises of disarmament, peaceful nuclear access, and security assurances. This alignment between the treaty’s *logic of appropriateness* and state behavior created stability. However, over time, especially since the 1995 indefinite extension, the treaty has experienced **normative drift**: nuclear weapon states (NWS) have failed to uphold disarmament obligations, while NNWS perceive growing inequities and betrayal of foundational promises.

Review Conferences (RevCons), intended as sites of adaptation, have instead become scenes of **dysfunction and contestation**. The 1975–2022 RevCon cycle reveals recurring failure to resolve structural asymmetries, growing discontent from the Global South, and the rise of **alternative regimes** like the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). While some moments (e.g., the 2000 “13 Practical Steps”) offered partial realignment, the broader trajectory has been one of **misalignment and stagnation**.

The article warns that persistent misalignment without reform may erode not only compliance and participation, but the **very legitimacy of the NPT itself**. The author suggests that the NPT now risks becoming a legally intact but normatively hollow shell, increasingly **bypassed by parallel instruments** and disconnected from contemporary security challenges. Realignment—if still possible—will require procedural reform, normative reimagination, and an honest reckoning with treaty asymmetries.