

UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR DISARMAMENT RESEARCH

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... IDEAS FOR PEACE AND SECURITY



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FOR PEACE  
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SECURITY



# The Disarmament Machinery

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The disarmament machinery  
is complex

Complex  $\neq$  Complicated

Complexity is due to  
interrelated components of  
a system = interdependency

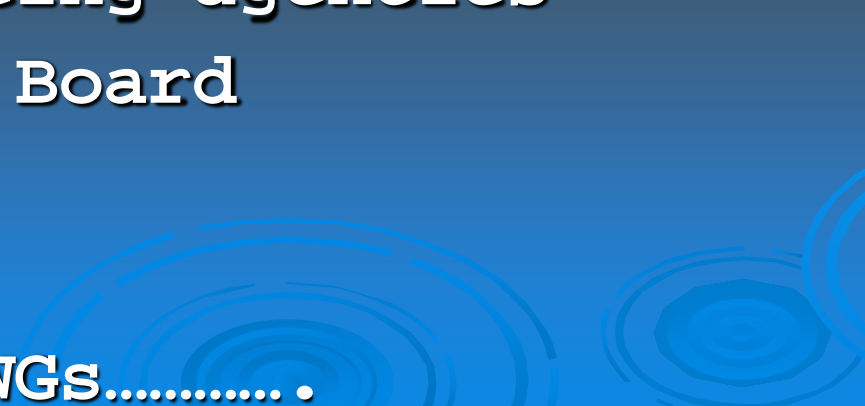


# Multiplicity of forums

- Multilateral
- Regional
- Plurilateral
- Bilateral
- Unilateral



# Multilateral Multiplicity

- Conference on Disarmament
  - Disarmament Commission
  - First Committee
  - Treaties, treaty conferences
  - Formal non-treaty bodies
  - Like-minded initiatives
  - Implementing agencies
  - Advisory Board
  - ODA
  - UNIDIR
  - GGEs, OEWGs.....•
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# Multiplicity of issues

- Nuclear weapons
- Biological weapons
- Chemical Weapons
- Conventional weapons
- Space weapons
- National security, regional security, human security, information security...



# The disarmament machinery = the disarmament system

- The reductionist approach of studying the parts of a machine independently in order to understand the whole is more than 400 years old.
- Instead we should be thinking of the Disarmament System: a combination of interrelated, interacting elements comprising a unified whole.

# Complexity Tipping Points

- Complex systems evolve naturally towards a critical state - known as self-organized criticality.
- The rational concept of determinism no longer holds in complex systems: cause and effect are not uniquely coupled.
- The key feature of complexity lies in interactions: many agents act collectively, completely new and unintuitive outcomes arise : called "emergence".

# Complexity Tipping Points

- Because of its high level of interconnectedness, a complex system is hypersensitive: even the smallest perturbations can have tremendous effects.
- A complex system can reach a critical point and massive change – a tipping point & where that occurs depends on the history of the system

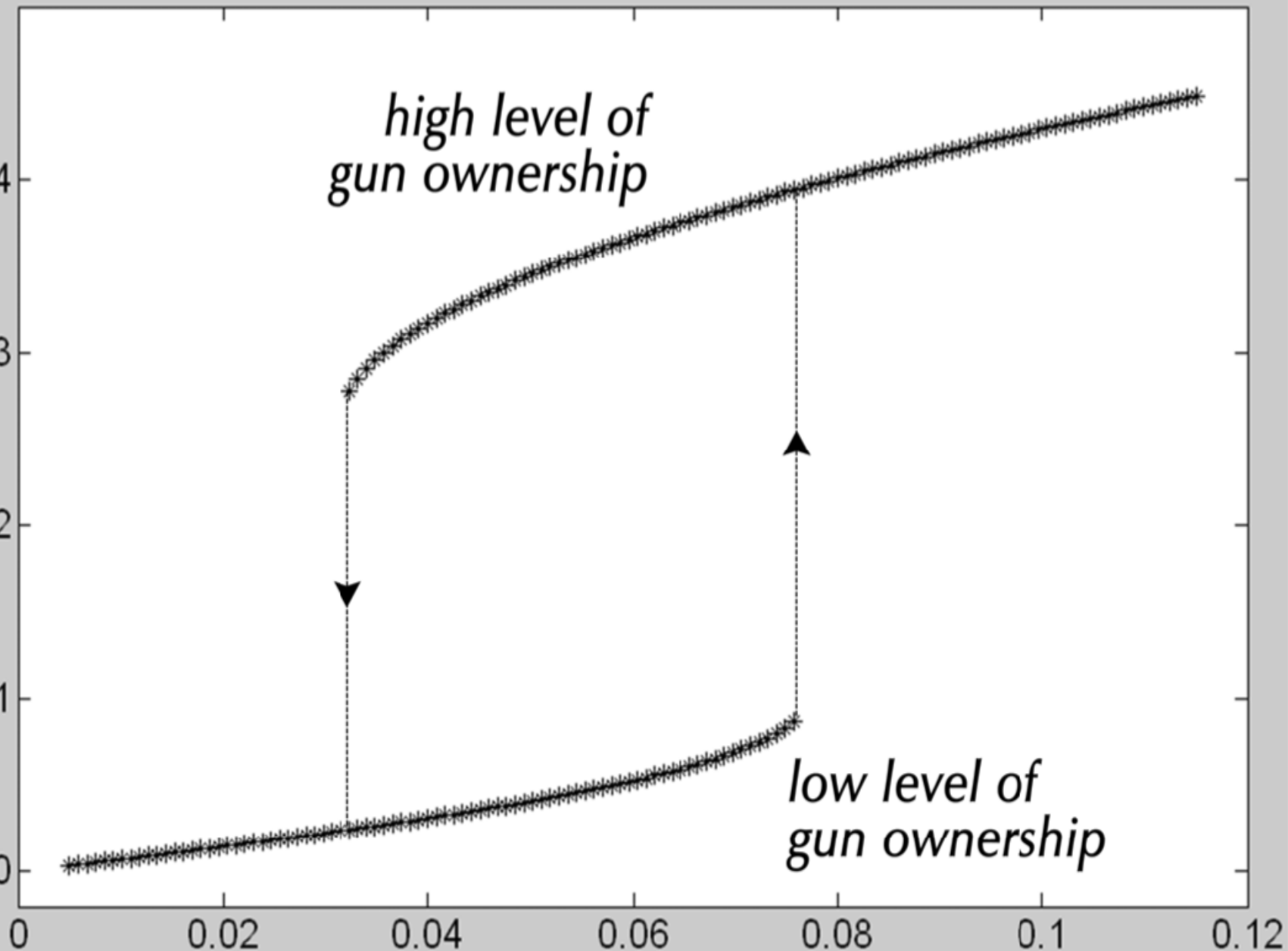




Proportion of gun owners

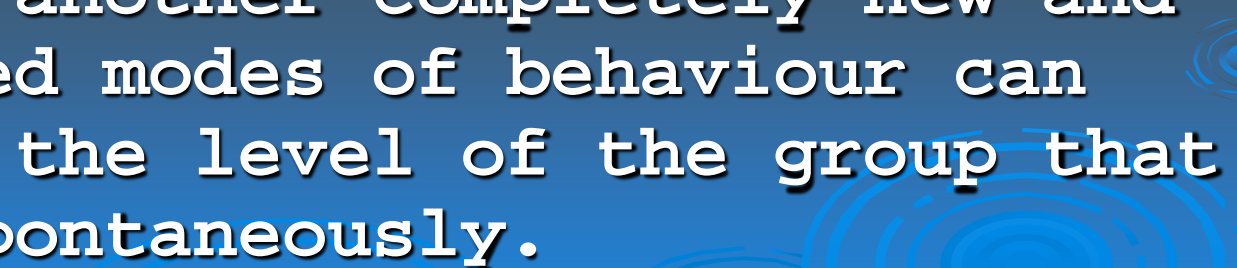
*high level of  
gun ownership*

*low level of  
gun ownership*



Level of insecurity

# Multilateral negotiations as a complex system

- Multilateral disarmament and arms control negotiations involve hundreds/thousands of people.
  - Multilateral negotiations are not singular events, but rather unfold over time and history matters.
  - When many individual agents interact with one another completely new and unexpected modes of behaviour can arise at the level of the group that emerge spontaneously.
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# Can we predict tipping points?

- Not an exact science
- There could be indicators we can identify
- Are we near a tipping point re nuclear disarmament?
- If so, is it a positive or negative tipping point?



"Predictions are risky -  
particularly about the  
future"



# The three laws of prediction (Arthur C. Clarke):

1. When a distinguished but elderly scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong.
2. The only way of discovering the limits of the possible is to venture a little way past them into the impossible.
3. Any sufficiently advanced technology\* is indistinguishable from magic.

\* *new disarmament machinery?*

# Three factors

- Three variables that determine whether and when the tipping point will be achieved\*.
- the Law of the Few
- the Stickiness Factor
- the Power of Context.

\* Malcolm Gladwell's three "rules of epidemics"

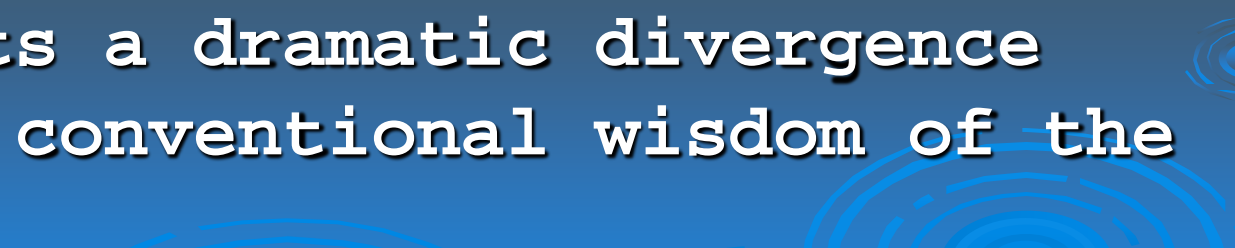


# The Law of the Few: Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen

- The path toward a tipping point needs small groups of individuals that can be classified as Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen.
- **Connectors** have ties in many different realms and act as conduits between them, helping to foster connections, relationships, and cross-fertilization.
- **Mavens** are trusted experts & help others to make informed decisions.
- **Salesmen** are extremely persuasive in influencing others' decisions and behaviors.



# Stickiness


- The stickiness factor is a unique quality that compels the idea to “stick” in the minds of people and influence their future behavior.
  - Stickiness is often counterintuitive or contradictory to the prevailing conventional wisdom and often represents a dramatic divergence from the conventional wisdom of the era.
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# Power of Context

- The environment into which an idea is introduced has to be right or a tipping point is unlikely.
- However, a few small but influential changes in the environment can create the conditions for a tipping point
- Groups of certain sizes and certain types can be uniquely conducive to achieving the tipping point
- E.g. certain demographic groups and of the size of the Magic Numbers – 28 and 150

# Creating the conditions

- Small changes in the environment
  - Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen
  - Work in small groups to develop ideas to bring to larger group
  - Do something new and unexpected
  - Venture a little way into the impossible to discover the extent of the possible
  - Discuss the disarmament system
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# How to discuss the disarmament system?

- SSOD 4 open ended working group:
- Chair registered support for a review of the structure, operation and methods fo work of the disarmament machinery, including further involvement of civil society and the engagement of public opinion

# Small key changes

- Furthering the work on follow-up and implementation of First Committee agreements and proposals
- Try new ways of doing business (eg P6 initiative in the CD.....)
- Holding a review of the disarmament machinery - if not SSOD4, how?