

# **Nuclear Arms Control Topic Report**

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June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026

## **Two-Page Summary Section**

### **History and Context for the Topic Area**

Nuclear arms control has been one of the central tools by which the United States has tried to manage the dangers of nuclear competition. The basic premise is not that arms control eliminates rivalry or makes adversaries trustworthy. Rather, arms control attempts to structure rivalry by creating limits, verification systems, notifications, and predictable channels of communication. During the Cold War and after, agreements such as the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, START, and New START helped define the boundaries of competition. They gave each side more information about the other side's forces, reduced incentives for worst-case planning, and created mechanisms for handling disputes before they escalated into crises.<sup>i</sup>

This history is important for debate because arms control is not merely a technical subject about weapons numbers. It is a way of asking what kind of competition the United States should accept with nuclear-armed adversaries. Some advocates argue that negotiated and verified agreements can reduce arms race pressures, preserve strategic stability, and prevent accidents. Skeptics argue that arms control can lock in bad assumptions, give adversaries opportunities to cheat, and constrain the United States now when Russia and China are expanding or diversifying their nuclear forces. That division provides the topic with a clear internal controversy, while still allowing students to study the broader history of international law, diplomacy, deterrence, and military strategy.

The contemporary moment makes that history newly relevant. New START entered into force in 2011 and limited the United States and Russia to 1,550 deployed strategic warheads, 700 deployed strategic missiles and bombers, and 800 deployed and non-deployed strategic missile launchers and bombers. The State Department describes New START as the central bilateral framework governing strategic offensive arms, while Brookings analyst Steven Pifer emphasized that the treaty's data exchanges, notifications, and inspections created transparency and helped the United States avoid worst-case assumptions about Russian strategic forces.<sup>iiii</sup>

The problem is that the old framework has eroded. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the collapse of the INF Treaty, Russia's suspension of New START implementation, and China's nuclear expansion all contribute to a post-Cold War arms control crisis. Brookings analysis of the Russia-Ukraine war describes the conflict as a major setback for arms control, both because of heightened nuclear risk and because it further damages the diplomatic conditions necessary for future agreements. The Council on Foreign Relations described New START's expiration on February 5, 2026, as the end of the last remaining treaty limiting U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear weapons. That fact alone makes the topic timely, but the deeper controversy is what should replace that framework, if anything.<sup>ivv</sup>

### **Current Policy, Legislation, and Pending Action**

The current policy landscape is defined by three overlapping pressures. First, the United States is entering a post-New START world in which there are no binding bilateral numerical limits on U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear forces. Second, the United States is modernizing its nuclear triad, nuclear command and control systems, and supporting infrastructure. Third, China's nuclear expansion complicates the traditional bilateral U.S.-Russia model of strategic arms control. These pressures make nuclear arms control an unusually rich topic because the controversy is not settled by simply choosing negotiation over deterrence, or deterrence over negotiation. The core debate is how to combine restraint, assurance, verification, and military preparedness in a world where nuclear competition is becoming more multipolar.

Cost is a major part of the current policy debate. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that current U.S. plans to operate, sustain, and modernize nuclear forces would cost \$946 billion over the 2025-2034 period, or about \$95 billion per year. That estimate gives affirmative teams a concrete domestic advantage: arms control can be framed as a way to avoid unconstrained modernization and arms-race

spending. It also gives negative teams a response: modernization may be the price of deterrence, alliance reassurance, and the political support required to make arms control possible.vi

The international environment is equally important. SIPRI's 2025 assessment warns that a dangerous new nuclear arms race is emerging at a time when arms control regimes are severely weakened. SIPRI estimates that at the start of 2025 there were approximately 12,241 nuclear weapons worldwide, including thousands deployed with operational forces and roughly 2,100 kept on high operational alert. These facts make the topic accessible to students and persuasive to judges: the controversy is not hypothetical, and the stakes are immediate.viiviii

Pending action is likely to involve proposals for post-New START restraint, renewed strategic stability dialogue, unilateral or reciprocal transparency measures, limits on upload potential, test-ban norms, and discussions about whether China can be brought into any future framework. Those debates are unlikely to disappear before the 2027-2028 debate season. Even if a new negotiation begins, the topic remains durable because students can debate the design of the agreement: what it limits, whom it includes, how it verifies compliance, what enforcement looks like, and whether binding rules are preferable to unilateral or non-binding measures.

### **Proposed Resolutions in Rank Order**

The United States federal government should negotiate legally binding international nuclear arms control.

The United States federal government should pursue binding international nuclear arms control.

The United States federal government should negotiate and implement binding international nuclear arms control.

The United States federal government should restrict its nuclear forces through one or more international nuclear arms control agreements.

The United States federal government should substantially increase its participation in binding international nuclear arms control.

## **Wording Discussion**

My preferred wording is: “The United States federal government should negotiate legally binding international nuclear arms control.” This wording is strong because it clearly centers the topic on the controversy that matters: whether the United States should attempt to create binding international limits on nuclear weapons. “Negotiate” is preferable to broader verbs like “pursue” because it points toward an official diplomatic process without necessarily requiring the affirmative to fiat full ratification by other states. It keeps the topic focused on arms control rather than unilateral reductions, general diplomacy, or vague statements of policy preference.

“Legally binding” is essential. Without that phrase, the topic risks becoming too broad and too soft. Affirmatives could claim topicality for speeches, talks, working groups, hotlines, voluntary transparency measures, or symbolic confidence-building measures that do not require an actual arms control commitment. Those cases may be educational in limited doses, but they avoid the central negative ground: treaty verification, compliance, ratification, enforcement, and constraints on U.S. flexibility. “Legally binding” also gives negative teams predictable counterplans: unilateral action and non-binding diplomacy.

“International” is also important because the topic should not become a domestic nuclear posture topic. A topic about unilateral U.S. nuclear reductions would be good in some ways, but it would not produce the same debates about reciprocity, verification, adversary compliance, and diplomatic design. “International” makes clear that the affirmative must engage at least one other state or international legal framework.

“Nuclear arms control” is preferable to more precise phrases like “strategic nuclear arms reductions” because it allows sufficient breadth for a full season. The topic should include reductions, transparency, verification, testing, non-strategic weapons, and emerging systems. At the same time, “nuclear arms control” is more predictable than “nuclear weapons policy,” because it points toward limits, rules, and agreements rather than any policy touching nuclear weapons.

### **Ranking Rationale**

The first resolution is best because it creates the cleanest division between affirmative and negative ground. It requires an official diplomatic process, limits the topic to binding international commitments, and excludes purely unilateral or symbolic measures. The second resolution, using “pursue,” may be more flexible but also risks making the affirmative too process-based. The third resolution, “negotiate and implement,” has desirable finality but may create fiat problems because implementation of an international agreement depends on other actors. The fourth resolution uses a familiar “restrict” stem and may be easier for students to recognize, but it narrows the topic toward force limits and away from verification or testing. The fifth resolution is the broadest and least preferred because “increase participation” may include too many soft diplomatic activities.

## **Affirmative Case Areas**

Affirmative teams would defend concrete efforts by the United States federal government to negotiate, pursue, or implement binding international constraints on nuclear weapons. The most predictable cases would include a successor to New START, renewed verification and transparency commitments, limits on deployed strategic warheads and launchers, agreements covering reserve warheads or non-strategic nuclear weapons, China-inclusive or multilateral negotiations, test-ban commitments, and issue-specific limits on destabilizing systems. These cases are accessible because the basic affirmative story is intuitive: nuclear weapons are uniquely catastrophic, arms racing is expensive and dangerous, and verifiable limits can reduce uncertainty, slow worst-case planning, and preserve information channels. Advanced teams would still have room to debate treaty design, verification procedures, counting rules, upload potential, and the relationship between arms control and deterrence.

The best affirmative ground is unified by a simple mechanism: the United States uses binding international nuclear arms control to reduce risk, increase predictability, and limit dangerous arms racing. The topic should encourage affirmatives that are concrete enough for negative preparation but broad enough to support a full year of debate. The following case areas would likely define the topic.

### **1. New START Successor Treaty**

The most predictable affirmative would negotiate a successor agreement to New START. A sample plan text could read: The United States federal government should negotiate and enter into a legally binding international agreement with the Russian Federation that limits deployed strategic nuclear warheads, deployed strategic delivery vehicles, and deployed and non-deployed strategic launchers. This case would likely claim that strategic limits reduce upload incentives, preserve intelligence insight, and prevent a bilateral arms race after New START's expiration. A novice version could simply restore numerical limits and verification. A varsity version could debate more precise counting rules, launcher conversion, telemetry, or reserve warhead transparency.

This affirmative has excellent advocates. Arms control supporters argue that negotiated, verified agreements reduce uncertainty and make nuclear competition more predictable. The CFR post-New START analysis emphasizes that New START provided predictability and that its expiration creates risks of miscalculation and arms racing. Brookings analysis likewise emphasizes that data exchanges, notifications, and inspections are valuable because they reduce worst-case planning. [[EN2]][[EN7]]

### **2. Inspections and Transparency Agreement**

A second affirmative could focus less on numerical reductions and more on restoring transparency. A sample plan text could read: The United States federal government should negotiate a legally binding international nuclear arms control agreement requiring reciprocal data exchanges, notifications, and on-site inspections of strategic nuclear forces. This case is especially useful for novices because it avoids difficult debates over exact force levels while preserving the core topic controversy: whether transparency and verification reduce nuclear risks.

The advantage is that insight itself can be stabilizing. When states lack reliable information, they may plan against worst-case estimates. An inspections affirmative could argue that the plan reduces arms-race pressures by improving confidence in adversary force structure, lowering the need for hedging, and keeping crisis decision-makers from assuming the worst. The negative would still have strong ground: verification critics can argue that inspections are incomplete, that adversaries can exploit gaps, and that weak verification creates a false sense of security.

### **3. Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons Limits**

A third affirmative could address non-strategic or tactical nuclear weapons, which were not covered by New START. A sample plan text could read: The United States federal government should negotiate a

legally binding international nuclear arms control agreement with the Russian Federation that limits and verifies non-strategic nuclear weapons. This case would likely argue that non-strategic weapons are destabilizing because they may lower the threshold for nuclear use, complicate NATO-Russia crises, and create ambiguity between conventional and nuclear escalation.

This case area is more advanced because verification is difficult: many non-strategic nuclear weapons are not continuously deployed on launchers in the same way as strategic weapons. That difficulty is a feature rather than a flaw for debate. It forces teams to research warhead storage, chain of custody, declarations, inspections, and whether verified limits can apply to weapons that are not easily counted from satellites.

#### **4. China-Inclusive or Multilateral Arms Control**

A fourth affirmative could attempt to move beyond the bilateral U.S.-Russia model. A sample plan text could read: The United States federal government should negotiate a legally binding international nuclear arms control agreement among the United States, Russia, and China that requires nuclear force transparency and limits deployed strategic nuclear forces. This case would claim that a tripolar environment requires new arms control architecture because bilateral limits are less effective if China is unconstrained.

This case is likely attractive to advanced teams. It allows the affirmative to engage China's nuclear buildup, strategic stability in Asia, and alliance assurance in Northeast Asia. The negative would argue that China is unlikely to accept limits while its arsenal remains smaller than those of the United States and Russia, that negotiations would fail, or that the United States should prioritize deterrence and allied reassurance rather than give China leverage over U.S. force posture. The debate would be difficult but educational because it tests whether arms control can adapt to a multipolar nuclear order.<sup>ix</sup>

#### **5. Comprehensive Test Ban / Nuclear Testing Limits**

A fifth affirmative could focus on legally binding limits on nuclear explosive testing. A sample plan text could read: The United States federal government should ratify and implement the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Another version could negotiate a binding agreement with other nuclear-armed states not to conduct nuclear explosive tests. The advantage is that test bans can slow qualitative arms racing, strengthen nonproliferation norms, and reduce incentives for new nuclear weapons development.

This case is accessible because students can understand the core controversy quickly: testing helps states develop or validate new nuclear capabilities, while test bans try to make arms racing harder. The negative would retain good ground by arguing that test bans are unverifiable, that the United States may need to test to maintain reliability, or that adversaries could gain advantages through cheating or low-yield experiments. Because the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty remains a recognizable treaty with a substantial public literature base, this would also make a strong novice affirmative.<sup>xxi</sup>

#### **6. Strategic Stability Limits**

A final affirmative category would focus on new systems that complicate strategic stability. A sample plan text could read: The United States federal government should negotiate a legally binding international nuclear arms control agreement limiting nuclear-armed hypersonic delivery systems and related strategic delivery platforms. Other variants could address nuclear command-and-control interference, missile defense interactions, or systems not captured by Cold War counting rules. This category would be harder for novices but valuable for varsity debate because it directly tests whether arms control can adapt to technological change.

The affirmative advantage is that new technologies can shorten decision times, create ambiguity, and undermine confidence in second-strike capabilities. Rose Gottemoeller's work on rethinking arms control and James Acton's work on strategic stability provide useful starting points for these debates because both emphasize that arms control must be designed around the conditions that make crises more or less stable. The negative would argue that definitions are unstable, verification is nearly impossible, and arms

control formulas designed for older delivery systems cannot keep pace with cyber, space, hypersonic, and dual-use technologies. These debates would reward detailed research and prevent the topic from becoming repetitive.<sup>xii, xiii</sup>

## **Negative Strategies**

Negative teams would have a strong and diverse set of arguments. The most predictable negative positions include a unilateral reductions counterplan, a non-binding negotiations or confidence-building counterplan, a modernization counterplan, a diplomatic capital disadvantage, a deterrence and assurance disadvantage, a verification skepticism disadvantage, and arguments that binding arms control is poorly matched to a multipolar nuclear environment. Negative teams could argue that the United States should retain flexibility because Russia has suspended or violated key agreements, China is rapidly expanding its arsenal, and legally binding constraints may limit the United States more than its adversaries. Critical negative strategies could also argue that arms control legitimates nuclear possession, substitutes managerial reform for disarmament, or reproduces a technocratic security framework that leaves nuclear violence intact.

The negative ground is strong because nearly every affirmative mechanism invites a direct objection. The negative does not have to deny that nuclear risk matters; instead, it can argue that binding arms control is the wrong tool for reducing that risk under current conditions. The most predictable negative strategies are described below.

### **1. Unilateral Reductions Counterplan**

The unilateral counterplan should be one of the core negative positions. It would have the United States reduce, restructure, or declare limits on its own nuclear forces without negotiating a binding international agreement. The counterplan competes with the affirmative because the resolution should require international arms control; unilateral restraint avoids treaty negotiation, ratification, and verification disputes. It solves many affirmative advantages based on cost, nuclear risk, and moral leadership, while avoiding disadvantages based on adversary cheating or diplomatic failure.

This counterplan creates a high burden for the affirmative. The affirmative must explain why binding international reciprocity is necessary, rather than simply reducing U.S. forces or adopting a declaratory restraint posture. That debate is good for students because it distinguishes unilateral disarmament, reciprocal restraint, and treaty-based arms control rather than collapsing them into one generic anti-nuclear position.

### **2. Non-Binding Negotiations / Confidence-Building Counterplan**

A second core counterplan would pursue non-binding negotiations, strategic stability talks, hotlines, transparency measures, or political commitments instead of legally binding arms control. This counterplan is especially strong against affirmatives whose advantages are based on communication, predictability, and avoiding miscalculation. The negative can argue that flexible, non-binding arrangements are easier to secure, easier to update, and less vulnerable to Senate ratification or treaty withdrawal politics.

The affirmative answer is that non-binding arrangements are too easy to abandon and do not create the same compliance expectations as binding agreements. That produces an excellent debate over the meaning of commitment. Are binding treaties valuable because violations become legally and diplomatically costly? Or are they dangerous because they create brittle commitments that adversaries can exploit and domestic politics can destroy?

### **3. Deterrence and Assurance Disadvantages**

The most important generic disadvantage is deterrence and assurance. The negative can argue that binding nuclear limits reduce U.S. flexibility at the exact moment when Russia is aggressive, China is expanding, and allies depend on U.S. extended deterrence. Against a strategic reductions affirmative, the link is straightforward: fewer deployed systems, weaker upload potential, or limits on new capabilities

could make adversaries doubt U.S. resolve or make allies fear abandonment. Against a test-ban or verification affirmative, the negative can argue that the plan signals restraint while adversaries modernize.

This disadvantage is not just generic impact inflation. It links to the actual controversy over arms control design. The negative can ask whether binding limits are prudent when the United States faces two major nuclear competitors, whether allies in Europe and Asia would accept new constraints, and whether future presidents would have enough flexibility in a crisis. The affirmative can respond that arms control strengthens deterrence by reducing uncertainty and avoiding arms races, making the debate balanced and evidence-driven.

#### **4. Verification Skepticism Disadvantage, the “cheating” dilemma**

Verification skepticism will be a major negative literature base. The negative can argue that treaties are only as good as their verification systems, and that modern nuclear systems are difficult to count, inspect, or monitor. Heritage Foundation analyst Paula DeSutter argues that New START’s verification regime was weaker than the original START and warned that weak verification can provide a false sense of security while limiting the United States more than its adversaries.<sup>xiv</sup>

This disadvantage applies to nearly every affirmative. New START successor cases must defend inspections and data exchanges. Tactical nuclear weapons cases must explain how to verify warheads that may not be deployed on launchers. China-inclusive cases must explain how to verify a state with a different nuclear posture and far less history of treaty transparency. Emerging technology cases must define and count systems that may be dual-use, mobile, or difficult to distinguish from conventional weapons.

#### **5. Modernization Tradeoff / Horse-Trading Disadvantage**

Another likely negative strategy is that successful arms control requires political tradeoffs that increase modernization. Historically, presidents have often had to reassure military leaders, allies, and senators that arms control will not weaken deterrence. The negative could argue that pursuing or ratifying a treaty requires spending on nuclear modernization, missile defense, conventional precision strike, or command-and-control upgrades. The plan therefore trades arms control for military programs that increase arms-race pressures or undermine the affirmative’s advantage.

This disadvantage is particularly useful because it is not merely politics. It tests the conditions under which arms control becomes domestically possible. If the affirmative says binding arms control is realistic, the negative can ask what the president must give up to make it realistic. If the affirmative says the plan can be adopted without modernization concessions, the negative can argue that the plan is politically infeasible.

#### **6. Diplomatic Capital / Negotiation Tradeoff Disadvantage**

A diplomatic capital disadvantage would argue that arms control negotiations consume attention, leverage, and bargaining capital that should be used on more urgent priorities such as Ukraine, China crisis management, nonproliferation, alliance coordination, or conventional deterrence. Brookings analysis of contemporary arms control emphasizes that the arms control enterprise is weakened by treaty violations, withdrawals, terminated dialogues, and a difficult security landscape.<sup>xv</sup>

This argument links especially well to broad wordings such as “pursue,” because the affirmative may not even guarantee an agreement. The negative can argue that pursuit itself is costly: it signals concession, creates expectations, diverts diplomats, and gives adversaries opportunities to stall while continuing modernization. The affirmative response is that arms control is not a distraction from nuclear danger; it is one of the few policy tools that directly addresses it.

## **7. Disarmament / Arms Control Critique**

Critical negative teams could argue that arms control manages nuclear domination rather than challenging it. From this perspective, arms control legitimates the possession of nuclear weapons by major powers, treats nuclear risk as a technical problem for experts, and marginalizes more transformative demands for abolition or disarmament. This critique would link to affirmatives that preserve deterrence while only making arsenals more predictable.

The affirmative would have several answers. It could argue that arms control is a material harm-reduction strategy, that abolition is not politically available in the short term, and that verification and transparency are necessary steps toward deeper reductions. The debate would be educational because it forces students to compare reformist and abolitionist approaches to nuclear danger rather than assuming all anti-nuclear strategies are the same.

### **Debatability and Balance**

The topic is balanced because the central controversy is not whether nuclear weapons are dangerous; both sides agree that they are. The debate is over whether binding international arms control is the best way to reduce that danger. Affirmatives can defend a security-oriented reform that directly targets nuclear risks, while negatives can challenge the mechanism through deterrence, verification, compliance, alliance, and political-process arguments. That creates unusually clean clash. The affirmative has powerful advantages because even small reductions in nuclear risk can be framed as existentially important. The negative has equally durable ground because arms control is difficult to negotiate, verify, ratify, and sustain in the current strategic environment. The topic also avoids the common problem of artificial nuclear impacts on unrelated topics: students would debate nuclear weapons directly, rather than tacking nuclear war scenarios onto unrelated domestic policies.

## **Ballot Synopsis**

Nuclear arms control is an urgent and durable topic for high school debate. The expiration of New START ended the last remaining bilateral treaty limiting U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear forces, while Russia, China, and the United States are modernizing their arsenals and arms control institutions are weakening. The topic asks students to debate whether the United States should pursue binding international limits on nuclear weapons. Affirmatives could advocate a New START successor, renewed inspections and data exchanges, strategic or non-strategic weapons limits, China-inclusive negotiations, test-ban commitments, or verification agreements. Negatives could argue that arms control is outdated, unverifiable, politically infeasible, harmful to deterrence, damaging to alliance assurance, or inferior to unilateral restraint and non-binding diplomacy. The topic is accessible to novices because the basic controversy is clear: treaties can reduce nuclear danger, but adversaries may cheat or refuse to cooperate. Should the US choose to bind itself to a treaty when it can't trust that other members will? That issue is simple, and perfectly reflects the core controversy in the literature. It is also deep enough for advanced debates about strategic stability, counting rules, verification technology, modernization, and multipolar competition. The result is a timely, educational, and balanced topic that gives students a direct way to debate one of the most important security questions in the world.

## **Application of the NFHS Criteria for Debate Topics**

### **Timeliness and Durability**

This topic is timely in a straightforward and compelling way. New START expired on February 5, 2026, ending the last remaining bilateral treaty limiting U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear forces. At the same time, SIPRI warns that a dangerous new nuclear arms race is emerging as arms control regimes are severely weakened. These developments will continue to generate government statements, think-tank reports, congressional hearings, and media coverage throughout the debate cycle.

The topic is also durable. Even if negotiations begin, the controversy will not disappear. Debaters can shift from whether talks should begin to what a treaty should include, how compliance should be verified, whether China should be included, how non-strategic weapons should be handled, and whether new technologies can be limited. Arms control debates have a moving fact pattern but a stable core controversy. That is exactly what a good topic needs: enough change to keep research fresh, but not so much volatility that the topic becomes obsolete.

### **Accessibility and Material**

Nuclear arms control is accessible to debaters of varying skill levels. Novices can understand the basic clash: treaties can limit nuclear weapons and reduce risk, but adversaries may cheat and deterrence may require flexibility. Students do not need graduate-level strategic theory to begin debating whether nuclear weapons should be limited by agreement. At the same time, the topic has enormous depth for advanced debaters, including upload potential, verification technology, telemetry, launcher conversion, warhead dismantlement, tactical nuclear weapons, and tripolar deterrence.

The material base is excellent. Students can find high-quality evidence from government agencies, SIPRI, Brookings, CFR, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Arms Control Association, the Heritage Foundation, Carnegie, FAS, and other accessible sources. The topic does not require exclusive reliance on paywalled academic databases. That matters for equity and novice participation.

### **Student Interest and Engagement**

Student interest should be high because nuclear weapons are inherently dramatic, morally serious, and politically salient. Students already encounter nuclear war scenarios in many policy debate contexts, but often through artificial internal link chains. This topic allows them to debate the weapons directly. It also connects to questions students care about: war prevention, the role of diplomacy, the cost of military spending, international law, climate and humanitarian consequences, and the possibility of existential catastrophe.

The topic is also audience-friendly. Judges and community members may not know the details of New START, but they understand why nuclear weapons matter. A novice debate about whether legally binding agreements reduce nuclear risk can be compelling without becoming simplistic, while a varsity debate can develop into sophisticated clash over verification, deterrence, and strategic stability.

### **Educational Quality**

The educational quality of the topic is high because it asks students to reason about uncertainty, risk, law, diplomacy, and power. Students will learn the difference between arms control, disarmament, nonproliferation, and deterrence. They will learn how treaties are designed, why verification matters, how international commitments can be enforced or evaded, and why domestic politics affects foreign policy. These are exactly the kinds of analytical and problem-solving skills that debate should cultivate.

The topic also avoids shallow consensus. Most people agree that nuclear war would be catastrophic, but they do not agree about what follows. Some believe that legally binding agreements are necessary to reduce the risk of use. Others believe that deterrence, modernization, and flexibility are more important in a dangerous world. That disagreement is substantive, evidence-rich, and educationally valuable.

## **Balance**

Balance is one of the topic's strongest features. The affirmative has access to powerful advantages: reducing nuclear use risk, preventing arms races, lowering costs, preserving transparency, strengthening nonproliferation norms, and creating stable crisis-management channels. These advantages are intuitive and supported by a deep literature defending negotiated, verified arms control.

The negative has equally strong ground. It can argue that arms control is unverifiable, outdated, strategically dangerous, politically costly, or inferior to unilateral and non-binding alternatives. It can defend deterrence, assurance, modernization, and flexibility. It can also critique arms control as a managerial framework that legitimates nuclear possession. The result is a topic where both sides have stable, predictable, and high-quality arguments.

## **Novice Packet Guidance**

A novice packet on this topic would be easy to conceptualize and should contain at least three affirmatives, one counterplan, one kritik, and two disadvantages. The three recommended novice affirmatives are: (1) a New START successor treaty affirmative, (2) a transparency and inspections affirmative, and (3) a nuclear testing limits affirmative. These cases are concrete, understandable, and supported by accessible evidence.

The recommended novice counterplan is the non-binding negotiations counterplan. It is easy to explain: instead of a legally binding treaty, the United States should pursue flexible confidence-building measures, hotlines, strategic stability talks, and reciprocal transparency. The recommended novice kritik is the arms control/disarmament kritik, which argues that arms control manages nuclear domination rather than abolishing it. The two recommended novice disadvantages are deterrence/assurance and verification skepticism.

## **Conclusion**

Nuclear arms control is an excellent candidate for a high school debate topic. It is timely because New START has expired and nuclear competition is intensifying. It is durable because the central controversy will persist even if negotiations begin. It is accessible because novices can understand the basic treaty-versus-deterrence debate. It is deep because advanced teams can research verification, strategic stability, China, Russia, testing, tactical weapons, and emerging technologies. Most importantly, it is balanced: both sides have strong evidence, predictable ground, and meaningful strategic choices. This topic would allow students to debate nuclear weapons directly, seriously, and educationally for a full season.

## **Pre-Evidence References / Bibliography**

### **Pro Arms Control Advocates**

**Amy J. Nelson. “Arms control needs a shot in the arm.” Brookings, Feb. 3, 2023.**

**<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/arms-control-needs-a-shot-in-the-arm/>**

**Quote:** The alternative, an arms control void derived from a wait-and-see posture, is risky and destabilizing. It further exacerbates arms control’s erosion. Now is the time for new ideas for arms control, and the more the administration can say about what comes next, the better.

**Citing Biden’s NPR:** “Mutual, verifiable nuclear arms control offers the most effective, durable and responsible path to reduce the role of nuclear weapons...”

**Steven Pifer. “New START at 7.” Brookings, Feb. 5, 2018. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/new-start-at-7/>**

**Quote:** “These data exchanges, notifications, and inspections provide a great deal of transparency and information regarding the other side’s strategic forces.”

**Erin D. Dumbacher. “Nukes Without Limits? A New Era After the End of New START.” Council on Foreign Relations, Feb. 9, 2026. <https://www.cfr.org/articles/nukes-without-limits-a-new-era-after-the-end-of-new-start>**

**Quote:** “...arms control agreements provide predictability and help the parties involved avoid dangerous and costly military buildups.”

**Annotation:** Strong for affirmatives arguing that arms control’s core value is predictability (crisis stability) and avoiding arms-race dynamics after treaty expiration.

**Matt Korda et al. “The Aftermath: The Expiration of New START and What It Means For Us All.” Federation of American Scientists, Feb. 5, 2026. <https://fas.org/publication/the-expiration-of-new-start/>**

**Quote:** “If the two sides cannot reach an agreement, we face a world of heightened nuclear competition fueled by worst-case planning and nuclear expansion, fewer transparency mechanisms, and deepening mistrust among nations with the world’s most powerful weapons.”

**“The End of New START: From limits to looming risks.” Nuclear Threat Initiative, Jan. 12, 2026. <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/the-end-of-new-start-from-limits-to-looming-risks/>**

**Quote:** “The loss of information-sharing measures... opens the door for worst-case scenario planning and misunderstandings that fuel uncontrolled arms races.”

### **Anti-Arms Control Advocates**

Searching “arms control” at the NIPP provides a great start for qualified negative articles:

**<https://nipp.org/?s=arms%20control>.**

**David J. Trachtenberg. “Why Arms Control Must Fail.” No. 627, June 12, 2025.**

**[https://nipp.org/information\\_series/david-j-trachtenberg-why-arms-control-must-fail-no-627-july-12-2025/](https://nipp.org/information_series/david-j-trachtenberg-why-arms-control-must-fail-no-627-july-12-2025/)**

**Quote:** “In international relations, creative diplomacy is often seen as the key to solving intractable problems. This applies to negotiations with adversaries; it is often assumed that international tensions and the risk of war, especially nuclear war, can be alleviated through arms control agreements. Though a noble sentiment, this view is naïve, unsupported by history, ignores contemporary realities, and is unlikely to produce the desired positive results.”

**Robert Peters. “Extending New START Treaty Not in National Interest.” The Heritage Foundation, Feb. 4, 2026. <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/commentary/extending-new-start-treaty-not-national-interest>**

**Quote:** “...U.S. should not sacrifice its ability to deter an expanding nuclear power that is a conventional peer of the U.S. (China) to maintain a bilateral treaty with a regional power (Russia), particularly given its repeated arms control treaty violations and its bringing of war to Europe.”

**Michaela Dodge. “New START Sunk by Old Problem – Russian Cheating.” The Heritage Foundation, May 29, 2019. <https://www.heritage.org/europe/commentary/new-start-sunk-old-problem-russian-cheating>**

**Quote:** “Russia has cheated on almost every arms control agreement it has ever signed.”

**Michaela Dodge and Keith B. Payne. “Putin’s New START Offer: We Won’t Get Fooled Again.” (Information Series No. 640). National Institute for Public Policy, Oct. 21, 2025. [https://nipp.org/information\\_series/michaela-dodge-and-keith-b-payne-putins-new-start-offer-we-wont-get-fooled-again-no-640-october-21-2025/](https://nipp.org/information_series/michaela-dodge-and-keith-b-payne-putins-new-start-offer-we-wont-get-fooled-again-no-640-october-21-2025/)**

**Quote:** “The practical reality of arms control... is that more often than not the process harms U.S. national security...”

**Rebecca L. Heinrichs. “Automatically Extending New START Will Not Increase Stability.” Hudson Institute, Feb. 27, 2020. <https://www.hudson.org/national-security-defense/automatically-extending-new-start-will-not-increase-stability>**

**Quote:** “Russia has exploited Cold War era arms control agreements to improve its military capabilities to better position Moscow to outmaneuver the United States and to threaten the viability of NATO.”

**Rebecca L. Heinrichs. “Extending New START Makes U.S. Nuclear Modernization Imperative.” Hudson Institute, Mar. 17, 2021. <https://www.hudson.org/national-security-defense/extending-new-start-makes-u-s-nuclear-modernization-imperative>**

**Quote:** “The New START extension does not equate to nuclear stability...”

## **DEFINITIONS**

## **Definitions---Negotiate---Reach Agreement**

### **Must arrive at a settlement**

**Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania 17** (Aetna Better Health of Pa., Inc. v. Commonwealth, No. 274 M.D. 2017, Lexis)

"Discussion" is defined as "consideration of a question in open usu. informal debate" and "argument for the sake of arriving at truth or clearing up difficulties." Webster's Third New International Dictionary 648 (1976). "Negotiation" is defined as "a business transaction" and the "action or process of negotiating or of being negotiated." Id. at 1514. In turn, "**negotiate**" is defined as "**to communicate or confer with another so as to arrive at the settlement of some matter**;" to "meet with another so as to arrive through discussion at some kind of **agreement or compromise about something**." Id. See also Black's Law Dictionary 1150 (10th ed. 2009) (defining "negotiation" as "[a] consensual bargaining process in which parties **attempt to reach agreement** on a disputed or potentially disputed matter" and "[d]ealings conducted between two or more parties for the purpose of reaching an understanding."). Finally, "clarification" is defined as "the act or process of clarifying." Id. at 415. In turn, "clarify" is defined as "to explain clearly," to "make understandable," or "to make less complex or less ambiguous." Id.

### **It requires actively seeking agreement**

**Lande 14**, Isidor Loeb Professor, Senior Fellow of the Center for the Study of Dispute Resolution and former director of the LLM Program in Dispute Resolution at the University of Missouri School of Law (John, "What is Negotiation?, Part 1," <http://indisputably.org/2014/10/what-is-negotiation/>)

Although sometimes it may be helpful to focus on processes that involve explicit disagreements or the other factors I just mentioned, ignoring interactions without such factors leads people to overlook much of lawyers' everyday work of seeking agreements. When we use overly narrow definitions, I think that our work isn't as helpful for practitioners and students as it should be. So, as a general definition of **negotiation**, I think that it is appropriate to use the broad, unqualified concept of **seeking agreement**.

### **Negotiations must be in pursuit of agreement**

**Court of Appeals of Indiana 11** (Coldwell Banker Roth Wehrly Graber v. Laub Bros. Oil Co., No. 02A05-1003-PL-134, Lexis)

"Negotiations" is defined generally as the act or process of negotiating. "**Negotiate**" is defined generally as to confer with another or others in order to come to terms or reach an agreement. "**Negotiation**" is also defined as a consensual bargaining process in which the parties **attempt to reach agreement** on a **disputed** or potentially disputed **matter** and dealings conducted between two or more parties for the purpose of reaching an understanding. The term "negotiation" within the meaning of a contractual provision to broker means efforts which so far interest a person that, at the expiration of the agency, the person may be considered a likely buyer, and it does not embrace the broker's mere offer to sell which is met with a prompt refusal and which has no effect on the subsequent sale. More like this Headnote

### **It must overcome obstacles**

McKinney 22, PhD in Educational Services and Leadership (Kellie, "LESS OF A BALANCING ACT AND MORE OF A JUGGLING ACT: HOW WOMEN WHO WORK IN STUDENT AFFAIRS AND HAVE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES NAVIGATE THEIR DUAL ROLES," Dissertation, <https://rdw.rowan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3989&context=etd>)

Negotiate is defined as finding a **way over or through** (an obstacle or difficult path). In this context, we are examining how a woman negotiates their family and work domains.



## Definitions---Negotiate---Thanks Ian

**Negotiation is a discussion aimed at achieving a common understanding or agreement that includes establishing mutual interests, codifying new norms in international law, or settling a dispute**

**Hakapaa 2013** - Professor of Public International Law, University of Lapland, Finland, former Chair in Finnish Studies

Kari Hakapää May 2013 "Negotiation" Max Planck Encyclopedia of International Law, Oxford Public International Law <https://opil.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e67///IB>

1 **Negotiation means discussions** at different levels of authority with a view **to achieving common understanding or agreement.** In international relations, there are three basic modes of negotiation to be distinguished: a) generally, negotiations to discuss issues **of mutual interest**, b) negotiation as a means **for the codification and progressive development of international law**, and c) negotiation as **a means for the settlement of disputes**. In the first category, States may discuss relevant aspects of their relations whether of a bilateral, regional, or global nature. Such modes of negotiation may be best addressed in their respective substantive or institutional context (for instance, negotiations within the European Union system (European Union, Historical Evolution)). In the second category, negotiation may, for instance, result in the conclusion of a new treaty or convention as between the parties involved. In the third category, negotiation may provide a solution to a dispute or it may appear as a precondition for the judicial settlement of international disputes. States may also have consultation[s], for instance, to establish contact for information sharing or to carry discussions of a preliminary or preparatory nature. In practice, consultations often come close to negotiations.

2 '[A] general, non-exhaustive frame of reference for negotiations' is offered by the UN General Assembly in its Resolution 53/101 of 8 December 1998 on Principles and Guidelines for International Negotiations (Preamble para. 10). In the resolution, the General Assembly bears in mind 'the important role that constructive and effective negotiations can play in attaining the purposes of the [UN] Charter by contributing to the management of international relations, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the creation of new international norms of conduct of States' (Preamble para. 8). The resolution, inter alia, underlines that negotiations 'should be conducted in good faith' (para. 2 (a)) as well as that 'States should endeavour to maintain a constructive atmosphere during negotiations and to refrain from any conduct which might undermine the negotiations and their progress' (para. 2 (e)).

3 Negotiation is a primary means for international cooperation (Co-operation, International Law of). In present day circumstances, negotiations may be conducted in numerous ways: by meeting of parties, by correspondence, by phone, by video conference, or by e-mail. At all levels, negotiation means human contact to settle issues of common interest. Mere **negotiation may not bind parties** to any particular result but may produce results the parties are willing to implement with binding legal effect. Through a treaty obligation, parties may be committed to enter negotiations before resorting to other means of settlement. In the absence of an agreement on other means of settlement, negotiation may be seen as the minimum requirement for peaceful settlement of international disputes.

**Negotiation is a process of settling a dispute in pursuit of an agreement – it is not merely diplomatic contact and requires resolving conflicting interests**

**United Nations 2026** - Model United Nations Program, United Nations Department of Global Communications

United Nations, April 30 2026 (accessed), "Fundamentals of Negotiation," Model United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/model-united-nations/fundamentals-negotiation///IB>

Negotiation is well known and practiced in all fields of human activity. It is a way of settling disputes without fighting, a way of making joint decisions when those who are making decisions hold different

views or a way of achieving your own objectives despite other participants having different objectives. This means that negotiation is a way of coping with disagreement, with varying views and with different objectives. In short, it is a way of coping with conflict. But it can only deal with conflict in cases where the parties have a sense that they have common interests. If they did not think that they had common interests, they could shout at each other (unproductively) or ignore each other: they would not be interested in seeking agreement. Negotiation is about finding a way to reach agreement. When agreement is reached, a dispute is settled and a joint decision has been made.

### **Negotiation is an exchange between parties in pursuit of an agreement**

**Spector and Zartman 12** - Zartman is founding Chair of the International Institute for Peace and Security and one of the most cited scholars in negotiation theory  
Bertram I. Spector and I. William Zartman, 2012, "The Process and Practice of Negotiation," Chapter 6, Springer, PMC7122328, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7122328/>IB

**Negotiation can be defined as a process of exchange between two or more interested parties for the purpose of reaching agreement on issues of mutual concern.** Zartman and Berman (1982) distinguish three main phases leading to agreement: **the diagnostic phase**, during which the issues are identified, stakeholders engaged and information is prepared, **the formula phase**, establishing a shared framework for agreement, and **the detailed phase of negotiation and exchange.** **Negotiation is also crucial to the effective implementation of any international agreement, requiring ongoing monitoring and possibly arbitration of disputes** by an international body.

### **Negotiation Is Broadly Defined as a Process Where Parties with Conflicting Interests Seek an Agreement**

**Lister and Lee 2012** – London South Bank University and Simon Fraser University  
Graham Lister and Kelley Lee “The Process and Practice of Negotiation” Global Health Diplomacy . 2012 Nov 7:73–87. doi: 10.1007/978-1-4614-5401-4\_6/IB

**Negotiation is broadly defined as a process where two or more parties with conflicting interests seek a mutually satisfactory agreement.** According to Zartman, **negotiation combines conflicting points of view into a single decision of mutual interest.** This definition underscores the **collaborative nature of negotiation**, highlighting its role in **conflict resolution and cooperation.** Negotiation, derived from the Latin ‘negotiare,’ meaning ‘to do business, trade, deal,’ retains its commercial roots in modern usage.

## Definitions---Negotiations---Includes Concessions to Reach Agreement

### **Negotiations include a give and take to reach agreement**

Jozef Goldblat 3, From 1969 to 1989 he directed the arms control and disarmament programme of studies at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (“Arms Control: The New Guide to Negotiations and Agreements,” Kindle Edition)

Policy decisions in the field of arms control are a function of the interaction of various sectors of government. Consequently, in **arms control negotiations** each side tries first to enlist the support of its own political and military establishments. The support of allied governments is often sought as well. **Negotiations may be conducted through exchanges of concessions from the divergent starting positions of the opposing sides, with a view to reaching convergence of views and eventually a treaty.** Negotiations may also involve a joint search for a broadly worded agreement in principle, to be developed in detail in the course of treaty drafting. Both methods are in use, although - depending on the nature of the negotiation - one of the two will usually predominate. Procedures are not of decisive importance for the outcome of negotiations, but the existence of adequate institutional mechanisms may help to further the cause.

### **Arms control negotiations include the provision of incentives for entry, and punishments for non-compliance**

Jozef Goldblat 3, From 1969 to 1989 he directed the arms control and disarmament programme of studies at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (“**Arms Control**: The New Guide to **Negotiations and Agreements**,” Kindle Edition)

#### **Incentives and Disincentives**

In entering into **arms control agreements**, states demonstrate their dedication to the cause of peace; agreements may also reinforce their international political standing. First and foremost, however, what guides states are security and economic interests. Arms control agreements provide for mutual rights and obligations, but these rights and obligations are not necessarily equal for all. For example, agreements freezing the deployment and/or qualitative or quantitative levels of armaments favour those parties which enjoy military superiority over others. Similarly, agreements which proscribe transfers of certain militarily important items may be qualified as discriminatory by states which do not or cannot produce the items in question. In such cases, there is a need for positive incentives to induce the militarily disadvantaged states to enter into an arms control agreement.

Universal adherence to multi lateral arms control agreements is desirable but not indispensable. Nonetheless, to be meaningful, the agreements must attract most, if not all, of the militarily and economically significant states. It is to these states that positive incentives are often addressed.

Such incentives specifying the advantages of the parties may be either endogenous ( included in the text of the treaty) or exogenous (included in a separate document or documents not forming part of the treaty). For example, to compensate for the self-imposed nuclear arms denial of the nonnuclear-weapon states under the N PT, the nuclear-weapon states assumed an obligation to contribute to the development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy in nonnuclear-weapon states, with due regard for the needs of the developing areas of the world. In addition, in statements not directly linked to the N PT, the nuclear-weapon powers pledged not to use nuclear weapons against parties not possessing such weapons ( except in some special circumstances) and to provide assistance to any state that has become a victim of nuclear aggression or been threatened with such aggression. Similarly, the CW Convention prohibits restrictions that would impede trade in chemicals for peaceful purposes. In addition, the industrially underdeveloped countries, which are less well prepared to protect themselves against the consequences of chemical warfare, are granted the right to participate in the exchange of protective equipment and material as well as of relevant scientific and technological information, and to obtain assistance if chemical weapons are used against them.

When positive incentives prove insufficient, recourse may be had to negative incentives specifying the disadvantages of not joining a given arms control agreement. Thus, in 1992 the Nuclear Suppliers Group agreed that transfer to a nonnuclear-weapon state of nuclear facilities, equipment, components, material and technology should not be authorized unless that state behaved like a party to the N PT. This agreement among the nuclear suppliers may have influenced the decision of certain countries engaged in constructing nuclear power stations to renounce their nuclear-weapon option and accede to the N PT. Similarly, the CW Convention stipulates that three years after its entry into force the transfer of certain chemicals which possess properties enabling them to be used as chemical weapons, but which are of substantial economic interest to many countries, may take place only among parties. This stipulation may have played a major role in speeding up the ratifications of the Convention.

Not only accession to, but also compliance with, an **arms control agreement** may sometimes be **'bought'** with economic assistance. This was the case of North Korea, a party to the N PT, which was promised two modern nuclear power reactors in exchange for ceasing activities suspected to be part of a nuclear-weapon programme. All the same, it should be borne in mind that even countries suffering from an economic crisis are not likely to join agreements which they believe might affect their security - as exemplified by the refusal of India and Pakistan to join the N PT.

## **Definitions---Pursue---Reach Conclusion**

### **“Pursue” requires being brought to a conclusion**

Ambassador Mohamed I. **Shaker**, 2008 – Vice Chairman, Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs

“Debating Article VI” The Nonproliferation Review Volume 15, 2008 - Issue 3

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10736700802407051#d1e287>

As to the obligation to **pursue negotiations**, if I were to agree with Ford's analysis that all that is required is to negotiate in good faith, we could end up going in circles. Negotiations usually aim at reaching an

**agreement**. Article VI, when it speaks of cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date, is introducing a time frame to these negotiations.

“Early date,” then, doesn't mean aimlessly negotiating for years or decades. And although “early date” was linked to the cessation of the nuclear arms race, it is transmittable to the other subject matters of negotiations, namely nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.

(The “early date” was a contribution made by Sweden during the negotiation amending draft Article VI language.) Therefore, I agree with

the ICJY's advisory opinion that there “exists an obligation to pursue in good faith **and bring to a**

**conclusion** negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective

**control**.” I disagree with Ford that the ICJ exceeded its authority in interpreting Article VI. In answering the question put to the court, it was entitled to examine the NPT, including Article VI as a major international instrument related to nuclear weapons.

## Definitions---Pursue---Not Conclude

### **Requiring an outcome of negotiations isn't possible, good faith is the only requirement**

Christopher A. Ford, 2007 – Professor of International Relations and Strategic Studies at Missouri State University's School of Defense and Strategic Studies, a Nonresident Senior Associate in the Geopolitics and Foreign Policy Department at the Center for Strategic and International Studies “DEBATING DISARMAMENT:

Interpreting Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons” The Nonproliferation Review

Volume 14, 2007 - Issue 3, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10736700701611720>

After all, if one party has pursued negotiations in good faith, but one (or more) of its negotiating partners has either refused negotiations or not pursued them in good faith, there might well be no agreement. Yet how can one judge the good faith partner as noncompliant with Article VI? Unless the ICJ meant Article VI to require a state party to agree to any dubious arms control proposal that came along, or to reach a deal with negotiating partners who display bad faith—or, even more bizarrely, to require a state party to reach deals even if others to refuse to negotiate at all—the ICJ's dictum about a supposed Article VI obligation to “conclude” negotiations is thus fundamentally incoherent as applied to individual compliance cases. (Moreover, would not the NPT be asking foolishness of any single state party to make its Article VI compliance contingent upon disarming, even if its rivals were not?)

Again, therefore, the better reading is not that of the ICJ. Instead, it stands to reason that if good faith efforts to move toward the ends described in Article VI have been pursued, a mere failure to disarm or to conclude negotiations on disarmament cannot in itself constitute Article VI noncompliance. Nor, because meaningful negotiations require the existence of serious negotiating partners—which is beyond the power of any single state always to ensure—can one necessarily find any single state party in noncompliance solely on the basis even of a complete lack of negotiations. That is the subtlety behind the seemingly simple language of Article VI: as the drafters put it quite clearly, Article VI requires that each state party “pursue”—not necessarily that they “conclude” or even “engage in”—good faith negotiations toward the goals of Article VI. This language is no accident. Footnote 41

(footnote 41)

41. I use the terms “pursue” and “conclude” to mean, in effect, “seek to engage in” and “successfully end one's engagement in,” respectively.

### **Pursue means to seek, not necessarily to conclude**

David Krieger, 2008 – President Nuclear Age Peace Foundation Santa Barbara, California, “Debating Article VI” The Nonproliferation Review Volume 15, 2008 - Issue 3

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10736700802407051#d1e287>

Ford uses his impressive rhetorical skills to place emphasis on the word “pursue,” making the claim that “pursuit” of negotiation in good faith is all that is required of a party. He uses the term “pursue” to mean “to seek” or “to chase,” rather than in the sense of “to carry something out” or “to continue with something,” meanings that the ICJ likely had in mind in reaching its opinion that negotiations must not only be pursued but also brought “to a conclusion.” It seems unlikely that the non-nuclear weapon states would have been (or now would be) satisfied with Ford's view of “pursue.” Like the bold lover on the Grecian urn in Keats' famous ode, the non-nuclear weapon states would be denied their reward, “though winning near the goal.” In other words, they could only watch as the nuclear weapon states pursued the goal of negotiations on nuclear disarmament without real hope that the goal would ever be reached.

### **Pursue is separate from bringing to a conclusion**

Christopher A. Ford, 2007 – Professor of International Relations and Strategic Studies at Missouri State University's School of Defense and Strategic Studies, a Nonresident Senior Associate in the Geopolitics and Foreign Policy Department at the Center for Strategic and International Studies “DEBATING DISARMAMENT:

Interpreting Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons” The Nonproliferation Review

Volume 14, 2007 - Issue 3, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10736700701611720>

One of the more persistent confusions regarding Article VI is the myth that the July 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), on the “Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons,” shows that Article VI specifically requires each nuclear weapons–possessing state party to disarm.<sup>Footnote2</sup> First of all, the ICJ advisory opinion does not quite say this. The court's opinion claimed that there “exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.”<sup>Footnote3</sup> Second, one should remember that ICJ advisory opinions are not binding on states: they are, to state the obvious, merely advisory.

## Definitions---Restrict

### **Restrict is to prevent**

#### **Corpus Juris Secundum, 1931**

(Volume 54, p. 735)

RESTRICT: To confine; to limit; to prevent (a person or thing) from passing a certain limit in any kind of action; to restrain; to restrain without bounds.

### **To restrict is to prohibit**

#### **Oxford English Dictionary, 89**

(“restrict”, Second edition,

[http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50204487?query\\_type=word&queryword=restrict&first=1&max\\_to\\_s\\_how=10&sort\\_type=alpha&result\\_place=2&search\\_id=pM7h-54U2cC-10065&hilite=50204487](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50204487?query_type=word&queryword=restrict&first=1&max_to_s_how=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=2&search_id=pM7h-54U2cC-10065&hilite=50204487), accessed 9-9-9)

b. To restrain by prohibition.

1835 Penny Cycl. III. 381/1 The act of 1797, which restricted the Bank from making payments in gold.

2. To tie up, confine by tying. rare{em} 1.

1824 J. H. WIFFEN Tasso XVI. xxiii, Gathering up..Her hair, restricting each resplendent tress.

### **Restrict is to set bounds on**

#### **Merriam-Webster Online Thesaurus, 9**

(“restrict”, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/restrict>, accessed 9-9-9)

Entry Word:

restrict

Function:

verb

Text: 1 to set bounds or an upper limit for<will restrict access to the laboratory>— see limit 1

### **Restrict means to limit use of**

#### **WordNet, Princeton University Cognitive Science Laboratory**

(“restrict”,

<http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=restrict&sub=Search+WordNet&o2=&o0=1&o7=&o5=&o1=1&o6=&o4=&o3=&h=000000000>, accessed 9-9-9)

\* S: (v) restrict, restrain, trammel, limit, bound, confine, throttle (place limits on (extent or access))

"restrict the use of this parking lot"; "limit the time you can spend with your friends"

### **Restrict is to subject to bounds**

#### **Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law, 96**

(“restrict”, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/restrict>, accessed 9-9-9)

Main Entry: re·strict

Function: transitive verb

1 : to subject to bounds or limits <restrict the height of buildings> <restrict visitation rights>

### **Restrict is to limit ability**

#### **Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus, 9**

(“restrict”, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Thesaurus.com <http://thesaurus.reference.com/browse/restrict>, accessed 9-9-9)

Main Entry: restrict

Part of Speech: verb

Definition: confine, limit situation or ability to participate

Synonyms:

bind, bottle up, bound, chain, check, circumscribe, come down on, constrict, contain, contract, cool down, cramp, curb, decrease, define, delimit, delimitate, demarcate, demark, diminish, encircle, enclose, hamper, handicap, hang up, hem in, hold back, hold down, impede, inclose, inhibit, keep within bounds, keep within limits, moderate, modify, narrow, pin down, prelimit, put away, put on ice, qualify, reduce, regulate, restrain, send up, shorten, shrink, shut in, surround, temper, tether, tie

Antonyms:

enlarge, expand, free, let go, release

## Definitions---Legally Binding Arms Control

**“Arms Control” can be binding or non-binding. Binding requires: signed by representatives to bind under international law, binds successors, and includes remedies for non-compliance**

**SIPRI 9**, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI Yearbook 2009: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, SIPRI, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/09..pdf>)  
Arms control arrangements take different forms. Legally binding agreements are undertaken on behalf of the state. They must be signed by representatives authorized to bind the state under international law to the commitments contained in them. These agreements bind not only the current government but also its successors to take steps and allocate resources needed to implement the commitments they contain for as long as the agreement is in force. Such agreements are likely to include remedies that parties could expect to be applied in cases of non-compliance. Politically binding measures are also a commitment by the parties to a particular course of action, and parties could expect criticism in cases of non-compliance. A government would still commit itself to allocate the resources and modify legislation, practices and policies in ways that implement the arrangement.<sup>10</sup> However, political measures would not contain judicial remedies and parties would not expect to be subject to sanctions in cases of non-compliance.<sup>11</sup>

**Legally binding are frameworks that include accountability based on a legal basis, that’s distinct from risk reduction, transparency, CBMS, dialogues, etc.**

**Fella 25**, Senior Researcher at the Berlin office of the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, where he heads the trilateral Challenges to Deep Cuts project. He previously held roles, among others, at the Hertie School and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. In 2022, he conducted lectures and workshops for the German Armed Forces on the political, military, and economic dimensions of the war in Ukraine, preparing units for NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania. He holds a PhD in political science from Humboldt University of Berlin. (Tobias, et al, “FUTURE FORMATS OF NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL,” Deep Cuts, <https://deepcuts.org/media/pages/publications/issue-briefs/future-formats-of-nuclear-arms-control/4040267829-1765905443/issue-brief-future-formats-of-nuclear-arms-control.pdf>)

Desirability of Alternatives to Legally Binding Agreements

In arms control, there is a strong preference for agreements that are legally binding. They provide clear frameworks and mechanisms to which states must adhere, ensuring accountability, promoting stability, and allowing for certain measures that would be difficult to implement without a legal basis.

However, when political tensions run high or reaching consensus on binding commitments proves challenging, agreements that are not legally binding can offer pragmatic alternatives. These may include risk reduction, transparency and confidence-building measures, military and scientific dialogues and exchanges, norms of behavior, crisis communications, and more.

**\*\*\*These cards aren’t definitions, they demonstrate that the aff can beat the “non-binding” counterplan**

### **Non-binding fails**

**Fella 25**, Senior Researcher at the Berlin office of the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, where he heads the trilateral Challenges to Deep Cuts project. He previously held roles, among others, at the Hertie School and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. In 2022, he conducted lectures and workshops for the German Armed Forces on the political, military, and economic dimensions of the war in Ukraine, preparing units for NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania. He holds a PhD in political science from Humboldt University of Berlin. (Tobias, et al, “FUTURE FORMATS OF NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL,” Deep Cuts,

<https://deepcuts.org/media/pages/publications/issue-briefs/future-formats-of-nuclear-arms-control/4040267829-1765905443/issue-brief-future-formats-of-nuclear-arms-control.pdf>)

Relying exclusively on non-binding political agreements to regulate nuclear arms control can pose **significant risks**. Unlike legally binding agreements, these statements lack enforceability and accountability mechanisms, which can increase the likelihood of ambiguity in interpretation. This can lead to suspicions and accusations of non-compliance among participating states, further exacerbating discord and undermining trust. Without clear guidelines and mechanisms for verification and enforcement, **non-binding agreements** may fail to effectively address the complex challenges of nuclear arms control and risk escalating the situation rather than resolving it.

### **Solvent arms control must be binding**

Michael **Albertson 26** is deputy director of the Center for Global Security Research at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Prior to his current position, he worked in the federal government in a wide variety of Russia, deterrence, and arms control-related portfolios for the Department of Defense, the State Department, and the National Security Council staff. (“New START might be dead, but legally binding arms control isn’t,” Atlantic Council, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/new-start-might-be-dead-but-legally-binding-arms-control-isnt/>)

Admittedly, this is an old school approach to a rapidly evolving problem set. There is a strong reliance on past mechanisms such as negotiations, interagency implementation, and data analysis, and a historical coupling of concrete, detailed cooperative agreements with continued strategic competition. There are no illusions about what these agreements can achieve or what geopolitical trends they can stop in their tracks. This will leave many in search of new approaches to arms control unsatisfied. There are no specific carveouts for emerging technologies like artificial intelligence or fast-moving issues like Golden Dome. There is no call for new, more intrusive, or more technology-dependent verification measures. This is because searches for new aspirational or performative approaches over the last fifteen years—aimed at going lower in numbers of launchers or warheads, capturing a wide range of new and emerging threats, and looping in more countries—have not proven fruitful. In pursuing these searches, time has run out for many agreements. The lack of results has validated that **legally binding arms control** might again be **necessary**.

As Brooks wrote in 2020, “International agreements are only impossible until they aren’t.”<sup>27</sup> The present moment demands an approach that is substantive, flexible, and reactive enough to respond to the two-peer challenge posed by Putin’s Russia and Xi’s China. What has been articulated here—a bilateral treaty proposal with Russia, a multilateral P5 proposal, and a simultaneous US modernization in the absence of cooperation—might not gain near-term acceptance in Moscow and Beijing, but it offers a **concrete and coherent US arms control strategy** in the post-New START era. It also serves as a rallying point within the arms control and disarmament communities to begin thinking more substantively about which proposals and negotiating positions meet the present moment, encouraging a shift from aspirational or performative rhetoric to practical negotiability. Without substantive focus, aspirational and performative proposals will continue to dominate the discourse and the community will continue to lose relevance in the broader national security debate.

### **Without binding, everyone violates**

Andrey **Baklitskiy 19**, Andrey Baklitskiy is a consultant at the PIR Center. (“Arms Control Is Dead. Long Live Arms Control,” <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/78651>)

At the present time, neither Russia nor the United States appears ready to drastically increase its nuclear forces beyond the limits set by the New START, and it’s unlikely that such plans will appear immediately after the legal limitations on doing so disappear. Both countries are already modernizing their arsenals—at great expense—and developing separate new programs. Reallocating resources for new programs would conflict with other budget priorities. The United States says it has no plans to deploy intermediate-range missiles to Europe, and Russia has said that it will only roll out its own missiles in response to actions by Washington.

At the same time, this situation can hardly endure in the long term, or even the medium term. In the absence of **legally binding limitations and arms control negotiations**, and with imperfect information, there is a **high risk** of sides eventually embarking on the arms race either because they overestimate their counterpart’s capabilities (see example of so called “Missile Gap”) or because of purely internal reasons. It’s in the interests of both countries to officially enshrine the existing position, thereby increasing predictability and broadening the planning horizon. Another priority should be to preserve as far as possible the confidence-building and verification measures devised during the previous decades. The people most interested in such stabilization should be those responsible for foreign policy and the military in the two countries, since they have a better idea than anyone what the alternative scenarios would entail.

### **Legally binding commitments are irreplaceable**

Jozef **Goldblat** 3, From 1969 to 1989 he directed the arms control and disarmament programme of studies at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (“Arms Control: The New Guide to Negotiations and Agreements,” Kindle Edition)

Reciprocal restraints assumed without legally binding commitments may supplement the conventional means of achieving arms control, but they **cannot replace** them. To become durable, verifiable and enforceable, limitations resulting from unilateral moves or from merely politically binding agreements - especially those significantly affecting the military potential of states - **need to be codified** so as to define the range of prohibited activities and give the force of law to the prohibition. A formal treaty may include incentives that increase the likelihood of compliance and provide means for the resolution of disputes. It may also neutralize forces within each state which would otherwise urge new arms acquisitions; abrogation of a contractual commitment is more complicated and politically more hazardous than reversing a unilateral one. Finally, once a treaty gains widespread acceptance, it sets a standard of international behaviour which even non-parties must take into account.

## Definitions---Arms Control---Requires Negotiations

**The most common definition of “arms control” requires a limit on armaments and an explicit international agreement**

**Brodie 76**, PhD @ U Chicago, Military strategist and nuclear theorist (Bernard, “On the Objectives of Arms Control,” International Security, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2538574.pdf>)

I am using the term "arms control" in a sense which accords with the popular conception but which some would regard as unduly restrictive. It was right once to make the point that the kind of arms control that may be most important in the long run is that which depends on tacit rather than explicit agreement—also that arms control for the purpose of enhancing security does not usually imply reducing the overall costs of our armaments but may in particular respects mean raising them.<sup>2</sup> Though of some perennial application, those points were more pertinent to the Eisenhower years than to the present. Anyway, the more common and narrower conception, which I accept, identifies the term "arms control" with some degree of limitation or reduction of particular armaments, and it implies also explicit rather than merely tacit international agreement. There is indeed substantial extra value in the relevant agreements being explicit.

**It mandates “seeking and institutionalizing” cooperation**

Larsen and **Smith 24**, \*\*Research Professor in the Institute for Regional and International Security (IRIS), US Naval Postgraduate School, both National security scholars (Jeffrey and Shane, “Does Arms Control Have a Future?,” Pacific Forum, <https://pacforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/65667190ae61b.pdf>)

The founding premise of traditional arms control theory—that arms control can be an important adjunct to national security strategy—has, in practice, not always been obvious or consistently observed because arms control is inherently a counterintuitive approach to enhancing security.

Arms control makes national security dependent on the cooperation of prospective adversaries. It often involves setting lower levels of arms than might otherwise appear prudent based on a strict threat assessment. It mandates establishing an interactive relationship with potential opponents and, in the case of mutually intrusive verification and data exchanges, exposes sensitive national security information and facilities to scrutiny by foreign powers. It requires seeking and institutionalizing cooperation where the potential for conflicts of interest seemingly far outweighs common objectives. It is fundamentally a high-stakes gamble, mortgaging national security against little more than the collateral of trust and anticipated reciprocal restraint, often in a geopolitical context fraught with political hostility and tension. It is, in fact, a voluntary (and not always reversible) delimitation of national sovereignty. Viewed from this perspective, arms control is not obviously better than its alternative—unilaterally providing for one’s own security.<sup>6</sup>

**It requires negotiation**

**Sobon 22**, Law student, JD Candidate (Ryan, “AI & Arms Control: The Cold War Continued,” Seton Hall University School of Law Student Scholarship, [https://scholarship.shu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2249&context=student\\_scholarship](https://scholarship.shu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2249&context=student_scholarship))

Arms control is defined as a “limitation of the use, exchange, or manufacture of military weapons by nations often as a policy established through diplomatic negotiation.”<sup>96</sup> Arms control implies collaboration between states, generally in areas of military policies, to reduce the likelihood and destructiveness of war.<sup>97</sup>

**Arms control requires the agreement is “mutually agreed upon”**

**NATO 23**, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation in NATO, <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/wider-activities/arms-control-disarmament-and-non-proliferation-in-nato>

**Definitions**

While often used together, the terms arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation do not mean the same thing. Experts consider them to reflect associated but different areas in the same discipline or subject.

**Arms control**

Arms control is the broadest of the three terms and generally refers to **mutually agreed upon** restraints or controls (usually between states) on the development, production, stockpiling, proliferation, deployment and use of troops, small arms, conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. Arms control includes agreements that increase the transparency of military capabilities and activities, with the intention of reducing the risk of misinterpretation or miscalculation.

## Definitions---Arms Control---Requires Cooperation With Antagonists

**The most widely cited definition of “arms control” says it’s with potential enemies, not just allied agreements**

**Krepon 9**, Co-founder of the Stimson Center and arms control expert (Michael, “Defining Arms Control,” Arms Control Wonk, <https://www.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/402497/defining-arms-control/>)

Thomas Schelling and Morton Halperin provided **the most widely used definition of arms control** in their seminal book, *Strategy and Arms Control* (1961):

We believe that **arms control** is a promising, but still only dimly perceived, enlargement on the scope of military strategy. It rests **essentially** on the recognition that our **military relation with potential enemies** is not one of pure conflict and opposition, but involves strong elements of mutual interest in the avoidance of a war that neither side wants, in minimizing the costs and risks of the arms competition, and in curtailing the scope and violence of war in the event it occurs.

**Arms control must be between antagonists, not allied agreements**

**Bull 76**, International relations scholar at Oxford (Hedley, “Arms Control and World Order,” *International Security*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2538573.pdf>)

First, there is the definition of arms control itself: “Arms control in its broadest sense comprises all those acts of military policy in which **antagonistic states co-operate** in the pursuit of common purposes even while they are struggling in the pursuit of conflicting ones.”<sup>1</sup> When two antagonistic states pursue common purposes in their military policy—as the United States and the Soviet Union have sometimes done—these purposes may be universal ones, accepted as valid by international society as a whole, but they may also be purely bilateral ones, the special purposes of the cooperating powers themselves. “If two states,” I wrote in 1964, “were to achieve their common goals in this field by bringing about the ruin of other nations there would seem no reason to deny that what they were engaged in was arms control, except for the common but quite unnecessary assumption that arms control has about it an aura of spiritual rectitude, instead of being a temporal process like any other.”<sup>2</sup>

**The old ev above is cited here**

**Baas 8**, MA in European Studies, International relations scholar (Richard, “Negotiating Nuclear Weapons: Arms Control and Disarmament in the NPT Framework,” University of Twente Student Thesis, [https://essay.utwente.nl/fileshare/file/59277/scriptie\\_R\\_Baas.pdf](https://essay.utwente.nl/fileshare/file/59277/scriptie_R_Baas.pdf))

It is generally believed that arms control belongs to a series of closely related perspectives of which the central them focuses on peace through the manipulation of force. <sup>16</sup> This objective can be achieved in a number of ways, of which one focuses on placing this force in the hands of a central authority, while others focuses on the creation of a system of collective security, by accepting a system of mutual deterrence, by abolishing or reducing force, or through establishing restraints an limits on forces. This last method appears to reflect the principle of arms most accurately. Early theorists, defined arms control in the broadest possible sense possible in which generally all forms of military cooperation were confined. Or as Hedley Bull put it, **arms control** is cooperation between **antagonistic pairs of states** in the military **field**, whether this cooperation is founded upon interests that are exclusively those of the cooperating states themselves or on interests that are more widely shared. <sup>17</sup> Later on, theorists tended to view the objectives of the concept of arms control threefold. For Schelling and Halperin, these objectives included reducing the likelihood of war; reducing the political and economic costs of preparing for war; and minimizing the scope and violence of war if it occurred.<sup>18</sup> Bull envisaged three similar objectives for arms control; the contribution to international security and stop the drift to war; the release of economic resources otherwise squandered in armaments; and the preclusion of preparing for war, which is morally wrong. <sup>19</sup> Many practitioners debated the priority of these three objectives, but the first of these objectives, the prevention of war, is generally believed to be the principal objective of arms control.<sup>20</sup>

## Definitions---Arms Control---Distinct from CBM's

### **“Arms control” is distinct from codes of conduct and CBMs**

Mark **Gubrud 9**, physicist and adjunct professor in the Peace, War and Defense curriculum at the University of North Carolina, coined the term AGI (This is from a comment on a piece defining arms control, would not want to build a whole topic on it,

<https://www.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/402497/defining-arms-control/>)

With the passage of enough time or the consumption of enough intoxicants, anything can be seen to morph into anything else. However, for the purposes of clear and effective communication, I don't think it is useful to erase distinctions and conflate formerly distinct concepts, or to dilute them with broadened meanings. Therefore, I **would not** equate arms control, which by a direct reading of the term seeks to **impose controls** on arms (weapons), or at most “some aspect of... military capability or potential” as per Bowie, with other kinds of “cooperative threat reduction” including confidence-building measures, openness, Codes of Conduct and so on.

Actually, **equivocation** is a strategy of **deception** and it seems to me that lately some **people who are opposed to actual arms control**, such as a ban on space weapons, **suggest instead some milder formulation such as a Code of Conduct for Spacefaring Nations as a substitute**, and would like to argue that such measures, **which do not actually** address the **control** of **weapons**, still somehow qualify as “arms control.” While I agree such measures are **desirable** in themselves, **they do not** substitute for measures which actually address and ban or limit (**control**) **arms**.

### **Those are “other...instruments”**

**Loets 13**, Public international law scholar (Adrian, “Arms Control,” Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law, Oxford University Press,

<https://opil.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e246>)

3 Frequently, arms control is **complemented** by **other** stabilizing instruments, for example, voluntary **confidence-building measures**. It can be distinguished between mutually agreed arms control conventions and unilaterally applicable limitations.

## **Definitions---Arms Control---Among States**

### **Arms control is an agreement among states**

**Thom 6**, U.S. Air Force officer and strategic studies scholar (Chad, “Information Warfare Arms Control: Risks and Costs,” United States Air Force Academy, <https://www.usafa.edu/app/uploads/ocp63.pdf>)

Although there is not a universally accepted definition of arms control, over the past two decades different types of international agreements have been developed and are often addressed under the rubric of “arms control,” to include nonproliferation, disarmament, confidence-building measures, and laws of war.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, for this paper, the general concept of arms control is defined as an “agreement among states to regulate some aspect of their military capability or potential.”<sup>70</sup> These different varieties are represented in Table 2 along with their potential to serve as an information warfare arms control regime.

## **Definitions---Arms Control---Restraint on Character, Deployment or Use**

### **Arms control restrains character, deployment, or use**

**Shaker 80**, Egyptian diplomat and nuclear nonproliferation expert (Mohamed, “The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: Origin and Implementation, 1959–1979, Volume 2,” Oceana Publications, [https://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/mohamed\\_shaker\\_npt\\_vol\\_2.pdf](https://www.nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/mohamed_shaker_npt_vol_2.pdf))

Before embarking on this analysis and in order to avoid confusion as to the meaning of the terms used, a clear distinction must be made between "arms control" and "disarmament" terms which are quite often used interchangeably in the current literature. The definitions provided by Professor Hedley Bull in his theoretical study on disarmament and arms control appear most propitious for the purposes of the analysis undertaken here. "Arms control" is defined as **restraint internationally exercised upon armaments policy, whether in respect of the level of armaments, their character, deployment or use**. As to "disarmament" it is defined as armaments. It may be unilateral local; comprehensive or partial ; the reduction or abolition of or multilateral; general or controlled or uncontrolled.

## **Definitions---Arms Control---Includes Verification**

### **Includes verification**

**Lissner 21**, Assistant Professor at the U.S. Naval War College and international security scholar (Rebecca, “The Future of Strategic Arms Control,” Council on Foreign Relations, [https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/lissner-dp\\_final.pdf](https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/lissner-dp_final.pdf))

Arms control can enhance transparency through inspections and verification. Verification has traditionally been a **central component** of arms control. It provides confidence that the reductions or limits that states commit to through arms control agreements will not jeopardize their security. It deters cheating (because cheating would be caught by the verification mechanisms) and ensures that each side holds up its end of the agreement.<sup>5</sup> In addition, information exchanges and transparency provisions (including, but not limited to, formal verification measures) reduce the national costs of monitoring and increase the accuracy of U.S. intelligence estimates.

## Definitions---Arms Control---Negotiations Can Be Secret

**Those negotiations can be in secret, and there is an advantage to doing so**

Arbatova, Perkovich, and **van Hooft 24**, \*\*\*PhD, research leader at RAND Europe, all Nuclear policy experts (Nadezhda, George, and Paul, The Future of Nuclear Arms Control and the Impact of the Russia-Ukraine War, American Academy of Arts and Sciences,

[https://www.amacad.org/sites/default/files/publication/downloads/2024\\_Promoting-Dialogue\\_Future-Nuclear-Arms-Control.pdf](https://www.amacad.org/sites/default/files/publication/downloads/2024_Promoting-Dialogue_Future-Nuclear-Arms-Control.pdf))

One possible answer is that treaties cannot be negotiated in secret, but “military cooperation between potential enemies”—

Schelling’s and Halperin’s definition of **arms control**—could focus on **secretly negotiated** (or even signaled)

reciprocal changes of behavior. Iran, for example, could stop building new advanced centrifuges, and the United States could stop interdicting Iranian oil sales. China could announce a moratorium on production of fissile materials for military purposes, and the United States could around the same time declare it has no plans to deploy intermediate-range land-based missiles on Guam or anywhere else in East Asia. The point is that the United States and one or more of its major adversaries could **secretly negotiate** observable

quid pro quos that would manifest these governments’ intentions to restrain and stabilize their competition. If and when such arrangements were revealed, the fact that restraints had already been agreed to by the other party (or parties) would make them **more politically palatable** than offering to negotiate

restraints without knowing that the adversary would reciprocate. (Kennedy felt a need to keep secret the withdrawal of Jupiter missiles from Turkey even after Khrushchev withdrew the Soviet missiles from Cuba. Years later, when the compromise did become known, it was widely accepted.)

## Definitions---Arms Control---Extremely Broad

**Extremely broad definition, found in US State Department Glossary. It includes: unilat/multilat, includes the law of arm conflict and the whole world of arms sales and export controls**

**Wheeler 4**, PhD, Senior Analyst in the Strategies Group, Science Applications International Corporation, et al (Michael, "Perspectives on Arms Control," U.S. Department of Defense, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA435093.pdf>)

Throughout the odyssey of the past forty or so years, I have often thought that the public discussion of arms control was much too narrowly focused. In the first place, it often is unclear what interlocutors in the discussion mean by "arms control." I personally prefer the broad definition that was (and still is) to be found in the official US State Department Glossary—a definition, I might add, that many Americans appear never to have read, which says that arms control is:

Any unilateral or multilateral step taken to reduce or control any aspect of either a weapon system or armed forces. Such reductions or limitations might affect the size, type, configuration, production or performance characteristics of a weapon system, or the size, organization, equipment, deployment, or employment of armed forces.<sup>10</sup>

Under this broad definition, treaty-based arms control of the modern variety shades into a much wider diplomatic agenda and, more generally, into how one approaches the international law of armed conflict and the entire realm of regulating trade in weapons technologies and arms.

### **Includes economic actions and unilateral actions**

Major John A. **Nagl**, D.Phil. **2k**, Defending Against New Dangers: Arms Control of Weapons of Mass Destruction in A Globalized World, <https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/isa/naj01/>

This paper takes a similar position, believing that arms control is of no merit in and of itself, but only insofar as it diminishes the chances or the costs of future conflict or the costs of preparing for the same. This paper also argues that the definition of arms control must be extended to include not only military, but also political and economic actions, intended to accomplish those objectives. It further extends the definition to include cooperation between friends as well as potential enemies in the interest of reducing the likelihood of war—for in the post-Cold War world, very often potential enemies will not be other states, but individuals and sub-state groups with interests inimical to those of the United States. Many states share a common interest in minimizing the likelihood of war or conflict initiated by these actors, its scope and violence if it occurs, and the political and economic costs of being prepared for it. Even if all states are not prepared to cooperate in the effort, involving as many as possible, especially those with advanced research and industrial capacities, will help to limit the dangers of these emerging threats. Schelling and Halperin were very concerned about the impact of technology, especially nuclear technology, on the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union at the time when they were writing. They believed that both unilateral U.S. actions and bilateral arms control agreements could serve to increase the security of both superpowers, and strongly advocated both unilateral and bilateral arms control as a result. In addition to what we can do unilaterally to improve our warning, to maintain close control over our forces, to make our forces more secure against attack, to avoid the need for precipitant decisions, to avoid accidents or the mistaken decisions that they might cause and to contain conflict once it starts, there may be opportunities to exchange facilities or understandings with our enemies, or to design and deploy our forces differently by agreement with our enemies who do likewise, in a way that enhances those aspects of technology that we like and that helps to nullify those that we do not. <sup>6</sup>

These agreements need not be formal ones, signed, negotiated, and named. Reciprocal self-restraint was a common feature of US-Soviet relations during the Cold War and remains one today. In the same way, informal agreements, among adversaries or friendly states, which serve to accomplish the three purposes of arms control listed above, will continue to play a large—and perhaps an increasing—role in U.S. security policy for the foreseeable future. These agreements can accomplish the objectives of arms control by decreasing the benefit to states of getting more armaments, by increasing the cost of getting more armaments, by increasing the costs of using these armaments, or by decreasing the benefits of using them. <sup>7</sup>

### **Mixes burdens: anything that reduces the risk of war**

**Manzo 19**, Nuclear Arms Control Without a Treaty? Risks and Options After New Start, <https://www.cna.org/analyses/2019/03/nuclear-arms-control-without-a-treaty>

This report explores risks and US policy options for a specific scenario: The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) expires with no follow-on treaty in tow. We identify the key risks and uncertainties the United States and Russia would face after New START and develop a portfolio of policy options for mitigating them. We also identify the impact US-Russian nuclear dynamics after New START may have on China's nuclear policy and posture, and then explore potential policy options for the US-China relationship. By exploring the risks of a world without a treaty, as well as the value and limitations of arms control options outside of a treaty framework, this report also provides a frame of reference as the United States and Russia prepare for the near-term decision on New START extension and the longer-term decision on how to

approach its eventual expiration. Our working definition of **arms control** for this study is **any form of cooperation** between potential adversaries designed to **reduce the risks of war** and **nuclear escalation** and/or **restrain arms competitions**. When we use the term “nuclear arms control without a treaty,” we are referring to cooperative options that serve these objectives through means other than a treaty.

## Definitions---Arms Control---Includes CBM's

### **“Arms control” includes confidence-building-measures**

**Thom 6**, U.S. Air Force officer and strategic studies scholar (Chad, “Information Warfare Arms Control: Risks and Costs,” United States Air Force Academy, <https://www.usafa.edu/app/uploads/ocp63.pdf>)

Although there isn't a universally accepted definition of arms control, over the past two decades different types of international agreements have been developed and are often addressed under the rubric of “arms control” to include: nonproliferation, disarmament, confidence-building measures, and laws of war.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, for this paper, the general concept of arms control is defined as an “agreement among states to regulate some aspect of their military capability or potential.”<sup>6</sup> These different varieties are represented in Table 2 along with their potential to serve as an information warfare arms control regime.

### **CBMs are included in “arms control”**

Jozef **Goldblat 3**, From 1969 to 1989 he directed the arms control and disarmament programme of studies at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (“Arms Control: The New Guide to Negotiations and Agreements,” Kindle Edition)

In general, CSBMs do not directly affect the strength of armed forces or arms inventories, but in facilitating progress towards disarmament they constitute a separate category of **arms control measures**. They also make less likely the use of force for settling disputes. To have the intended effect, CSBMs must be significant in scope and binding. A mere exchange of solemn declarations is rarely sufficient.

For a great majority of states, threats to national security arise from conditions within their own region. Hence attention is most often devoted to regional approaches. For confidence-building purposes, a region could embrace states which do not meet the geographical criteria of a 'region' but are linked economically or politically. Arrangements initiated by neighbouring states may subsequently attract more distant states as well. Regional confidence-building measures cannot be imposed by outsiders; they must be freely negotiated and agreed to by states in the region. It is only these states that can address the causes of their specific security problems and determine the type, scope and area of application of the required undertakings. In one region, distrust and tension could be generated by a lack of reliable information about the military activities of neighbouring states and the inadequacy of channels of communication among political decision-makers. In another region, distrust and tension could be generated by the absence of agreed restraints on the behaviour of the armed forces and uncertainty about compliance with international obligations.

Confidence building to promote better communication and understanding among the parties may include: (a) exchange of information about military expenditures, strength of armed forces, arms production and arms transfers; (b) open presentation and clarification of defence doctrines; (c) prior notification of military manoeuvres and major military movements, including their scope and extent; (d) the establishment of a mechanism to check the accuracy of the data provided; (e) the presence of foreign observers at military exercises; (f) exchanges of visits by military officers; (g) exchanges of cadets between military academies; and (h) the establishment of direct, rapid communication links - 'hotlines' - for crisis management.

Confidence-building measures that impose military constraints may include: (a) abstaining from certain specified military activities in border areas; (b) disengagement of armed forces by establishing zones between neighbouring countries that are partly or fully demilitarized; (c) voluntary submission to inspections to demonstrate compliance with agreed standards of behaviour; and (d) formalized commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Security cannot be obtained by promoting measures solely in the field of military affairs; it embraces economic and social factors as well. However, the military factor is of prime importance, as the absence of war constitutes a prerequisite for nonmilitary CSBMs.

## **Definitions---Arms Control---Includes Unilat**

**“Arms control” includes unilateral measures**

**SIPRI 9**, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI Yearbook 2009: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, SIPRI, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/09..pdf>)

Although there is no precise agreed **definition of arms control**, in its usage in English it can best be described as a cooperative, purposive approach to armaments policy. The primary aim is to produce effects on the actions of participants that would not otherwise have occurred.<sup>4</sup> Unilateral measures may fall within this general definition if they are undertaken in order to bring about reciprocal actions. Export control cooperation falls within this general definition, although it is undertaken in order to produce effects on the armaments policy of actors other than those that are cooperating.

## Definitions---Arms Control---Includes Export Controls

### **Includes export controls**

**SIPRI 9**, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI Yearbook 2009: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, SIPRI, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/09..pdf>)

Although there is no precise agreed **definition of arms control**, in its usage in English it can best be described as a cooperative, purposive approach to armaments policy. The primary aim is to produce effects on the actions of participants that would not otherwise have occurred.<sup>4</sup> Unilateral measures may fall within this general definition if they are undertaken in order to bring about reciprocal actions. Export control cooperation falls within this general definition, although it is undertaken in order to produce effects on the armaments policy of actors other than those that are cooperating.

## Definitions---Arms Control Agreements---Limited

**Arms control agreements is more limiting, it requires formal intergovernmental negotiation**

Jozef Goldblat 3, From 1969 to 1989 he directed the arms control and disarmament programme of studies at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (“Arms Control: The New Guide to Negotiations and Agreements,” Kindle Edition)

### 1.1 Arms Control Agreements

Arms control can take various forms. It can be part of interstate cease fire or armistice arrangements, as was the case after the 1950-53 war in Korea and the 1946-54 war in Indo-China. It can be imposed upon defeated countries by peace treaties, such as those concluded after World War I and World War II. It can follow the termination of intra-state conflicts, as in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995 and Kosovo in 1999. Finally, it can take the form of sanctions applied in accordance with the UN Charter against aggressor states, as in the case of Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War. However, an ‘arms control agreement’ is an agreement among sovereign states, freely arrived at in time of peace through a process of formal intergovernmental negotiation

**Arms control agreements are diplomatic agreements that limit development, testing, producing, deploying or using weapons**

**Council on Foreign Relations 26, What Is Arms Control?,**

<https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/what-arms-control>

### What are arms control agreements?

Arms control agreements are a specialized subset of diplomacy that limit developing, testing, producing, deploying, or using certain types of weapons. They can also create transparency and predictability around the world’s most dangerous weapons and decrease the likelihood and potential costs of conflict.

Such agreements can occur between two countries (bilaterally) or many countries (multilaterally) and can take different forms.

Quantitative agreements cap the number of certain types of weapons that countries can produce, store, and/or deploy. The United States and the Soviet Union, for example, signed multiple quantitative arms control agreements during the Cold War that limited their stockpiles of nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Qualitative agreements ban certain types or aspects of weapons altogether. For instance, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) prohibits countries from producing or using weapons such as sarin or mustard gas.

Horizontal agreements prohibit countries from acquiring a specified type of weapon. For instance, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) designated five “nuclear weapons states” (the United States, China, France, the former Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom) and seeks among other things to prevent additional countries from acquiring that weapon of mass destruction.

**Norms and expectations for behavior are not arms control agreements**

**Wolfsthal 20, Former Senior Director for Arms Control at the National Security Council (Jon Brook, “Why Arms Control?,” Dædalus, American Academy of Arts and Sciences,**

<https://www.amacad.org/publication/daedalus/why-arms-control>)

While **not** formal **arms control agreements** per se, there are other negotiated commitments that set **norms and expectations of behavior** that have served to enhance crisis stability in certain regions. Such arrangements have reinforced the view that both Washington and Moscow wanted to set limits on the extent of their military and geostrategic competition to avoid or at least reduce the risk that lower-level incidents or interactions might quickly escalate and go nuclear. The 1972 U.S.-Soviet Incidents at Sea Agreement and the 1963 Memorandum of Understanding Regarding the Establishment of a Direct Communications Line, for example, have proven their value.<sup>21</sup> While direct communication is now an afterthought, in a crisis, secure communication links may prove critical, and in the face of stepped-up military exercises by both NATO and Russia, the Sea Agreement has proved its worth and helped to manage interactions. There appears to be room to expand such deals to include interactions between aircraft and naval forces, air-to-air interactions, and even land-based incidents. Russia has recently negotiated deals with Baltic states on civilian air traffic and discussed conflict resolution and avoidance agreements with other NATO states.

## Definitions---Arms Control Agreements---Treaties

**Arms control agreements are signed and ratified, and they “lock in” reductions with verification**

**Krimmer 98**, Lt Col, U.S. Air Force (Michael J., “Comrades in Arms...Control: The Contractor’s Role in Implementing On-Site Inspections,” U.S. Department of Defense, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA396980.pdf>)

Bunn cites four reasons arms control will endure, even with the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. First, **arms control agreements** are **signed and ratified international agreements** that **lock in** reductions, making reversals less likely. Second, specific numerical limits and detailed verification procedures...ease the task of confirming that reductions have...taken place. Third, negotiated agreements provide a framework conducive to deeper cuts. Finally, negotiated agreements can channel nations in directions that are most conducive to overall stability.<sup>43</sup> By these accounts, arms control will continue to be an important tool of statecraft for the US. Continued interest in the Open Skies Treaty, the administration's continued efforts to implement START II and negotiate START III, the unwavering support of the US for the UNSCOM mission in Iraq, and the Dayton Accords further illustrate the importance of arms control as a ready instrument of US foreign policy.

## Definitions---Arms Control Agreements---Same Course of Action

### **It's both sides committing to the same course of action**

**Brodie 76**, PhD @ U Chicago, Military strategist and nuclear theorist (Bernard, "On the Objectives of Arms Control," International Security, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2538574.pdf>)

The merit of explicit, mutual **agreements on arms control** is that **both sides** are **committed to the same course**

**of action**, usually for the same or at least similar reasons. That makes the signals mutual. Just as cost-effectiveness analysis was devised and pursued for the sake of avoiding sheer waste in military expenditures (it is usually expressed in other ways, but they amount to the same thing), so arms control should be conceived as an important and fruitful means of avoiding waste. For that we should not have to make apologies.

## Definitions---Arms Control Agreements---Broad

Arms control agreements might be just as broad as the broadest definition of arms control  
**Herbach 19**, lecturer in public international law at Utrecht University in the Netherlands (JD,  
“Preventing nuclear terrorism,” <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA396980.pdf>

Though there **may be no** generally accepted definition of arms control,<sup>41</sup> it is traditionally, or classically, thought of as encompassing regulation of, limitations on or elimination of certain military capabilities between or among (potential) adversaries. It is often described in terms of certain principles and objectives like reducing the likelihood of war, namely nuclear war; limiting the extent of damage should war occur, death and destruction being more catastrophic if nuclear weapons are used; fostering stability and predictability; and reducing expenditures on military forces.<sup>42</sup> Bull refers to this latter objective as secondary in a hierarchy of objectives, the first being the reduction of the likelihood and potential destructiveness of war, and a third being a moral and social goal of combatting society’s militarization.<sup>43</sup>

**Arms control law**,<sup>44</sup> involves the development and codification of rules, norms and standards to achieve the broader arms control structure and objectives, legal **agreement** often being the goal and **result of arms control processes**. **Agreement**, or consent, is key, as the starting point is the freedom to possess armaments unless a state accepts rules by which its level of armaments is limited.<sup>45</sup> Agreements to accept such rules can be **bilateral**, **regional** or **international**. Agreements can take a **number of different forms**, from hard law such as treaties, conventions, decisions of international organizations and protocols, to softer forms of rule-making and norm-setting (soft law) such as recommendations and guidelines, memoranda of understanding and codes of conduct, to political commitments contained in joint statements and declarations, and final documents of international conferences.<sup>46</sup> **Arms control agreements** have **involved** various measures of control: **disarmament** (including reducing or abolishing certain categories of weapons); **limitations on the numbers or deployment** of armed forces and weaponry; non-proliferation (preventing the spread of weapons); **prohibitions on the testing** of weapons, namely nuclear weapons; **proscriptions of or regulations on the transfer** of militarily relevant items; **constraints or prohibitions on certain weapons during armed conflict** (or methods of war); and **measures to build confidence** (such as through increasing openness and transparency in military matters).<sup>47</sup>

## **AFFIRMATIVE EVIDENCE**

## **Affirmative---Inherency**

### **Arms control faces unprecedented gridlock**

**Horschig 25**, fellow with the Project on Nuclear Issues at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and a non-resident research associate at the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs at the University of Central Florida (UCF). She received her PhD in security studies from the UCF. Her research examines proliferation, nonproliferation, and counterproliferation, as well as nuclear norms contestation and public opinion on nuclear issues. (Doreen, “Lessons from former arms control negotiators,” Bulletin of American Scientists, <https://thebulletin.org/premium/2025-09/lessons-from-former-arms-control-negotiators/>)

Efforts to revive arms control are facing **unprecedented gridlock**. The collapse of landmark treaties like the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the looming expiration of New START without a clear successor exemplify a broader crisis. With trust between nuclear-armed adversaries at a low, new technologies outpacing diplomacy, and geopolitical competition intensifying, traditional arms control mechanisms appear outdated or **politically infeasible**. But the risks are real: Without any guardrails, the chances of an arms race or a crisis spiraling out of control grow significantly.

## **Affirmative---Solvency---Trump-Specific**

**The United States federal government should negotiate binding arms control with Russia and China that limits the numerical growth of their nuclear weapons arsenals.**

### **Here's Trump-specific solvency evidence advocating for trilateral arms control negotiations**

Ruiz and **Wilson 25**, Nuclear policy analysts (Lucas and Geoff, “What Trump Got Right About Nuclear Weapons—and How to Step Back from the Brink,” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, <https://thebulletin.org/2025/02/what-trump-got-right-about-nuclear-weapons-and-how-to-step-back-from-the-brink/>)

Stepping toward the brink—and back. While President **Trump's** remarks offer hope for a more reasonable nuclear path, his **administration** is also **espousing “peace through strength”**—Ronald Reagan’s mantra—as one of the foundations of its foreign policy. The administration’s Republican allies in Congress—including notably Sen. Roger Wicker, a Republican of Mississippi who now chairs the Senate Armed Services Committee—have adopted this framing and proposed doubling down on the arms race by adding \$200 billion to an already historically high US defense budget.

Other **conservatives are pushing Trump to adopt Reagan’s playbook for US-Soviet relations by demonstrating US supremacy internationally, which includes accelerating the nuclear arms race.** Most concerning, some allege winning this arms race necessitates being prepared to resume US explosive nuclear testing. And some within the military establishment have called for the reintroduction of tactical nuclear weapons into the US arsenal despite being hugely destabilizing. But these hawkish policies are only the first part of Reagan’s nuclear weapons chapter.

In 1982, after boosting defense spending by 35 percent, Reagan suddenly reversed course and famously declared in a radio address that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” His reversal on nuclear weapons would be confirmed after witnessing the infamous Pentagon war game Proud Prophet, viewing the cataclysmic effects of nuclear war in the movie “The Day After,” and nearly triggering a catastrophic war with the Soviets. Reagan’s idiom became the bedrock of efforts to avoid mutual destruction through nuclear war, which has been repeated by many officials in the four decades since, including just five years ago at the start of the Biden administration.

In hindsight, **Trump can skip to the productive portion of Reagan’s strategy.** His intuition is already pointing him in this direction. **The president should not be listening to those around him who would like to see the United States embrace a nuclear arms race by chasing after the illusion of strategic superiority and expanding the nuclear arsenal**—which Trump already said made no sense. Instead, President **Trump should pursue a course of **hard-nosed diplomacy**** like Reagan did to secure the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), which eliminated US and Soviet intermediate- and shorter-range missiles in 1985.

**The Trump administration could renew Reagan’s crowning achievement by **negotiating with Russia and China** to limit the growing numbers of new nuclear weapons in the world today.** The president has the opportunity to push the United States and other nuclear-weapon states to abide by their disarmament promises regarding nuclear weapons. Should he succeed, Trump could even win a Nobel Peace Prize—becoming just the fifth US president to do so.

### **More Trump-specific solvency evidence**

Williams and **Adamopoulos 26**, Nuclear policy experts at CSIS (Heather and Nicholas, “Trump’s New Nuclear Architecture for Modernization and Arms Control,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/trumps-new-nuclear-architecture-modernization-and-arms-control>)

Third, **arms control and risk reduction must play a role in preventing nuclear escalation. The era of strategic competition is not likely to end anytime soon.** Moreover, assuming China and Russia continue to qualitatively and quantitatively develop their own strategic arsenals and maintain regional ambitions as the United States also expands and diversifies its arsenal, **nuclear-related risks will continue to rise.** As much as a credible nuclear posture must be backed up by new capabilities and the capacity to produce them, it must also be paired with an arms control

policy that is ready to engage when the time is right. In the short term, President **Trump should **publicly invite his Chinese and Russian counterparts to a nuclear summit**** to discuss three priorities for **nuclear risk reduction**: (1) clarifying the testing moratorium, (2) establishing a trilateral nuclear hotline, and (3) reaffirming the principles outlined in the 1973 Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War to refrain from nuclear threats.

## Afirmative---Solvency---AT Arms Control Skeptics

**Isn't this impossible? Nope.**

**Horschig 25**, fellow with the Project on Nuclear Issues at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and a non-resident research associate at the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs at the University of Central Florida (UCF). She received her PhD in security studies from the UCF. Her research examines proliferation, nonproliferation, and counterproliferation, as well as nuclear norms contestation and public opinion on nuclear issues. (Doreen, "Lessons from former arms control negotiators," Bulletin of American Scientists, <https://thebulletin.org/premium/2025-09/lessons-from-former-arms-control-negotiators/>)

**The ultimate lesson**, as Susan Koch puts it, is to "never say never" in arms control (Koch 2025, 11:48). Typhoon submarines, once built to carry massive nuclear payloads, were disassembled under Nunn-Lugar programs that few believed would ever work. The once unthinkable happened because bold ideas met the right moment. US President Donald Trump recently voiced his support for denuclearization (Miller and Price 2025), reminding us that the window for ambition **never** **fully closes**.

Today's arms control efforts must meet a fragmented and faster-moving world. They may look different, less treaty-centric and more flexible, but they still require the same elements: determination, detail, leadership, and a willingness to act before the perfect conditions arrive. New proposals will not succeed by copying the past, but they can succeed by learning from it.

## **Affirmative---Solvency---New START**

**The USFG should negotiate with Russia over a follow-on binding agreement to New START.**

**Russia has a strong incentive to negotiate.**

Leonor **Tomero 23**, is a leading expert on nuclear deterrence, national security, space and missile defense, including applying innovative technologies and concepts for strategic deterrence. She served as deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear and missile defense policy and as counsel and Strategic Forces Subcommittee Democratic staff lead on the House Armed Services Committee. (“With New START Setbacks Challenging Arms Control, US Must Work to Reduce Chances of Nuclear War, With or Without Russia,” Russia Matters, <https://www.russiamatters.org/analysis/new-start-setbacks-challenging-arms-control-us-must-work-reduce-chances-nuclear-war-or>)

If Washington and Moscow are able to find a way to re-engage on arms control, it will be imperative not just to salvage New START, but to do the hard work of designing a follow-on treaty.

While resumed arms control talks are not likely, they **are not inconceivable**. The rationale for preserving arms control as a useful tool now is the same as Secretary of State Antony Blinken's explanation for extending New START in 2021: "An unconstrained nuclear competition would endanger us all." In addition to multiple U.S. assertions of its willingness to resume New START implementation, recent statements from Moscow suggest that **Russia too continues to see value in the treaty**. Hours after Putin's announcement of the suspension, Russia's Foreign Ministry said the decision was “reversible.” Earlier, right after the U.S. finding of noncompliance, a Kremlin spokesman stated that continuation of the treaty is "very important," describing New START as the only arms control treaty that remains "at least hypothetically viable." (Perhaps this indicates that some Russian officials are concerned that, if an arms race did begin, Moscow would be at a disadvantage: Respected Russian military analyst Alexei Arbatov wrote recently that "the collapse of New START would allow the U.S. to double and even triple the number of its strategic nuclear warheads in a few years with minimal cost"; Russia, already entangled in a costly war, may find it difficult to keep up.)

If the pursuit of arms control continues to be a U.S. and Russian priority to avoid a dangerous, unconstrained nuclear arms race, Washington and Moscow should initiate serious dialogue not only about inspections and treaty implementation but about urgently negotiating a post-New START agreement. Until recently, the working context was that each side had security interests it wanted reflected in any new deal, but the main forum for discussing them—the U.S.-Russian Strategic Stability Dialogue—had been stalled by the war in Ukraine. The issues related to a new verifiable treaty, particularly one that would address limits on all nuclear warheads, are complex and will likely require extensive negotiation to be resolved. As during the Cold War, such talks would not confer legitimacy to positions the United States rejects; they would demonstrate our intention to set up guardrails to prevent unintended disastrous miscalculation and escalation and would set predictable limits on numbers of nuclear weapons.

**This would solve without sacrificing deterrence**

Bera and **Pifer 21**, U.S. Congressman and Senior Fellow at Brookings (Ami and Steven, “Strengthen US Security Through Nuclear Arms Reductions,” Brookings Institution, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/strengthen-us-security-through-nuclear-arms-reductions/>)

As part of a bold new vision for arms control and strategic stability, U.S. negotiators should seek an agreement that encompasses all U.S. and Russian nuclear warheads, including reserve (non-deployed) strategic warheads, and non-strategic nuclear weapons. Negotiators should work to limit all nuclear warheads to no more than 2,500 each, with an embedded sub-limit of 1,000 deployed strategic warheads within the overall aggregate limit. Even with the dramatic arsenal reductions outlined here, the United States would maintain the ability to deter and, if necessary, defend against any global adversary.

Such a nuclear arms reduction agreement would have significant additional advantages for the United States:

First, it could position Washington and Moscow to press China to freeze or limit its build-up of nuclear arms as long as the United States and Russia are reducing their nuclear arsenals.

Second, such an agreement could give the Pentagon **additional resources** to support wider **force modernization requirements** for **nuclear and conventional forces alike**, including new ballistic missile submarines and the B-21 bomber. If we have the forces to deter conventional conflict, we dramatically reduce the prospect of nuclear war.

Third, such an agreement would bolster America's non-proliferation credentials and leadership. A new U.S.-Russia nuclear arms reductions treaty may not lead North Korea to abandon its nuclear program overnight, but it would increase the ability of U.S. diplomats to urge third countries to pressure and sanction outliers such as North Korea.

### **It has an RCA Advantage**

**Vu 21**, Ph.D. from Boston College in 2024 and his master's degree from Dartmouth College in 2019 (Khang, "Arms control is not just about arms," Lowy Institute, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpret/arms-control-not-just-about-arms>)

Worse, for the United States, the deterioration in the Russian relationship has coincided with a time that Russia and China have consolidated their strategic partnership. Talk of a Russia-China military alliance is gaining traction. The prospect of Washington facing a two-front battle against both Beijing and Moscow is no longer a distant possibility.

Still, there are positive developments in US-Russia ties as well. During US President Joe Biden's first week in office, he agreed to extend the New START Treaty with Russian President Vladimir Putin for five years to 2026, saving the last standing bilateral arms control agreement from expiring. The two presidents also agreed to establish the bilateral Strategic Stability Dialogue to facilitate further discussions on strategic arms control.

The Biden administration should not pursue arms control just for the sake of better US-Russia relations. In a recent journal article on International Security, my co-author Timothy Crawford and I argued that the United States should also use bilateral arms control talks with Russia to **drive a wedge into the Russia-China partnership** and to indirectly improve US ties with Russia's traditional partner in Southeast Asia, Vietnam.

Better US-Russia ties can weaken the common perception of the US threat that binds China and Russia together as well as bolster the defence capabilities of Vietnam, which heavily relies on Russian arms, against Chinese coercion.

## **Affirmative---Solvency---China**

**The United States federal government should negotiate binding nuclear arms control with China.**

### **Solvency advocate for arms control with China**

**Gottemoeller 25**, Lecturer at Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies and Research Fellow at the Hoover Institute. She is the former NATO Deputy Secretary-General and U.S. Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security. (Rose, "Arms Control Is Not Dead Yet: America Should Pursue Parallel Nuclear Negotiations With China and Russia," Foreign Affairs, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/arms-control-not-dead-yet#>)

Full denuclearization, as Trump has gestured at, is too much to expect. But there is significant opportunity for Washington to make progress—in different ways—with Russia and China. In Russia, the United States is dealing with a nuclear peer. For six decades the two countries' nuclear relationship has been based on parity: an equivalence of numbers and freedom to mix on force structure, meaning that as long as they keep the total number of nuclear warheads below equal limits, they can deploy them on different delivery systems. The United States has preferred more sea-launched missiles, whereas Russia has opted for more intercontinental ballistic missiles, which are launched from the ground. Over this period, Washington and Moscow have been engaging in serious efforts to limit and reduce their arsenals of nuclear weapons, sometimes through treaties and sometimes through unilateral initiatives conducted in parallel. This nuclear arms limitation is now eroding. Trump's goal should be to restore it.

The United States should have a different objective with regard to China: to convince Beijing that its interests lie in predictability and stability. Unlike Russia's weapons, China's nuclear forces are still far inferior to those of the United States. Although its forces are modernizing quickly, China will not become a nuclear peer for a decade or more. In the meantime, Washington should engage with Beijing to understand its objectives, create predictability about future force structure and modernization plans, and lower the risk of misunderstandings that could lead to a nuclear crisis. Rather than focusing on the size of China's arsenal, the United States should be trying to build mutual understanding with China and exercise mutual restraint in order to avoid a nuclear arms race—in other words, **arms control**.

## **Affirmative---Solvency---Trilateral Negotiations**

**Even if they aren't fruitful, they drive a wedge between Russia and China**

**Lissner 21**, Assistant Professor at the U.S. Naval War College and international security scholar

(Rebecca, "The Future of Strategic Arms Control," Council on Foreign Relations,

[https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/lissner-dp\\_final.pdf](https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/lissner-dp_final.pdf))

In light of these triangular asymmetries, arms control that is comprehensive, symmetrical, and binding—that is, arms control that replicates the U.S.-Russia model in trilateral form—will be impossible to

achieve. Whereas a mutual and formal recognition of mutually assured destruction served as the basis for U.S.-Russia arms control at a time when those states had fairly symmetrical nuclear arsenals and doctrines, no 10 The Future of Strategic Arms Control corresponding recognition exists between the United States and China or China and Russia. Given these differences, the U.S.-Soviet approach for arms control and nuclear risk reduction is unlikely to succeed for the United States and China.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, trilateral negotiations could prove

fruitful in generating reciprocal restraints of a different, and initially more modest, variety. Such negotiations could also serve a broader, strategic end: creating friction and exposing divergent interests between China and Russia at a time when they are increasingly aligned in opposition to the United States.<sup>31</sup>

## **Affirmative---Communication Advantage**

### **Cooperative communication advantage**

**Lissner 21**, Assistant Professor at the U.S. Naval War College and international security scholar (Rebecca, “The Future of Strategic Arms Control,” Council on Foreign Relations, [https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/lissner-dp\\_final.pdf](https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/lissner-dp_final.pdf))

Arms control can establish communication mechanisms that build confidence between parties and provide venues to discuss perceived violations or address new factors the original agreement omitted. Strategic stability is a fundamentally intersubjective condition: it exists only when the nuclear powers in question believe it exists.<sup>9</sup>

To help bring about convergent understandings of strategic stability, the conditions that underlie it, and the changes that could threaten it, arms control can provide **venues for dialogue**. Strategic stability dialogues can elucidate the nuclear thinking of rivalrous states, creating some measure of predictability, and build confidence in parties’ commitment to implementation. Arms control agreements can provide avenues for settling disputes over implementation, including accusations of cheating, and integrate new or unforeseen capabilities into the terms of the agreement—thereby making the agreement impervious to inadvertent violations, resistant to misperception, and flexible amidst geopolitical or technological change. Arms control can also build broader trust among parties, building a **foundation for other cooperative ventures**.

## **Affirmative---AT DA's---Empirical**

### **Decades of other arms control agreements empirically denies DAs**

Thomas **Countryman 20**, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arms Control Association. He served as the acting under secretary of State for arms control and international security from 2016 to 2017 and as assistant secretary of State for international security and nonproliferation from 2011 to 2017. He retired from the U.S. Foreign Service with the rank of Minister Counselor in January 2017 after serving for 35 years. (“Why Nuclear Arms Control Matters Today,” <https://afsa.org/why-nuclear-arms-control-matters-today>)

Before 2017, every U.S. president dating back to John F. Kennedy proposed and pursued negotiations with Moscow as a means to regulate destabilizing nuclear arms competition and reduce the risk of the United States and its allies being destroyed in a nuclear war. With their diplomatic and military advisers, they sought and concluded a series of treaties, most with strong bipartisan support, that have made the United States and the world much safer, and reduced U.S. and Russian arsenals by 85 percent from Cold War peaks.

The current administration, however, is veering off course from the approach to nuclear risk reduction and arms control pursued by previous Republican and Democratic administrations. Worse, President Donald Trump’s team has not presented a coherent alternative road map to reduce the threats posed by nuclear weapons.

This departure from proven and effective nuclear risk reduction and arms control strategies is a matter of urgent concern, because, among other things, we face a higher risk of a U.S.-Russian nuclear war than at any time since the end of the Cold War.

Proven Rules of the Road

Previous U.S. presidents understood that talking to an adversary is not a sign of weakness, but a hardheaded and realistic means to reduce an existential threat posed to the United States. They came to realize that well-crafted arms control and nonproliferation treaties provide rules of the road that enable the United States to more effectively pursue its economic and security interests.

As Thomas Schelling and Morton Halperin argued in their seminal 1961 study, *Strategy and Arms Control*, nuclear weapons limitation agreements with adversaries can help achieve three critical foreign policy objectives: “the avoidance of war that neither side wants, minimizing the costs and risks of the arms competition, and curtailing the scope and violence of war in the event it occurs.”

Throughout the nuclear age, U.S. policymakers—from William **Foster**, Henry **Kissinger**, George **Shultz** and Brent **Scowcroft** to John **Kerry** and Rose **Gottemoeller**—have pursued arms control agreements because they are a vital tool that can constrain other nations’ ability to act against our interests, while still allowing the freedom of action that is necessary to defend U.S. interests and those of our close allies. In other words, arms control agreements are not a concession made by the United States, nor a favor done for another nation; they are an essential component of, and contributor to, our national security.

## **Affirmative---AT DA's---Deterrence**

### **Arms control doesn't sacrifice deterrence**

**Horschig 25**, fellow with the Project on Nuclear Issues at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and a non-resident research associate at the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs at the University of Central Florida (UCF). She received her PhD in security studies from the UCF. Her research examines proliferation, nonproliferation, and counterproliferation, as well as nuclear norms contestation and public opinion on nuclear issues. (Doreen, "Lessons from former arms control negotiators," Bulletin of American Scientists, <https://thebulletin.org/premium/2025-09/lessons-from-former-arms-control-negotiators/>)

Lesson Three: Arms control and deterrence policy can coexist

Another critical lesson gleaned from decades of experience in nuclear security policy is that arms control and deterrence are not mutually exclusive concepts; rather, they coexist, and can even enhance one another. This contrasts with the "us against them" mentality some hold, as observed by Bunn (Bunn 2025, 42:08). Experts who have spent careers in both domains firmly assert their interconnectedness.

## **Affirmative---AT DA's---Elections**

### **Arms control doesn't impact elections**

**Wolfsthal 20**, Former Senior Director for Arms Control at the National Security Council (Jon Brook, "Why Arms Control?," Dædalus, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, <https://www.amacad.org/publication/daedalus/why-arms-control>)

The prospect for new agreements remains viable because there is little public support for a new arms race, and concern about the risks of nuclear use are growing.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, there is **little evidence that arms**

**control issues have much if any impact on electoral politics either way**, creating space for political leaders to champion arms control as a component of a new strategy for improving American security if

they choose to do so. It remains true, even in the face of vocal but limited opposition from certain parts of the national security community, that arms control agreements have provided multiple advantages for the United States in the past, including direct military and national security benefits, and can provide them in the future if properly configured and implemented.

## **NEGATIVE EVIDENCE**

## Vagueness

### **Vague plans fail**

**Horschig 25**, fellow with the Project on Nuclear Issues at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and a non-resident research associate at the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs at the University of Central Florida (UCF). She received her PhD in security studies from the UCF. Her research examines proliferation, nonproliferation, and counterproliferation, as well as nuclear norms contestation and public opinion on nuclear issues. (Doreen, “Lessons from former arms control negotiators,” Bulletin of American Scientists, <https://thebulletin.org/premium/2025-09/lessons-from-former-arms-control-negotiators/>)

Lesson Four: It’s all in the details

One of the most profound lessons from the history of arms control is that these agreements are developed in an environment where robust, detailed verification and **meticulous language** are **absolutely essential**, precisely because of inherent mistrust and significant cultural differences between negotiating parties.

A fundamental lack of trust has always underpinned arms control negotiations. As Brooks put it, we negotiate with adversaries “because we are worried about going to war with them” and this deep suspicion means that “there is no such thing as the spirit of the treaty.

There’s what the words say” (Brooks 2025, 27:31-28:01). Miller states that the US side believed the Soviets would cheat, and indeed, he notes that Russia has cheated on “at least nine treaties and agreements and probably a tenth” (Miller 2025, 13:38). This history mandates extraordinarily intrusive and thorough verification. The INF Treaty, for example, pioneered an unprecedented level of verification including “perimeter portal monitoring” to ensure no covert missile production (Miller 2025, 15:00). Even seemingly minor details, like distinguishing missile ranges, involved immense technical effort.

This need for precision is further complicated by profound cultural nuances and negotiating styles. Miller described the classic Russian negotiating style where they “pocketed what you said and they did not admit at all to what they had conceded the night before” (Miller 2025, 9:36). Bunn recalled the silent contest of endurance, where Russian negotiators would “sit there and talk and talk and talk for hours and hours and hours on end. Not eat, not drink, not go to the bathroom” (Bunn 2025, 34:18-35:10). Brooks advised never asking directly “What do you think?” about a new proposal, as it could “box them in” (Brooks 2025, 1:16:16-1:17:04). Cultural differences extended to basic communication, like the Russian military not clearing their foreign ministry for missile names, or the importance of using correct military ranks (Brooks 2025, 1:13:54 – 1:15:01).

Such complexities underscore the **vital role of meticulous drafting**. Legal advisers, often from the State Department, need to ensure language is “**unambiguous**” and consistent with broader policy, preventing a treaty from being “**read two different ways**” (Brooks 2025, 44:39-46:07). The creation of detailed glossaries, as seen in START I, was necessary to clarify terms like “metric mile” that do not translate directly (a metric mile refers to 1500 meters, or 0.93 miles). Even seemingly trivial reciprocity, like Washington providing detailed bomber information despite having no strategic purpose for it, was included to ensure the agreement appeared “equitable” (Brooks 2025, 39:30-40:26).

Successful arms control demands not only strategic foresight but also an **unwavering commitment to detail**, a deep understanding of the adversary’s mindset, and a **legal precision that leaves no room for ambiguity**. This comprehensive approach can help to build agreements that stand a chance of surviving the test of time and mistrust.

## DA Links---Dip Cap

### **Dip cap DA link**

**Ford 13**, PhD, non-resident senior associate with the Geopolitics and Foreign Policy Department at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and professor of international relations and strategic studies at Missouri State University's School of Defense and Strategic Studies (Chris, "A Perspective upon Arms Control," <https://www.newparadigmsforum.com/p1618>)

Finally, one should remember that **arms control** has an **opportunity cost**. National leaders only have so much **time, energy, and political capital** available that can be "invested" in the pursuit of policy objectives. As a result, **seeking an arms control agreement necessarily means – as a practical matter – that one doesn't work so hard on other initiatives**. This is fine if there aren't more important things that need attention, but if one's strategic circumstances are such that there isn't much danger of a spiraling arms competition – or if one doesn't face a dangerous adversary whose weapon acquisition or behavior one needs to constrain or at least better understand for one's own strategic planning – it **might be wiser to spend one's finite reserves** of political and **diplomatic capital** on **other things**. Arms control should not be pursued out of mere inertia, or solely out of some politically-correct conception of virtue ethics that prizes seeking arms control for its own sake even where achieving it would contribute little or nothing to peace and security. It should be pursued where the advantages to be had outweigh what one could do with that time, energy, and political capital on other policy fronts, but not otherwise.

### **Unilat avoids, and each new party increases the dip-cap expenditure**

**Lissner 21**, Assistant Professor at the U.S. Naval War College and international security scholar (Rebecca, "The Future of Strategic Arms Control," Council on Foreign Relations, [https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/lissner-dp\\_final.pdf](https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/lissner-dp_final.pdf))

In determining the correct number and identity of parties for future arms control, the United States will face clear trade-offs. Unilateral measures are the easiest to achieve because the authority to conduct them rests exclusively with the United States—but reciprocity cannot be assured and, even if reciprocal restraints are embraced, unilateral measures lack agreed-upon mechanisms for verification. Bilateral U.S.-Russia strategic nuclear arms control has been the dominant configuration, and the United States and Russia have established habits of cooperation in the negotiation and implementation of their agreements—but the exclusion of China from this format grows increasingly problematic. With the incremental addition of more parties to arms control agreements, the reach of a reciprocal restraint regime expands—but bargaining grows more complex and the number of **veto points**, including within each nation's domestic political system, increases.

## DA Links---Conventional Build-up

### **Trump has to ramp up military spending to garner political support for arms control**

**Balzer 25**, Fellow at AEI (Kyle, “Trump’s Denuclearization Is a Nonstarter—but There Is a Future for Arms Control,” American Enterprise Institute, <https://www.aei.org/foreign-and-defense-policy/trumps-denuclearization-is-a-nonstarter-but-there-is-a-future-for-arms-control/>)

But why, exactly, did Gorbachev feel this way? Because military, according to two Soviet officials engaged in arms control negotiations, the Soviets suffered from “insufficient technological development vis-à-vis the United States.” And politically, Reagan exploited America’s newfound military advantages by conducting quiet but no less transformative diplomacy with the Kremlin to tamp down Cold War tensions. Gorbachev saw no point in another round of futile military competition with a rival seeking peaceful relations.

If Trump desires arms control, the United States will have to compete shrewdly in another round of military competition to help engender the political conditions conducive to arms control. Though there may be an opening for a simple extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia, it is difficult to see how this would be to the United States’ benefit. Extending New START leaves Russia’s theater nuclear weapons—weapons Moscow is currently wielding to paralyze NATO and advance its revanchist political ambitions in Ukraine—free from control. Moreover, such a narrow arms control agreement with Russia does not address China’s massive buildup of strategic and theater nuclear weapons, which is enabling Beijing’s short-of-war coercion campaign against America’s political interests and allies in the western Pacific. Washington, of course, could always pull Beijing into trilateral negotiations with Moscow. But due to China’s revisionist national ambitions that clash fundamentally with America’s, and due to the fact that China’s nuclear weapons support these ambitions, trilateral arms control negotiations are likely a nonstarter in the near term.

The Trump administration, then, would be wise to disabuse itself of the notion that “denuclearization” offers an opportunity to halve the overall defense budget—quite the opposite. Détente is not on offer. And an extended period of military competition is likely. But Trump, like Reagan, can help reshape the political environment by ramping up defense spending to lock in a military edge against China and Russia.

### **It would be a political requirement for arms control**

**Lissner 21**, Assistant Professor at the U.S. Naval War College and international security scholar (Rebecca, “The Future of Strategic Arms Control,” Council on Foreign Relations, [https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/lissner-dp\\_final.pdf](https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/lissner-dp_final.pdf))

This fragile accommodation could also founder as arms control agreements reach into new territory. Limitations on U.S. missile defense are, for example, a central priority for both China and Russia, but agreeing to any such constraints would be a political lightning rod, and perhaps even a third rail. Recent political science research indicates that, as a Democrat, Biden would face an especially high “ratification premium”; gaining Senate approval for a post–New START arms control treaty could entail a political price in the form of defense spending that progressives are simply unwilling to pay.<sup>58</sup> Hawks could also construe arms control as overly “soft” on China or Russia—a line of political attack that partisan polarization all but guarantees. Anticipating such gridlock and taxation of political capital, Biden or his successors could simply turn away from treaty-based arms control and pursue executive agreements or other, less formal measures.

## DA Links---Nuclear Modernization

### **Nuclear modernization will be required to win domestic political support for arms control**

John D. Maurer 21, a professor at the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies at Air University and a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute (“Restoring Nuclear Bipartisanship: Force Modernization and Arms Control,” War on the Rocks, <https://warontherocks.com/restoring-nuclear-bipartisanship-force-modernization-and-arms-control/>)

Despite these differences, there is a deal to be made on nuclear weapons and arms control. The president and Congress should work together to modernize American nuclear forces and develop a long-term plan for great-power arms control. By modernizing the nuclear arsenal and linking that modernization to serious arms control proposals, the president and Congress could advance both American national security abroad and political unity at home. Absent such bipartisanship, the United States is unlikely to enjoy the benefits of either force modernization or arms control.

#### **Nuclear Bipartisanship, Then and Now**

For much of the Cold War, Americans on both sides of the political aisle supported nuclear bipartisanship. While debates persisted over specific policies and programs, both leading Democrats and leading Republicans supported progressively improving the nuclear arsenal and negotiating arms control agreements with the Soviet Union. Nuclear bipartisanship receded as the Cold War ended and American leaders focused on other pressing security challenges. Despite this pause, nuclear bipartisanship received new life in the Obama administration, as the president and Congress came together to ratify the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia while also committing to rebuild American nuclear forces. As the United States faces a return to great-power competition, this combination of nuclear force modernization and strategic arms control is increasingly important to American national security.

Skeptical observers have long questioned the logic of nuclear bipartisanship. Why should the United States modernize its nuclear forces as it draws them down? Conversely, why should American leaders enter into agreements with authoritarian, untrustworthy adversaries that place limits on U.S. nuclear capabilities? To critics on both the left and the right, nuclear bipartisanship has always lacked a clear rationale. Ironically, despite their radically different views, partisans agree that we should ditch compromise and pursue either arms control or nuclear modernization.

Like many products of the Cold War, nuclear bipartisanship is counterintuitive, but it is not illogical. Nuclear bipartisanship operates at both the domestic and international levels. Domestically, pursuing nuclear modernization and strategic arms control in tandem builds the political capital necessary to sustain both policies over the long term. Internationally, this approach shapes adversary behaviors in ways that enhance American nuclear capabilities and promote successful arms control.

#### **Defeating Domestic Spoilers**

While critics claim that nuclear modernization and arms control have little in common, the two policies face similar domestic political challenges. Both require long-term commitments across multiple administrations and Congresses to bear fruit, and both face periodic controversies that would threaten their continuation. Linking the two together provides greater durability to ride out these controversies and achieve long-term successes.

The American nuclear arsenal is a vast system painstakingly assembled and reassembled over many decades. Successfully replacing the older components of the nuclear arsenal will take decades, if not the remainder of the century. And while nuclear modernization is not a major cost driver when compared to other financial liabilities and represents only a small fraction of the total defense budget, it does require consistent funding across those decades. As such, nuclear modernization will always be a target for those seeking to trim costs while avoiding difficult conversations about foreign policy priorities and domestic entitlements.

American leaders repeatedly delayed modernization in the 1990s and 2000s to focus on force reduction or long-running counter-insurgencies. Most of these decisions seemed reasonable under the circumstances. It would be difficult to argue, for example, that nuclear modernization was more pressing than procuring mine-resistant vehicles for immediate use in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, decades of deferral demonstrates that the long-term value of modernization the nuclear arsenal will struggle to attract political support when set against the opportunity or crisis of the day. Even as the United States returns to great-power competition with an increasingly decrepit arsenal, the ravages of the pandemic and growing concern about climate change create strong pressures to delay or abandon nuclear modernization efforts.

Strategic arms control is similar to nuclear force modernization in its long-term orientation and vulnerability to disruption. Arms control is vulnerable because it can be reversed. Most arms control agreements place limits on specific weapons systems — how many can be built, where they can be deployed, or how they can be used. Some also place limits on the material capability to build weapons — for example, treaties which limit not just the number of missiles or warheads, but the number of missile factories or nuclear enrichment facilities. Yet, few if any agreements eliminate the technological basis for building weapons in the future, since the basic technology often has important civilian uses. Rocket boosters can be used on intercontinental ballistic missiles or for a country’s civilian space programs. As a result, there is rarely any barrier to rolling back an arms control agreement and rebuilding the dismantled forces later, if the parties of the agreement decide to do so. Arms control’s political volatility compounds its reversibility. As relations with adversaries worsen, so too does the temptation grows to tear up arms control agreements in frustration.

Sustaining arms control and nonproliferation efforts has proven challenging in recent years. The Trump administration quickly scrapped one of the signature nonproliferation achievements of the Obama administration, the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (or Iran nuclear deal). Trump also abandoned Obama’s attempts to bring Russia back into compliance with the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the

1992 Open Skies Treaty, in favor of withdrawing from both agreements. The point is not to apportion blame but merely to note how ineffective a tool of foreign policy arms control becomes when successive administrations reverse their predecessors' policies.

Given their similar requirements and vulnerabilities, we should not be surprised that proponents of nuclear force modernization and strategic arms limitation have historically banded together to pursue nuclear bipartisanship.

Lyndon Johnson linked specific arms control objectives to modernizing American forces in the late 1960s. His Republican successor, Richard Nixon did likewise, setting a pattern that would continue for the remainder of the Cold War. Nuclear bipartisanship did not end debates about either force modernization or arms control, which remained fierce throughout the 1970s and 1980s. But pursuing force modernization and arms control at the same time enabled decades of gradual, but steady, improvement of American nuclear forces and long periods of successful arms control observance, including the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty, which lasted 29 years; the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which lasted 18; and the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty, which has lasted 53 years and counting. Neither policy is likely to be as successful politically on its own.

## **Nuclear modernization is explicitly tied to arms control**

**Lissner 21**, Assistant Professor at the U.S. Naval War College and international security scholar (Rebecca, "The Future of Strategic Arms Control," Council on Foreign Relations, [https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/lissner-dp\\_final.pdf](https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/lissner-dp_final.pdf))

Polarization could also be eroding the consensus that undergirded the last remaining arms control

agreement between the United States and Russia. New START rested upon a bipartisan compromise initially articulated by the Perry-Schlesinger Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, which stated: "The United States should continue to pursue an approach to reducing nuclear dangers that balances deterrence, arms control, and nonproliferation. Singular emphasis on one or the other element would reduce the nuclear security of the United States."<sup>55</sup> In effect, hawkish Republicans accepted arms control as the

prerequisite for nuclear modernization and more dovish Democrats accepted modernization as the price for arms control.<sup>56</sup>

Democratic Senator Robert Menendez put it plainly in 2018: "bipartisan support for nuclear modernization is tied to maintaining an arms control process that controls and seeks to reduce Russian nuclear forces."<sup>57</sup> As partisan animosity has increased and bipartisan compromises have become more difficult, Democrats could rethink their support for robust nuclear modernization, further jeopardizing future prospects for arms control.

## DA Links---Concessions on Ukraine

### **Arms control with Russia necessitates US concessions on Ukraine**

Leonor **Tomero 23**, is a leading expert on nuclear deterrence, national security, space and missile defense, including applying innovative technologies and concepts for strategic deterrence. She served as deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear and missile defense policy and as counsel and Strategic Forces Subcommittee Democratic staff lead on the House Armed Services Committee. (“With New START Setbacks Challenging Arms Control, US Must Work to Reduce Chances of Nuclear War, With or Without Russia,” Russia Matters, <https://www.russiamatters.org/analysis/new-start-setbacks-challenging-arms-control-us-must-work-reduce-chances-nuclear-war-or>)

As frictions around New START have ramped up over the past year, the messages from Washington and Moscow have sounded very different:

While the United States has emphasized New START compliance and the need to reduce nuclear risk and maintain dialogue, Russia has suggested that progress on New START will depend on obtaining concessions in the war in Ukraine. **This has precluded any progress on nuclear arms control.** Specifically,

though some diplomatic communication continues, Russia’s escalation of the New START situation—with its unilateral suspension, first, of inspections and, ultimately, of implementation of New START itself—has made reasonable talks increasingly difficult. (Moscow would probably argue that it is Western support for Ukraine that has led to this result.)

While Russia’s position could reflect a straightforward desire to use New START as leverage in talks over Ukraine, it also might indicate a more fundamental and long-term rift with the United States on the value of nuclear arms control as a useful tool for national (and international) security. Policymakers must weigh both possibilities.

Ukraine Tensions in the New START Context

As noted above, Russia has clearly linked progress on nuclear arms control, including New START, to the conflict in **Ukraine.** In an indirect exchange this month, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov reportedly said there was no chance for Moscow’s decision on New START to be reconsidered “until the United States changes its behavior ... in relation to Ukraine.” which has included billions of dollars in U.S. security assistance to Kyiv; in response, outgoing State Department spokesman Ned Price said explicitly that “Russia’s purported suspension of new START will ... not stop the United States from continuing to support Ukraine.”

## **DA Links---China**

### **US-Russia bilateral arms control ensures they both lose to China**

Lissner 21, Assistant Professor at the U.S. Naval War College and international security scholar (Rebecca, “The Future of Strategic Arms Control,” Council on Foreign Relations, [https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/lissner-dp\\_final.pdf](https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/lissner-dp_final.pdf))

Yet if U.S.-Russia arms control were to proceed along its current path, these China-centric risks would **go**

**unaddressed**—and, in some cases, a purely bilateral framework could **expose both the United States and Russia** to new dangers generated by China’s unconstrained military modernization.<sup>22</sup> Given the warming

relationship between China and Russia, Russia could possibly be more tolerant of changes to the trilateral strategic balance—though, with a shared border, overlapping notional spheres of influence, and a history of cooperation-turned-enmity, Russia has reason to be warier of growing Chinese military power than it publicly acknowledges.<sup>23</sup> The United States is of course in a different position. Sino-U.S. relations are on a downward trajectory, which COVID-19 has only accelerated, and the two nations have sharply different visions for the future of the Asian regional order.<sup>24</sup> The United States can only deter a Chinese bid for regional hegemony and preserve its position as an Indo-Pacific power if it maintains a military presence sufficient to ensure the costs of any U.S.-China war remain prohibitively high.<sup>25</sup>

## **DA Links---Politics**

### **Arms control requires political capital**

**Wolfsthal 20**, Former Senior Director for Arms Control at the National Security Council (Jon Brook, “Why Arms Control?,” Dædalus, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, <https://www.amacad.org/publication/daedalus/why-arms-control>)

Sadly, the consensus for negotiated constraints on nuclear forces has been weakened by the broader domestic polarization in the United States and a lack of strategic consensus on how to deal with the geopolitical challenges posed by Russia and China. Ideological commitment to certain programs—primarily national missile defense—at the expense of preserving global nuclear stability and the inability of the American political system to sustain support for negotiated treaties from one administration to the next have increased instability and reduced the perceived viability of arms control.<sup>10</sup> Building support for new agreements in the United States will take **time**, **patience**, and an investment of **political capital**, but in the end should be pursued if they enhance American security.

### **Arms control faces an inhospitable domestic political environment**

**Lissner 21**, Assistant Professor at the U.S. Naval War College and international security scholar (Rebecca, “The Future of Strategic Arms Control,” Council on Foreign Relations, [https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/lissner-dp\\_final.pdf](https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/lissner-dp_final.pdf))

An inhospitable domestic-political environment within the United States compounds the international hurdles to arms control. All of the U.S.- Russian arms control treaties that entered into force during the Cold War received bipartisan approval with eighty-eight or more affirmative votes. By contrast, the most recent bilateral arms control agreement— New START, ratified in 2011—passed seventy-one to twenty-six, with only 32 percent of Republican senators supporting the treaty.<sup>50</sup> This outcome seems to reflect several trends and dynamics in U.S. politics that portend greater difficulty for future arms control treaties. The first trend is sharpening partisan polarization in the United States—not only among the mass public, but also evident among policy elites—as Democrats and Republicans have sorted into two opposing political camps.<sup>51</sup> Partisan polarization hampers U.S. foreign policy in many respects, including by presenting barriers to treaty ratification, which requires a two-thirds vote by the U.S. Senate. Over the last two decades, the number of new international agreements concluded by the United States has plummeted. Treaty ratification has experienced an especially sharp downward turn.<sup>52</sup> Although not solely attributable to partisan polarization, this trend does reflect fundamental divergence on the nature of U.S. interests and the best methods to achieve national security objectives, especially as concerns about the encroachments of international law on U.S. sovereignty have become a particular stalking horse of some on the ideological right.<sup>53</sup> Diminished congressional interest in arms control issues makes reflexive partisanship even likelier, as members decline to consider the merits of an agreement substantively and instead vote along party lines or **weaponize arms control politically**.<sup>54</sup>

### **Negotiations with Russia collapse PC**

**Bortnik 25**, Ukrainian political analyst and director at the Ukrainian Institute of Politics (Ruslan, “The Potential Extension of New START: Global (In)Stability Ahead?,” Ukrainian Institute of Politics, <https://uiamp.org/en/isled/potential-extension-new-start-global-instability-ahead>)

Politically, negotiations on a successor to New START will require at least a minimal détente. During the Cold War, arms control agreements, such as SALT I in 1972 and the INF Treaty in 1987, were concluded during periods of improved relations or following serious crises that pushed both sides to seek stability. If the current Russo-Ukrainian war continues unabated, it is difficult to imagine that there will be the level of trust and **political capital** necessary to conclude a comprehensive arms control treaty. Domestic politics also play a role: Ratification of any new treaty would require two-thirds support in the U.S. Senate, which, in the current atmosphere of mistrust toward Moscow, could become a **serious obstacle**.

### **The “term” nuclear arms control is polarizing**

Wolfsthal 20, Former Senior Director for Arms Control at the National Security Council (Jon Brook, “Why Arms Control?,” Dædalus, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, <https://www.amacad.org/publication/daedalus/why-arms-control>)

Today, **nuclear arms control** is a **polarizing** term in the United States, and some analysts believe that legally binding, Senate-approved arms control deals have no viable future due to perceived costs and objectionable Russian behavior.<sup>4</sup> While some experts and officials see nuclear treaties as commonsense enhancements to national security and defense policy that should be pursued despite partisan opposition, critics see nuclear deals as dangerous and an unnecessary constraint on American freedom of action in the face of growing Russian and Chinese dangers.<sup>5</sup>

## **DA Links---Politics---President Required**

### **Presidential leadership would be required**

**Horschig 25**, fellow with the Project on Nuclear Issues at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and a non-resident research associate at the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs at the University of Central Florida (UCF). She received her PhD in security studies from the UCF. Her research examines proliferation, nonproliferation, and counterproliferation, as well as nuclear norms contestation and public opinion on nuclear issues. (Doreen, “Lessons from former arms control negotiators,” *Bulletin of American Scientists*, <https://thebulletin.org/premium/2025-09/lessons-from-former-arms-control-negotiators/>)

Lesson Five: Presidential leadership and political will are paramount

A recurring and vital lesson from the history of arms control is that presidential leadership and sustained political will are crucial for achieving significant breakthroughs and progress. Without high-level executive engagement, negotiations often stall, and ambitious initiatives fail to materialize.

President George H. W. Bush’s PNIs exemplify this principle. As Koch notes, the name “Presidential Nuclear Initiative” is not a misnomer, as it truly was the first President Bush’s personal undertaking (Koch 2025, 1:06). His deep background as CIA director, and then ambassador to the UN, combined with his acute concerns about the command and control of nuclear forces and the risk of proliferation following the Soviet coup, spurred these unprecedented, initially unilateral measures. This direct involvement was so profound that Bush and Gorbachev even “worked out the language” for Bush’s public announcement of Soviet reciprocity (Koch 2025, 16:53). Gorbachev’s own political will, driven by a desire to shift resources from military to economic development, was similarly “fortuitous” and made a “huge difference” in facilitating agreements like START I (Koch 2025, 37:47).

Leaders also play a crucial role in overcoming bureaucratic inaction and streamlining complex processes.

Miller recalls that his office essentially “kicked off START II” by presenting the idea of deep cuts and a MIRV ban directly to President Bush, who then endorsed the concept (Miller 2025, 50:37). Brooks adds that “all the really exciting decisions get made by presidents and secretaries of state,” indicating that high-level intervention can cut through the red tape that negotiators might otherwise create over months of talks (Brooks 2025, 9:55). The unique euphoria following the end of the Cold War, coupled with decisive leadership, allowed START II to be negotiated quickly.

Even in later periods, presidential backing remains essential. President George W. Bush’s desire to avoid contentious arms control processes, influenced by his father’s PNIs, shaped the rapid and less formal nature of SORT (Miller, 2025, 37:10). Furthermore, securing ratification for treaties like New START required significant political effort, with Vice President Biden’s engagement acting as a “bargaining chip” to win over skeptical senators (Bunn, 2025, 35:32 – 36:21).

Ultimately, the historical record strongly suggests that arms control success is often directly proportional to the visible commitment and hands-on leadership of a nation’s highest political figures.

## DA Links---Politics---Link Turns Case

### **Politics links means other countries say no**

**Lissner 21**, Assistant Professor at the U.S. Naval War College and international security scholar (Rebecca, “The Future of Strategic Arms Control,” Council on Foreign Relations, [https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/lissner-dp\\_final.pdf](https://static.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/lissner-dp_final.pdf))

Finally, partisan polarization undermines the United States’ credibility as a counterparty in international diplomacy. including arms control negotiations. Arms control treaties are easy for presidents to exit and therefore they are only as binding as a president’s willingness to uphold bargains struck by his predecessors. Polarization thus injects greater volatility into U.S. foreign policy because of the likelihood of swings and reversals whenever the presidency changes hands from a Democrat to a Republican. Allies and adversaries alike will observe this inconstancy when considering diplomatic agreements, especially costly ones that rest upon U.S. promises of future restraint.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the congressional politics of the Iran nuclear deal encapsulate the difficulties of nuclear diplomacy in a polarized Washington, as the Barack Obama administration sought to circumvent congressional gridlock by pursuing an executive agreement rather than a treaty, and Congress’ subsequent, highly contentious review of the deal validated the wisdom of that strategy. Once Trump took office, however, he pulled the United States out of the deal and reinstated sweeping sanctions on Iran—underscoring the ease with which presidents can withdraw from informal agreements.

### **Link turns case**

**Böller 21**, Political scientist at the University of Kaiserslautern (Florian, “Brakeman or Booster? Presidents, Ideological Polarization, Reciprocity, and the Politics of US Arms Control,” International Politics, <https://d-nb.info/1243322357/34>)

The analysis presented here is important in order to understand the sources of polarization of foreign and security policy. In the field of arms control, domestic contestation primarily results from the rise of conservative treaty skeptics within the Republican party, while Democrats’ support for international agreements has remained comparably stable over time. Although GOP support for other traditional elements of US foreign policy, such as NATO, has continued, even during the Trump presidency, the preference for arms control agreements has consistently declined among Republicans since the end of the Cold War. Treaties such as the CTBT, New START and the ATT, as well as executive agreements (JCPOA with Iran), have been opposed by a majority of Republicans in the Senate. At the other end of the ideological spectrum, liberal treaty supporters on the Democratic side have been crucial in mobilizing support for treaties, such as New START.

These domestic conditions entail severe consequences for the global role of the USA. It is clear that the Trump administration, and most of its congressional allies, disregarded the possibility of trustful international commitments. At the same time, it is important to note that this development started before the Trump era (see Schultz, 2017: 10–15). Here, my article underscored that the conjunction of conditions at critical junctures—the president’s unilateral foreign policy doctrine, in combination with a supportive majority in the Senate—propelled this decline of US leadership. The result of this domestic context is a severe crisis of international arms control. After the break-up of the INF, Open Skies, and JCPOA agreements, the New START treaty is one of the few remaining arms control treaties, after the new Biden administration swiftly moved to extend it.

The contrast between the Trump and Biden administrations reveals an important consequence of the identified polarization: US arms control policies are increasingly volatile, which may complicate negotiations as other actors will question Washington’s reliability. Furthermore, the domestic win-set to ratify new agreements remains small, because conservative treaty skeptics maintain a veto position. The remaining option, concluding executive agreements without the Senate’s consent, also suffers from reduced reliability. The next conservative administration may again terminate major arms control agreements.

## **Counterplan---Modernize/Expand Arsenal**

**The US should maintain its current arsenal, and not pursue arms control. Once the arsenal is large enough, that naturally facilitates arms control**

**Peters 26**, Senior Research Fellow at the Heritage Foundation (Robert, “Arms Control After New START: Comatose, Not Dead,” Heritage Foundation, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/commentary/arms-control-after-new-start-comatose-not-dead>)

For these reasons, the aforementioned bipartisan commission noted that given the deteriorating security environment, the United States must field a nuclear arsenal that is larger and more diverse than the one fielded today. Once the United States demonstrates that it has the ability and willingness to deploy a significantly larger and more diverse arsenal, it will have given China a compelling reason to come to the arms-control table.

Second, China will likely continue to build its nuclear arsenal for years to come—but it will likely not engage in an uninhibited numerical build-up akin to what the United States and the Soviet Union did during the Cold War, when each side fielded 30,000 or so weapons. China may grow its arsenal from 600 warheads to 1,500 to 3,000—but at a certain point it will likely believe it has sufficient weapons to achieve its purposes—whether that purpose is to deter a strategic attack on China or engage in nuclear warfighting. But without a strategic rationale to build endless numbers of nuclear weapons, China likely will feel it has achieved strategic sufficiency and does not require additional weapons.

When one or both or some combination of those two conditions are met—that the United States builds enough weapons to compel China to the arms-control table or China believes that additional nuclear weapons will not improve its security condition in a meaningful way—arms control will likely “awaken” from its dormancy. At that point, the United States, China, and likely Russia will be able to sit down at the negotiating table.

That point, however, is unlikely to come for many years—probably at least a decade or more, given the time scales involved in building and fielding nuclear weapons. It may be 2040—or later—until the world gets back to meaningful arms control.

For the time being, the United States should **field the arsenal it needs to deter its adversaries** and **not worry about arms control**.

## No Solvency---China

**The US is already trying, and China says no**

**Peters 26**, Senior Research Fellow at the Heritage Foundation (Robert, “Arms Control After New START: Comatose, Not Dead,” Heritage Foundation,

<https://www.heritage.org/defense/commentary/arms-control-after-new-start-comatose-not-dead>)

Arms control, however, is not “dead”—it is simply “comatose” for the foreseeable future. And the reason is just as much due to Chinese reluctance to engage in arms-control discussions as it is to Russian “noncompliance with treaty requirements”—otherwise known as “cheating.”

For years, the United States has attempted to engage China in arms-control discussions. However, China consistently has rejected such outreaches. And not only for preliminary discussions for a treaty, but for non-binding activities such as confidence-building measures, transparency efforts, risk reduction, or basic discussions on strategic stability.

President Trump’s administration correctly notes that arms control has its merits and that the United States will continue to seek arms-control agreements, but also that any future agreements must include the People’s Republic of China. This is critically important, because China is the fastest-growing nuclear power on the planet and on track to field as many nuclear weapons as the United States within a decade.

When combined with the Russian nuclear arsenal—which today has roughly 1,800 more nuclear weapons fielded than the United States—then the United States is at an acute disadvantage compared to the current and future combined arsenals of Russia and China.

As noted however, China is **unwilling to engage in arms-control discussions**, and the United States has no reason to engage in bilateral arms-control discussions with Russia. Even if the Russians didn’t cheat, they’re only part of the deterrence challenge the United States faces, given the ever-growing nuclear arsenals of China and increasingly North Korea.

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