Research Report | DISDHMUN 2025

# Security Council Building Trust and Cooperation in Arms Control Negotiations

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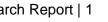
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### Forum: Security Council

### Issue: Building Trust and Cooperation in Arms Control Negotiations

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**Position: President** 





### Introduction

In 1986, during the Cold War, more than 60,000 nuclear warheads were in nuclear arsenals, but this number was reduced to less than 20,000 in the 2010s. This success can be largely attributed to successful arms control negotiations between the United States and Russia. Such negotiations focus on building transparency in the production of military arms and limiting dangerous weapons. Currently, however, arms control is in a crisis. Several treaties between the United States and Russia regulating nuclear weapons have expired, while modern military technologies and geopolitical conflicts pose unprecedented threats.

Arms control negotiations involve more than regulating nuclear weapons, since regulating conventional arms, as well as emerging military technologies like autonomous weapons and hypersonic missiles, is also important. Although some international treaties such as the Biological Weapons Convention and the Arms Trade Treaty have been effective at promoting responsibility in the production and distribution of specific weapons, more work has to be done on promoting safety for civilians in armed conflicts and international stability through arms control negotiations.

With more international tensions and increased disinformation, mistrust between states seems to be rising. This is detrimental to arms control negotiations, as they rely on trust and mutual responsibility. Therefore, establishing international agreements on promoting cooperation in arms control negotiations is essential for ensuring that emerging military threats are addressed appropriately. This would contribute to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 of peace, justice and strong institutions.

# **Definition of Key Terms**

1. Arms Control Negotiations

Arms control negotiations are discussions between two or more countries aimed at reducing the production and/or deployment of military weapons. Sometimes, they also focus on promoting transparency in the production of weapons.

2. Disarmament cf. Arms Limitation

While multilateral disarmament is aimed at reducing the number of existing military weapons, arms limitation agreements cap the number of specific weapons that a country can hold.

3. Non-Proliferation





Non-proliferation means reducing the spread of military arms by preventing countries from possessing them. One example is the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which limits the number of states that can hold nuclear weapons.

4. Deterrence

When discussing arms control, deterrence refers to the potential of powerful weapons to caution other countries from using military force.

5. Multilateral Treaty

Multilateral treaties refer to agreements that are reached between many different states. In arms control, negotiating multilateral agreements is often challenging, but necessary to ensure comprehensive regulation.

6. <u>Quantitative Agreements</u>

Quantitative agreements between countries focus on limiting the number of specific weapons that countries can produce or deploy.

7. <u>Qualitative Agreements</u>

Qualitative agreements refer to agreements which prohibit the use of specific military technologies.

8. Horizontal Agreements

Horizontal agreements are treaties related to non-proliferation.

9. Military Arsenals

A military arsenal is a building that stores weapons. In the context of arms control, the term is often used to refer to all military arms that a country holds.

10. Weapons of Mass Destruction

Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) include nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons capable of causing widespread harm.

11. Conventional Arms

Conventional arms are weapons commonly used in military conflicts but do not include WMD. These include tanks, combat aircraft, and warships.

12. <u>Autonomous Weapons Systems</u>



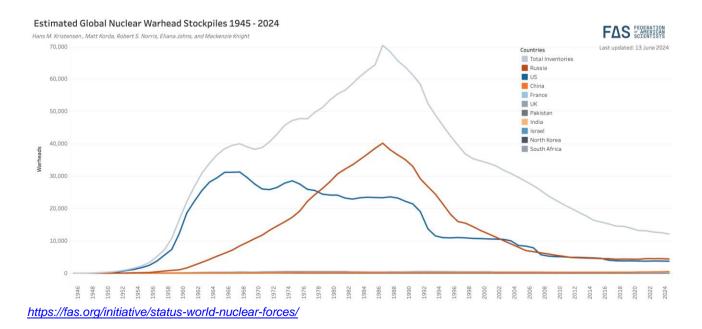
Autonomous Weapon Systems operate without human control in military conflicts and are sometimes referred to as "killer robots".

### **General Overview**

#### History of Arms Control

Efforts to promote peace and to limit the deployment of dangerous weapons go back a long time in history. Already the cities in ancient Greece agreed on guidelines for war, for example by prohibiting city states from cutting off water supplies of other cities. Such efforts continued during the Middle Ages, with several initiatives from the Catholic Church with the primary motivation of protecting the clergy. This included banning the use of crossbows in wars between Christians. Arms control also played a role during World War I, when chemical weapons were banned by the Geneva Protocol. However, the states participating in the war did not always comply with this agreement.

Arms control was important during the Cold War. During this time, the first nuclear weapons were developed and posed a serious threat, considering the tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Largely thanks to several arms control agreements, such as the Limited Test Ban Treaty from 1963 and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty from 1972, a nuclear war between the two countries was prevented. Nikita Khrushchev, the former Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, wrote in a letter to former U.S. President John F. Kennedy that "[w]e should like to continue the exchange of views on the prohibition of atomic and thermonuclear weapons, on general disarmament and other problems relating to the relaxation of international tension." After the Cold War, the U.S. and Russia continued negotiating arms control agreements, although many have expired today. The chart below shows how nuclear arsenals developed between 1945 and 2024, demonstrating the success of some arms control agreements.





### The Importance of Arms Control Negotiations

To prevent devastating military conflicts, it is essential to establish arms control agreements. By ensuring responsibility and accountability between countries, such treaties can help make the world safer. Specifically, the primary benefits of effective arms control agreements include:

1. Limiting WMD

WMD pose a substantial threat to people all around the world. Nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons can all destroy cities and kill many humans when deployed by governments or terrorist groups. With effective arms control agreements, the number of WMD that countries are allowed to own can be limited or even reduced. Therefore, arms control negotiations are crucial for one of the highest priorities of the United Nations: Disarmament. This approach was successful during the Cold War at preventing a nuclear war and is important for dealing with current risks caused by destructive weapons.

2. <u>Regulating Conventional Arms</u>

Arms control agreements help limit WMD, as well as conventional arms that also cause substantial civilian casualties around the world. Some conventional arms, like antipersonnel landmines are generally dangerous towards civilians when used in military conflicts, while other conventional arms primarily cause civilian harm when entering the black market. Arms control has the potential to reduce these risks by establishing clear regulations for the use of weapons in military conflicts and by regulating the distribution of conventional arms, preventing their illegal trade. One prominent example of effective conventional arms control is the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, which helped the participating states reduce their conventional armaments by more than 52,000 from 1992 to 2008.

3. <u>Greater Transparency</u>

Arms control agreements often mandate countries to be more transparent with their production and possession of weapons, particularly WMD. One such example is the New START Treaty between the U.S. and Russia, which provides verification measures by requiring the countries to share information about their nuclear weapons. Improving transparency related to weapons is essential for maintaining trust between countries and providing possibilities to verify compliance with agreements.

Current Challenges in Arms Control

Today, arms control faces substantial challenges, including:

1. <u>New Military Technologies</u>



New and destructive weapons are emerging due to technological advancements. These include autonomous weapons, which can operate without direct human control, hypersonic missiles, which can carry nuclear warheads over long distances at extremely high speeds, and new biological weapons. Modern biological weapons, for example, could be used to introduce deadly viruses in war zones. It is unclear whether existing arms control regulations can effectively address these unprecedented threats, while new ideas on how to manage them are often controversial.

#### 2. Limited Verifiability

Even when qualitative, quantitative, or horizontal arms control agreements between nations are reached, verifying compliance with them is challenging. Recently, some nations were accused of not complying with existing treaties. For example, in 2023, the U.S. reported that Russia did not adhere to the verification obligations in the New START Treaty. Conversely, the Russian government argued that U.S. sanctions related to the war in Ukraine prohibited Russian inspections regarding New START in the United States. Disputes like these hurt trust in arms control negotiations. Therefore, it is crucial to improve transparency and verifiability of arms control measures.

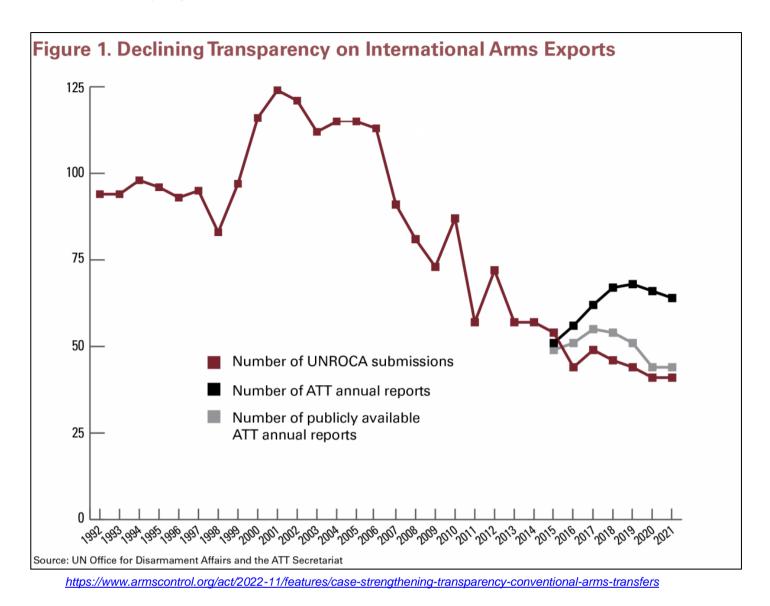
#### 3. Expiring Treaties

Several treaties that previously set the basis for arms control, particularly regulations for WMD, have expired or are expiring soon. For example, the U.S. withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019, and the last remaining treaty limiting nuclear arsenals for the U.S. and Russia, the New START Treaty, will expire in 2026 if the two countries do not agree on an extension. This means that arms control negotiations are essential for finding new comprehensive solutions for regulating WMD.

4. Geopolitical Tensions and Eroding Trust

However, arms control negotiations are becoming increasingly challenging due to geopolitical tensions. The war in Ukraine has made negotiations between Russia and the U.S. or the European Union more difficult, while tensions between the U.S. and China have led to further instability. Additionally, countries have become less transparent about their arms exports, as shown in the chart below. This significantly damages trust between countries, making effective arms control negotiations more difficult.





# **Major Parties Involved**

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) advocates for disarmament and consists of five main units: Weapons of Mass Destruction, Conventional Arms, Regional Disarmament, Transparency and Confidence-Building, and Other Disarmament Issues. It was established in 1998 with the goal of "general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control." The office works toward this goal by setting norms in disarmament, encouraging dialogue, improving transparency, and building confidence. Additionally, it focuses on providing objective data on disarmament to member states, other organizations, and the public. Through these measures, the UNODA contributes to raising awareness about the issue and enhancing trust in arms control negotiations.



### North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NATO is a powerful military alliance between many European and American countries that emphasizes the importance of arms control. It works closely with other organizations like the UN and the EU to promote disarmament and non-proliferation. Additionally, NATO supports partner countries in destroying mines and munitions, reducing the risks associated with conventional arms. Nevertheless, NATO's primary focus remains the security of its member states, which includes ensuring the possession of adequate and powerful military technologies.

#### United States of America

Since the U.S. possesses many nuclear weapons and has a strong military, it plays a crucial role in arms control negotiations. Clearly, the U.S. was heavily involved in nuclear arms control during the Cold War and remains important for regulating WMD and conventional weapons. The U.S. is a member of several key groups related to arms control, including NATO, the Australia Group (which develops strategies to better identify exports that could be used to produce WMD), and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. The Department of State's Bureau of Arms Control, Deterrence, and Stability leads the United States' diplomatic efforts in arms control, with the goal of promoting stability and responsibility. Although the U.S. generally advocates for comprehensive international arms control, it holds many WMD, emphasizing deterrence.

#### Russia

As part of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Russia possesses a large arsenal of nuclear weapons. In addition, Russia's strong military and opposition to NATO make it a key player in arms control negotiations. Since the invasion of Ukraine, the Russian government has made several nuclear threats while also reportedly violating the New START Treaty by prohibiting U.S. inspectors from visiting its nuclear arsenals. The Foreign Minister of Russia, Sergey Lavrov, justified this by stating that "the United States has cast aside the principles on which our countries once agreed to establish cooperation, including on arms control," although the U.S. denies these allegations. This mistrust makes arms control negotiations between Russia and NATO member states more difficult.

#### China

Despite its status as a nuclear power with a large military, China is part of only relatively few arms control agreements. For instance, it is not involved with the New START treaty between the U.S. and Russia. Generally, the Chinese government has demonstrated reluctance to enter arms control agreements that would restrict their military without the U.S. taking similar steps. Furthermore, China has opposed agreements related to offering other countries more insights into its military arsenals. Some progress on arms control in China has been made over the years though, which, according to the Chinese government, demonstrates China's commitment to "the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of weapons of mass





destruction". This includes their membership in the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

#### **European Union**

The European Union is an important party in arms control negotiations. One member state, France, owns nuclear weapons. In addition, most member states are part of other organizations such as NATO and the OSCE. The EU has expressed its support for international arms control, viewing it as a means of protecting its citizens. Therefore, the EU helps facilitate international dialogue on the regulation of WMD and advocates for controlling conventional weapons. One of the most important disarmament treaties, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty), however, collapsed after Russia withdrew in November 2023. This treaty previously limited the number of weapons that Russia and the EU were allowed to possess.

#### Iran

Iran's nuclear activity is a polarizing topic. Despite previously deciding not to develop nuclear weapons, Iran's government might have pursued this technology since 1979. In 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was signed by Iran and other nations, limiting Iran's nuclear program. This plan aimed to prevent potential conflicts involving Iran, particularly considering tensions with other nations such as Israel. However, in 2018, the U.S. withdrew from the plan, leading Iran to disregard the regulations one year later and its arsenal of uranium has exceeded the limits set by the agreement. Tensions in the region also have increased after Iran's deployment of ballistic missiles against Israel. This has raised concern among several other nations.

#### Democratic People's Republic of Korea

To the concern of other nations, the military arsenal of the DPRK contains several WMD. In addition to running chemical and biological weapons programs, it is estimated that the DPRK possesses around 50 nuclear warheads. The military arsenal also includes powerful intercontinental ballistic missiles. The DPRK does not participate in many important groups related to arms control, such as the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation and the Australia Group. It has also neither ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention nor the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Furthermore, the government of the DPRK has refused to comply with multiple resolutions of the UN Security Council intended to limit its military activities.



# **Timeline of Events**

- Date Event
- 6.8.1945 The U.S. deployed an atomic bomb over Hiroshima during World War II. After this devastating attack, Japan surrendered and a nuclear arms race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union began.
- 14.6.1946 Shortly before the start of the Cold War, the U.S. was the only country possessing nuclear weapons and proposed the Baruch Plan to the United Nations. While this plan offered more transparency into U.S. nuclear production facilities, it did not include sharing significant information on the technology, leading it to be rejected.
- 29.7.1957 In his "Atoms for Peace" speech, former U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower proposed the establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The organization was then created in 1957, currently has 180 member states, and promotes the peaceful, responsible use of atomic energy.
- 5.8.1963 The Limited Nuclear Test Ban treaty was signed by the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, representing a major step in arms control. This treaty placed strict regulations on testing nuclear weapons and required the two signatories to work towards disarmament.
- 26.5.1972 The first round of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) concluded.
  These talks led to several agreements that regulated crucial weapons for the U.S. and the Soviet Union.
- 26.3.1975 The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) entered into force. Many different countries have signed this agreement to date, which prohibits the use of biological and toxin weapons.
- 19.11.1990 The Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty was signed to set limits on the numbers of conventional arms that European countries and the Soviet Union were allowed to possess. This treaty has been considered as crucial for security in Europe.
- 11.5.1995 The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was extended indefinitely, after it entered into force in 1970. To this day, the treaty is one of the most important nuclear non-proliferation agreements, limiting the spread of nuclear weapons.
- 29.4.1997 The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) entered into force. The associated Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons



(OPCW) works on meeting the commitments of the CWC to stop the development, stockpiling, and deployment of chemical weapons.

- 1.1.1998 UNODA was established with the goal of general and complete international disarmament. This was a major step for the UN in the area of arms control.
- 13.6.2002 The U.S. withdraws from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which was previously implemented with the goal of reducing the arms race by placing limits on missile systems.
- 24.12.2014 To control the trade of conventional arms, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was signed. Currently, 110 states participate in the treaty, and several other nations will likely join in the future.
- 8.5.2018 The U.S. withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which limited Iran's nuclear activities. Other countries have criticized that the withdrawal might undermine the effort of nuclear non-proliferation.
- 7.12.2023 The CFE Treaty was suspended by NATO, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its withdrawal from the treaty.

# **Previous attempts to solve the issue**

Confidence-Building Measures (CDMs)

Various CDMs have been a core measure in improving trust and understanding between conflicting nations. However, they can also be useful for building trust in arms control before a clear conflict arises. Often, CDMs require greater transparency to prevent misunderstandings and mistrust between nations. For example, in a 2017 session, the UN Disarmament Commission made recommendations on confidence-building measures related to arms control for the General Assembly. These recommendations emphasized the importance of data sharing between states to enhance cooperation but were not always sufficiently implemented.

Negative Security Assurances (NSAs)

NSAs are particularly relevant in the context of nuclear arms control. These are commitments by states possessing nuclear weapons to not threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states. Several UN resolutions have supported such agreements, such as the UN General Assembly Resolution 21/53A, which asked the Committee on Disarmament to "consider urgently the proposal that nuclear weapons powers should give an assurance that they will not use, or threaten to use, nuclear



weapons against non-nuclear weapons states". Such agreements built the necessary trust for non-proliferation negotiations and convinced some nations to forgo the development of nuclear weapons. However, these agreements did not have a significant impact on conventional arms and have not always been met by the participating nations.

#### **Verification Measures**

Verifying compliance with existing arms control agreements is crucial for building trust in further negotiations. In the past, several agreements have been established with this goal in mind. For instance, the New START Treaty between the U.S. and Russia included provisions for mutual inspections of nuclear arsenals. Although Russia suspended this treaty in 2023, other agreements also incorporate similar verification measures to enhance transparency and accountability.

# **Possible Solutions**

#### Multilateral Arms Control Negotiations

Currently, several important arms control agreements are limited to a few specific countries. This has been particularly evident in nuclear arms control treaties, that often exclusively considered the U.S. and the Soviet Union/Russia. In contrast, other states with nuclear arsenals, such as China, did not participate in such agreements. Conventional arms are also most effectively regulated internationally, as controlling the trade of these arms between countries is important to ensure they are not traded illegally. To regulate both WMD and conventional arms more comprehensively, encouraging multilateral arms control negotiations involving diverse countries might be necessary.

#### Transparency

To establish trust and a common ground in arms control negotiations, it is essential that the participating countries are informed about each other's possession and use of weapons. Therefore, clear and mandatory transparency measures could help make arms control more effective and regain trust that has declined between some nations in recent years. In the area of regulating WMD, improved transparency can build a common ground in negotiations, but accurate information on conventional arms also is an important topic. Since conventional arms are often traded between different countries on a large scale, having accurate and up-to-date information is necessary to respond to potential dangers and regulate weapons effectively.

Ensure Implementation of Disarmament Obligations

While many agreements on arms control have been reached and several UN resolutions were passed on this topic, not all of them were implemented effectively or were suspended after some time. In some cases, this problem was due to political or military interests in participating countries, but sometimes also due to a lack of resources to implement comprehensive measures. This has further undermined trust in negotiations and led to reduced support for arms control in general. Various approaches could be taken to resolve this issue. For example, stricter accountability measures could be encouraged to ensure that countries fully comply with arms control agreements they participate in. Additionally, the necessary resources could be provided by the international community to individual countries that struggle with meeting arms control agreements due to a lack of capacity.

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