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**17/SMS10/004**

**Assignment Title:** Assignment 2  
**Course Title:** Arms Control and Disarmament  
**Course Code:** PCS 306

**Question**

1. Discuss the history and development of arms control as a mechanism to preserve international peace and security.

**Arms Control and Disarmament**

One of the major efforts to preserve international peace and security in the twenty-first century has been to control or limit the number of weapons and the ways in which weapons can be used. Two different means to achieve this goal have been disarmament and arms control. *Disarmament* is the reduction of the number of weapons and troops maintained by a state. *Arms control* refers to treaties made between potential adversaries that reduce the likelihood and scope of war, usually imposing limitations on military capability. Although disarmament always involves the reduction of military forces or weapons, arms control does not. In fact, arms control agreements sometimes allow for the increase of weapons by one or more parties to a treaty.

## **History**

Arms control developed both in theory and in practice during the cold war, a period between the late 1940s and 1991 when the two military superpowers, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), dealt with one another from a position of mutual mistrust. Arms control was devised consciously during the postwar period as an alternative to disarmament, which for many had fallen into discredit as a means of reducing the likelihood of war. Germany had been forced to disarm following [WORLD WAR I](https://law.jrank.org/pages/11399/World-War-I.html) but became belligerent again during the 1930s, resulting in [WORLD WAR II](https://law.jrank.org/pages/11401/World-War-II.html). Although Germany's weapons had been largely eliminated, the underlying causes of conflict had not. Germany's experience thus illustrated that no simple cause-and-effect relationship existed between the possession of weapons and a tendency to create war.

Following World War II, advocates of arms control as a new approach to limiting hostility between nations emphasized that military weapons and power would continue to remain a part of modern life. It was unrealistic and even dangerous, they felt, for a country to seek complete elimination of weapons, and it would not necessarily reduce the likelihood of war. Whereas disarmament had formerly been seen as an alternative to military strength, arms control was now viewed as an integral part of it. Arms control proponents sought to create a stable balance of power in which the forces that cause states to go to war could be controlled and regulated. The emphasis in arms control is thus upon overall stability rather than elimination of arms, and proponents recognize that an increase in weaponry is sometimes required to preserve a balance of power.

The development of arms control owes a great deal to the existence of [**NUCLEAR WEAPONS**](https://law.jrank.org/pages/8865/Nuclear-Weapons.html) as well. By the 1950s, when both the United States and the Soviet Union possessed nuclear weapons, the superpowers became convinced that they could not safely disarm themselves of those weapons. In the absence of guaranteed verification—the process whereby participants in a treaty monitor each other's adherence to the agreement—neither side could disarm without making itself vulnerable to cheating by the other side. The goal of the superpowers and other nations possessing nuclear weapons therefore became not total elimination of those weapons, but control of them so that a stable nuclear deterrent might be maintained. According to the idea of *nuclear deterrence*, a state possessing nuclear weapons is deterred, or prevented, from using them against another nuclear power because of the threat of retaliation. No state is willing to attempt a first strike because it cannot prevent the other side from striking back. Nuclear deterrence is therefore predicated upon a mutual abhorrence of the destructive power of nuclear weapons. This idea has come to be called *mutual assured destruction (MAD)*. Many experts see deterrence as the ultimate goal of nuclear arms control.

Because many civilians generally assume that arms control and disarmament are the same thing, there has often been public disappointment when treaties have resulted in an increase in the number or power of weapons. An advantage of arms control over disarmament, however, is that even states with a high degree of suspicion or hostility toward each other can still negotiate agreements. Disarmament agreements, on the other hand, require a high degree of trust, and their formation is unlikely between hostile nations.

Arms control is often used as a means to avoid an *arms race*—a competitive buildup of weapons between two or more powers. Such a race can be costly for both sides, and arms control treaties serve the useful purpose of limiting weapons stockpiles to a level that preserves deterrence while conserving the economic and social resources of a state for other uses.

## **Modern Arms Control**

Although disarmament and arms control agreements were forged prior to World War II (1939–45), the modern arms control effort began in earnest after the [CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS](https://law.jrank.org/pages/5912/Cuban-Missile-Crisis.html) of 1962. That situation erupted when the United States discovered that the Soviet Union was constructing launch sites for nuclear missiles on the island of Cuba, thereby threatening to put nuclear weapons very close to U.S. soil. President JOHN F. KENNEDY declared a naval blockade of the island, and for two weeks, the United States and the USSR existed in a state of heightened tension. Finally, the USSR and the USSR faced off in what became a white-hot international drama of brinksmanship, each side waiting to see who would blink first. With the United States' promise not to overthrow Fidel Castro's government in Cuba, the Soviets canceled plans to install the missiles. After the crisis, Kennedy wrote to Khrushchev, "I agree with you that we must devote urgent attention to the problem of disarmament. … Perhaps … we can together make real progress in this vital field."

Among the earliest arms control treaties were the [LIMITED TEST BAN TREATY](https://law.jrank.org/pages/8293/Limited-Test-Ban-Treaty.html) (LTBT), an agreement that prohibited nuclear test explosions in the atmosphere, under water, or in space, which was signed in 1963 by the United States, Britain, and the USSR, and the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, a superpower treaty that banned biological weapons and provided for the destruction of existing stockpiles. The 1972 convention was the first and only example, since 1945, of true disarmament of an entire weapons category. Although negotiation on a comprehensive test ban—an agreement that would prohibit all nuclear testing—continued, this solution remained elusive. Nevertheless, in 1974, the superpowers signed the Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT), which limits nuclear tests to explosive yields of less than 150 kilotons. (A kiloton represents the explosive force of one thousand tons of TNT). But the TTBT did not prevent the superpowers from developing nuclear warheads (the bomb-carrying segments of a nuclear missile) with power exceeding 150 kilotons; warheads on the Soviet SS-17 missile possess as much as a 3.6-megaton capacity. (A megaton equals 1 million tons of TNT.) In 1976, the superpowers signed the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty (PNET), which banned so-called peaceful nuclear testing.

Numerous arms control agreements have been designed to improve communications between the superpowers. The first of these, coming just after the Cuban Missile Crisis, was the 1963 HOTLINE AGREEMENT, setting up a special telegraph line between Moscow and Washington. In 1978, the hot line was updated by a satellite link between the two superpowers. The United States and the USSR also sought to create protocols designed to prevent an accidental nuclear war. This effort led to the 1971 agreement, Measures to Reduce the Risk of Outbreak of Nuclear War, which required advance warning for any missile tests and immediate notification of any accidents or missile warning alerts.

One highly celebrated arms control agreement is the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or Non-Proliferation Treaty, designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries. The agreement involves well over one hundred states. Under it, countries not possessing nuclear weapons give up their right to acquire such weapons, and countries with nuclear weapons waive their rights to export nuclear weapons technology to countries lacking that technology.

Another class of arms control treaties seeks to ban weapons from as-yet-unmilitarized areas. These include the 1959 ANTARCTIC TREATY, which prohibits military bases, maneuvers, and tests on the Antarctic Continent; the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, a ban on the testing or deployment of "weapons of mass destruction" in Earth's orbit or on other bodies in the solar system; the 1967 Tlatelolco Treaty, prohibiting nuclear weapons in Latin America; and the 1971 Seabed Treaty, banning the placement of weapons of mass destruction on or below the seabed.

## **STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION TALKS (Salt I And After)**

The STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION TALKS (SALT I and SALT II) were first undertaken in the era of détente in the early 1970s, when relations between the United States and the USSR became more amicable. SALT I led to two agreements: the [ANTI-BALLISTIC-MISSILE TREATY OF 1972](https://law.jrank.org/pages/4355/Anti-Ballistic-Missile-Treaty-1972.html) (ABM Treaty), which eventually limited each superpower to one site for antiballistic missiles (ABMs), the missiles designed to intercept and destroy incoming missiles; and an "interim" arms agreement limiting the number of inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) launchers and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) to those already deployed by specific dates in 1972. It also required that any modernization and replacement of ICBMs and SLBMs be on a one-for-one basis and prohibited any development of new, more powerful ICBMs. The agreement was meant to set limits before a more definitive SALT II treaty could be negotiated. When the SALT II Treaty was signed in 1979, it set a limit of 2,400 strategic missiles and bombers for each side. Although the U.S. Senate did not ratify this treaty, the United States abided by it for several years.

The ABM Treaty of SALT I was much more successful than the interim ICBM-SLBM agreement. Because the SALT agreements limited only the number of ICBM launchers, or missiles, both superpowers went on in the 1970s to develop missiles with multiple warheads, called multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs). Launcher totals thus remained constant, but the number of warheads increased dramatically. Adding warheads to missiles also made nuclear deterrence more unpredictable; a superpower with MIRVs could have enough warheads to destroy the opponent's retaliatory capability, thereby making MAD ineffective. Both superpowers felt that their land-based missile forces had become vulnerable to a first strike from the other side. Compliance with the SALT treaties became a contentious issue in the 1980s when the United States accused the USSR of violating treaty provisions on the development of new missiles. The administration of President RONALD REAGAN decided that alleged Soviet violations made it necessary to end U.S. compliance with the agreements. In 1986, the United States exceeded limits set by SALT II when a B-52 bomber equipped with cruise missiles (nuclear missiles that fly at a low altitude) entered active service. Another U.S. military proposal, the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), also complicated the ABM Treaty. In 1983, Reagan made a televised speech in which he announced plans to develop a space-based missile defense system. He presented SDI as an alternative to MAD. SDI would, he claimed, effectively shield the United States from a Soviet missile launch, including an accidental or third-party attack. SDI would also protect the land-based leg of the United States' nuclear triad, the other two legs of which are aircraft bombers and submarine-launched missiles. Many doubted whether such a missile defense system could actually be created, and others criticized SDI as a dangerous upset in the nuclear balance. A debate also arose as to whether SDI was in violation of the ABM Treaty. Relations between the superpowers eventually warmed when Mikhail Gorbachev emerged as leader of the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s. Relatively young and dynamic compared with his predecessors, Gorbachev initiated reforms for increased openness in the Soviet Union that facilitated arms control agreements. In 1987, President Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, another major step in arms control. The INF Treaty called for the elimination of an entire class of short- and intermediate-range (300- to 3,400-mile) nuclear missiles. These included 1,752 Soviet and 859U.S. missiles. It was the first treaty to result in a reduction in the number of nuclear weapons. The agreement also involved the most complete verification procedures ever for an arms control treaty. These included data exchanges, on-site inspections, and monitoring by surveillance satellites.

After the INF Treaty, the superpowers continued to try to work out a strategic arms reduction treaty that would cut the number of long-range missiles by 50 percent. By that time the superpowers each had nuclear arsenals that could destroy the other many times over, and a 50 percent reduction would still leave nuclear deterrence well intact.

## **A New World Order**

Between 1989 and 1991, a number of significant events brought about the end of the Cold War. In 1989, Gorbachev surprised the world when he led the Soviet Union in its decision to give up its control over Eastern Europe. By the summer of 1991, not only had the Warsaw Pact—a unified group consisting of the Soviet Union and its allies in Eastern Europe—dissolved, but so had the Soviet Union itself. Soviet [COMMUNISM](https://law.jrank.org/pages/5465/Communism.html), one-half of the superpower equation for over 40 years, had imploded. During this time of increasingly warm relations between the superpowers, a number of major arms control treaties were created. On November 19, 1990, the United States, the USSR, and 20 other countries signed the [CONVENTIONAL FORCES IN EUROPE TREATY](https://law.jrank.org/pages/5712/Conventional-Forces-in-Europe-Treaty.html) (CFE Treaty), which President GEORGE H. W. BUSH called "the farthest-reaching arms agreement in history," an accord that "signals the new world order that is emerging." The treaty grew out of a 1989 proposal by Bush that the superpowers each be limited to 275,000 troops in Europe. As events unfolded in Eastern Europe, however, and the countries of the former Eastern Bloc became independent from the USSR, that number of troops began to seem high. Under the CFE Treaty, each side was allowed to deploy, in the area between the Atlantic Ocean and the Ural Mountains, no more than 20,000 tanks, 30,000 armored troop carriers, 20,000 artillery pieces, 6,800 combat airplanes, and 2,000 attack helicopters. The treaty required the Soviet Union to disarm or destroy nearly 20,000 tanks, artillery pieces, and other weapons, to give a 27 percent reduction in Soviet armaments west of the Urals. That decrease was small, however, compared with the 59,000 weapons the USSR shipped east of the Urals to central Asia between 1989 and 1990 as it sought to realign its forces in response to world events. On the other side, the [NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION](https://law.jrank.org/pages/8848/North-Atlantic-Treaty-Organization.html) (NATO) forces—the postwar alliance of Western European and North American states, including the United States—were required to destroy fewer than 3,000 pieces of military equipment. In May 1991, NATO decided to reduce its forces even further. The United States, for its part, reduced the 320,000 troops it had in Europe by at least 50 percent.

Arms agreements on nuclear weapons were also reached during this period. On July 31, 1991, Bush and Gorbachev signed the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I). Negotiations on the technically complex accord had begun as early as 1982. The agreement required the USSR to reduce its nuclear arsenal by roughly 25 percent and the United States to reduce its arsenal by 15 percent, within seven years after ratification by both nations. Numerically speaking, the USSR would reduce its nuclear warheads from 10,841 to 8,040, and the United States would reduce its warheads from 12,081 to 10,395. These amounts would bring the nuclear arsenals of each nation roughly back to levels that existed in 1982, when START negotiations began. The agreement also limited the development of new missiles and required a number of verification procedures, including on-site inspections with spot checks, monitoring of missile production plants, and exchange of data tapes from missile tests.