

# University of Alberta High School Model United Nations 2011

## GA1: Disarmament and International Security Committee - Creating a Framework to deal with “Cheaters” in Disarmament Agreements

### *Scope of the Problem*

With the decline of the Cold War, the constant threat of nuclear war has significantly waned. Nonetheless, the mentality that large armies and weapons stockpiles equate to international significance and justify aggressive domestic and foreign policies still persists. Over the last forty years, a number of key nations as well as non-state actors have endeavoured to eradicate this paradigm through disarmament agreements and demilitarization schemes. Perhaps most prominent is the *Conference on Disarmament*, a forum operating in conjunction with the UN comprised of 65 states (and all nuclear-weapons states) responsible for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and other initiatives. Still, in light of these efforts, national security has long been a top priority for many nations, several of whom are oft-embroiled in bitter border disputes with their neighbours. Countries are fearful of reducing their military potential due to the risk that others will either not sign, or will cheat in disarmament agreements. Thus, while there is significant international interest in the prospect of accountability in disarmament, there are certainly problems that any large-scale effort will encounter. In this brief synopsis, I will expose the major players, potential contentious points, and best prospects for coming to some sort of resolution.

For the purposes of inclusiveness, I would like debate to focus both on conventional and strategic disarmament. Reference to Non-Proliferation (NPT) and Strategic Arms Reduction efforts (START) for framework conceptions and sanction ideas are certainly not out of place, but delegates will be required to discuss disarmament in a more current context. This will allow greater inclusion of states that are arguably less affected by the nuclear-level negotiations.

Military might has long been considered a sort of international currency of power. Traditionally, international relations were decided largely by military alliances, threats of military action, or invasion and conquest. While several developments have contributed to the arguable decline of this state-centric outlook, nations still heavily value military prowess as an expression of sovereignty. Not only does military might boost local prestige and authority, it also gives states the ability to resist foreign encroachment on valuable resources and land. Even states with small populations like North Korea have garnered greater international presence as a result of their sizeable military. In Africa, military strength has allowed states like Egypt to exert authority over precious water sources, at the expense of downstream neighbours.

It is important to note, additionally, that military expansion and weapons stockpiles are not always locally containable. The greatest example of this is the Gulf countries, who over the last few decades have gained considerable military might in exchange for oil and exploration rights. The use of valuable resources as a way to procure security is not a new mentality, and as such it will be difficult to challenge for any UN directive. During the first Gulf War, if not for the vested American interest in stability and protecting energy interests, few Gulf states would have been able to stand up against Iraq's superior military. So, delegates should keep in mind that disarmament agreements could have serious repercussions for Gulf states like Saudi Arabia if they were pressured into reducing their reliance on imported materiel.

The principle behind disarmament agreements is that states retain proportional levels of military might while reducing or limiting their weapons stockpiles. In order to have a chance of survival, these proposals should subscribe to the theory that raw military strength does not matter as much as simply having more than your opponent; expecting the United States to comply with an initiative that reduces their military power to the level of a third-world country would never happen. In other words, weapon reductions should be proportional to each country. As such, a sort of balance-of-power framework must be kept in mind, unless incentives can be thought up to encourage a state to reduce its' military below their neighbours'.

The complication lies with holding parties to their commitments to disarm and enforcing or punishing when quotas or terms are not met. Given the massive international disparity that exists between superpowers and third world states, the difficulty of enforcing far-reaching agreements should not be understated. This poses many challenging questions. How can small nations control superpowers? Do superpowers want many small states working together to police them? Alternately, do superpowers want the responsibility and costs of enforcing agreements, and how can this be done?

So what can the UN do? International superpowers have already demonstrated that where their interests outweigh those of the international community, they seldom feel obligated to abide by UN protocols. Similarly, delegates must keep in mind the potential for standard tools like economic sanctions to do more harm than good, where their impact would be felt by the lower classes rather than the ruling elite. It is important to note that calling for the establishment of a control agency may be far more contentious than it seems. The UN also has to be concerned with the sovereignty of states, and where to draw the line between national and international interests.

### ***Possible Solutions***

Please keep in mind, only the Security Council can make *binding* resolutions.

- Positive: Economic incentives for disarmament (potential for increased trust among neighbours, opening trade routes, etc), heightened status within the UN
- Negative: International censure, economic punishments, withholding of other UN programme aid

### ***Key Issues***

- Gross disparity in military power – establishing something that adequately maintains a status quo without disrupting balance of power
- Regimes kept in place by military (dictators) will not be inclined to sign on to any such agreement – which means their neighbours will be tentative to do so
- Given US experience in Iraq, superpowers will not be inclined to take on the role of world police in exchange for regional disarmament
  - o UN lacks power to enforce
- Cheaters are a reality – what can the UN do to punish them?
  - o Balancing sovereignty with other interests

### ***Research Links***

- UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) <http://www.un.org/disarmament/>
  - o Excellent preliminary source for outlining problems and existing UN initiatives
- BBC News
  - o Great source for keeping up to date with international news
- Greenpeace International: NGO committed to disarmament initiatives
- School Libraries
  - o Books on international politics, especially as they relate to resources and military are invaluable for foreign policy and alliance information
    - Michael Klare is an excellent author in this field
  - o Books on Cold War era – consider many of the localized conflicts that were in part fuelled by arms races – Gulf Wars, Six Day War, Suez Canal, etc.