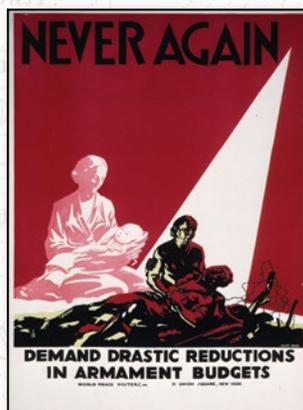
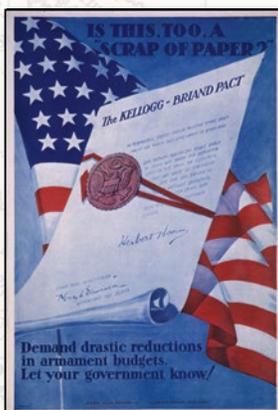


STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT



Do past arms control treaties offer insight about the proposed Iran nuclear agreement?

IN THIS ISSUE

Angelo M. Codevilla • Walter Russell Mead • Barry Strauss
Max Boot • Victor Davis Hanson • Bruce Thornton



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AUGUST 2015 · ISSUE 26

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ABOUT THE POSTERS IN THIS ISSUE

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The Flaws of Arms Control

Angelo M. Codevilla

The US-Iran “agreement” of 2015—its genesis, the negotiations that led to it, and its likely consequences—is comprehensible only in terms of a set of ideas peculiar to the post-World War II era, which distinguishes it from previous historical examples.

Prior to the turn of the twentieth century, most arms control agreements were terms imposed on defeated nations. A few flowed from the recognition that issues requiring military force had disappeared, at least for a time. Among these were the 1787 Anglo-French agreement to limit their naval fleets in the Atlantic, and the 1817 Rush-Bagot Pact between the United States and Great Britain to demilitarize the Great Lakes. But all such were negotiated on the basis of clarity about each side’s objectives and what role the weapons played in their pursuit thereof.

In our time, Western negotiations about “arms control” have paid less attention to the parties’ objectives—as well as to the military significance of the weapons being negotiated—than they have to: 1) the armaments themselves as the danger to be minimized; and 2) using the “process” to advance a desired relationship with the other party, to be consummated at a future time. Rarely do they claim to have changed the other party’s objectives or to have reached any “meeting of the minds.” By voluminous ambiguities, they allow all parties to pretend to have achieved charters for pursuing their original objectives.

Wars stem from conflicting objectives. Treaties do not change them, though sometimes they reflect changes in them. Arms, such as a government may promise to control in a treaty, are means at the service of objectives. If another government’s objectives are objectionable, its promise to control one of the means to achieving them is cold comfort. That is why arms control agreements are either superfluous, or futile.¹ This has always been so.

Arms control did not salve the conflict between Rome and Carthage’s mutually exclusive objectives. After the First Punic War (264–241 BC), Rome exacted a series of measures to make sure that the Carthaginians would never again threaten its hold on the Mediterranean or interfere in Sicily. Carthage gave up its island naval bases. Heavy tribute crippled its navy. But, its enmity to Rome undiminished, Carthage expanded northward via the Iberian peninsula. After the ensuing Second Punic War (218–201 BC), Polybius tells us that a new treaty imposed the loss of all colonies and all but ten triremes, the payment of “ten thousand talents of silver in fifty years, two hundred Euboic talents every year,” plus



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"a hundred hostages...to be not younger than fourteen or older than thirty years" chosen from the most influential families. That too worked as designed. But, since Carthage continued to thrive, Rome provoked the Third Punic War (149–146 BC) after which it sold the Carthaginian survivors into slavery.

When imposed arms control contributes to peace, it does so incidentally. After the Duke of Marlborough's victories in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14), the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht imposed upon France the demilitarization of the harbor of Dunkirk, from which Louis XIV had hoped to invade Britain. France being otherwise occupied, it would not again ready Dunkirk for invasion until Napoleon, a hundred years later.

Napoleon's arms control impositions, however, had only short-term military effects. In 1808, for example, after winning the battles of Friedland and Tilsit, he limited Prussia to an army of 42,000 men, pledged to assist him. By 1812, he controlled enough foreign armies by treaty to field a half million men against Russia. But at Leipzig in 1813, 75,000 Prussians joined with Austria and Russia to crush him. Napoleon knew that his control of other nations' armies rested not on treaties, but on his capacity to beat one and all. He failed in execution. Not in concept.

The 1919 Versailles Treaty's imposition of arms control on Germany, however, failed in execution because its concept was self-contradictory. The terms imposed on Germany were clear: an army limited to 100,000. No reserves. No heavy weapons, no arms industry, no air force, only pre-dreadnought battleships, three light cruisers, etc. But the imposers' intentions, "[i]n order to render possible the initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations," were conflicted: They (save France) intended to disarm themselves quite as much as they intended to disarm Germany.

So began the prototypical arms control story of the century: of how the Wehrmacht's initial contingent became officers for the giant army of WWII, of how flying clubs became the Luftwaffe, of how German industry's foreign subsidiaries produced components for weapons, of how the little cruisers were really battleships of the highest quality. Walter Lippman's summary of it foreshadowed the future: The disarmament movement was "tragically successful in disarming those that believed in disarmament." We need note only that the Germans' cat-and mouse game with the inspectors was wholly transparent.² One reason why the Versailles treaty's signatories did not force compliance is that, with the exception of France, they believed that the arms control clauses would be largely self-enforcing. But why?

The 1921 Washington Agreements (naval ratios that left Japan with naval superiority in Asia, plus the 9-power treaty that "guaranteed" China's integrity) illustrate the answer. Japan conditioned its agreement to the ratios and to joining the 9-power pledge, on a US commitment not to fortify its bases in the region. As Secretary of State Charles Evans

Hughes accepted Japan's condition, he rejected the suggestion that Japan might have objectives different from those of the United States and Great Britain.³ Said Hughes to much applause, the Great War had taught all mankind—equally—that war and weapons were the real enemy. Thus, as the United States committed to defending China, it deprived itself of the capacity to do so. The US had no intention to fortify those bases, or to build warships up to treaty limits. From Presidents Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, and Franklin Roosevelt on down, United States officials were sure that there would be no need for enforcement. They were making war on war.

Still, as Germany and Japan proved that arms control agreements are not self-enforcing, why the continued aversion to enforcement?

In 1961, as the US government began the era of arms control with the Soviet Union, Fred Charles Iklé's classic article, "After Detection—What?"⁴ looked back prophetically at the practical reasons: 1) Western governments want arms control to get past present troubles—not to take on new ones; and 2) the individuals who promote it know that to recognize that the advertised outcomes are not forthcoming is to indict themselves. Hence their personal interest coincides with that of the violators.

By then however, the assumptions that underlie the nonenforcement of arms control had become an ideology. Thomas Schelling summarized it.⁵ America's and the USSR's equal desire to maximize gains and minimize losses locked them in a matrix of choices that emphasized their shared interest in moderation. War being the common enemy, arms control is the manifestation of "strong elements of mutual interest in avoiding a war that neither side wants." Because nuclear war must annihilate all equally, that is so more than ever. Hence both sides' negotiators must aim naturally at a stable equilibrium of the "balance of terror." Because both sides are really on the same side, agreements are essentially self-enforcing and details are of secondary importance.

Henry Kissinger's *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (1957) and *The Necessity for Choice: Prospects of American Foreign Policy* (1961) popularized this ideology, making it the framework for the Strategic Arms Limitation talks and treaties—for America, that is. The Soviets thought differently. US nuclear forces were built to maximize the spread of blast overpressure over civilian-industrial areas. The objective was to make war irrational by creating a "stable equilibrium of terror." Soviet forces were built to create 90 percent probabilities of destroying 1,000 psi targets, American ICBMs and submarines in port—that is, to fight, survive, and win a nuclear war. For two decades, the SALT process—along with its huge exertions and controversies—served primarily to finesse the conflict between these two irreconcilable objectives. But only in American minds.⁶

Kissinger assured the Senate that SALT I had achieved "a broad understanding of international conduct appropriate to the dangers of the nuclear age." There would be no

circumvention of its “letter or spirit.” But the meaning of the letter depended on “whose spirit?” The Soviets’ 315 SS-9 missiles—unlike anything America had, and unambiguously designed for war fighting rather than societal destruction—showed a different “spirit.” The Soviets had already surpassed the United States in numbers of missile launchers (1,610 ICBMs to 1,040) and missile subs (48 to 41). SALT, however, guaranteed that there would be no more SS-9s and that no Soviet launcher would ever be converted to war-fighting weapons.

But, as Kissinger was speaking, the Soviet Union was set to emplace in all its launchers a new generation of missiles, each with four to ten times the counterforce lethality of the SS-9. All within the treaty’s letter, because Kissinger had chosen its currency, “launchers,” for ease of “verification” rather than military significance. Why? Because, as the Soviets were preparing for war, America was making war on war. Solipsism vs. reality.

Each side followed its own “spirit.” Kissinger asked, “What, in the name of God is strategic superiority...what do you do with it?” The USSR, not the USA, earned the option of answering. Thank God the USSR died.

Iran is joining in the “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action” (JCPA) in a spirit that differs from the US government’s. Iran had ignored six UN resolutions that called for ending its nuclear weapons program, and endured the US-led sanctions. In 2013, however, growing demands of the war in which Iran is leading the Muslim world’s Shia against its Sunni majority, led it to ask about the price it would have to pay for relief from those sanctions. Far from ending the program, President Obama’s price consisted of promises concerning its scope and timing. Those promises also secured the immediate release of \$100–150B in frozen funds, and the removal of restrictions on the purchase of high-tech weapons. Remarkably, they did so as Iran increased its commitment to its war, and chanted, “Death to America!” Why?

The US government enters the JCPA with a spirit that distills modern arms control’s standard elements. Because, like the Versailles Treaty, the Washington

POLL: WHY SHOULD WE PURSUE NONPROLIFERATION ACCORDS OR ARMS REDUCTION AND LIMITATION AGREEMENTS?

- We should not; these fantasies never work.
- Arms accords provide some savvy diplomatic cover while we pursue deterrence.
- Even if most agreements fail, some might work somewhat, and are worth the risk.
- Talks to limit arms always evolve into wider political and economic discussions that promote peace.
- In the twenty-first century, human nature has grown up; at last we can envision a disarmed and harmonious world.

Agreements of 1921, and SALT, the JCPA's aim is to promote peace and to bind troublemakers into the international community, its details are irrelevant. The constraints on Iran's uranium enrichment amount to moving things from places known to places unknown, setting up cat-and mouse games. Because the JCPA adds three layers of committees to the reluctance of officials who have committed to agreements to acknowledge their failure, enforcement is a transparent

pretense. More important, insufficient fissionable material is not Iran's barrier to becoming a nuclear power. While one crude nuke may require up to 50 kg of U-235, sophisticated nukes use only tiny amounts, depending on nonnuclear, compressive-reflective technology. Iran lacks only that. Getting it takes money and time. These are hard to get while fighting a multifront war. Thanks to the US government's arms control spirit, the JCPA will deliver them.

1 An extended theoretical argument for this may be found in Colin S. Gray, *House of Cards: Why Arms Control Must Fail* (Cornell University Press, 1992). A full theoretical counterargument is in Stuart Croft, *Strategies of Arms Control: A History and Typology* (Manchester University Press, 1996). For a practical argument on either side, see Malcolm Wallop and Angelo M. Codevilla, *The Arms Control Delusion* (Institute of Contemporary Studies, 1987).

2 See chapter 2 of John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Nemesis of Power: The German Army in Politics, 1918–1945* (Viking Press, 1967) and chapter 9 of J. H. Morgan, *Assize of Arms: The Disarmament of Germany and Her Rearmament (1919–1939)* (Oxford University Press, 1946), for treaty inspectors' reports to the League of Nations and to their home governments detailing the German authorities' violations.

3 See Betty Glad, *Charles Evans Hughes and the Illusions of Innocence: A Study in American Diplomacy* (University of Illinois Press, 1966).

4 Fred Charles Iklé, "After Detection—What?" *Foreign Affairs* (January 1961).

5 Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Harvard University Press, 1960). Thomas C. Schelling and Morton H. Halperin, *Strategy and Arms Control* (Pergamon-Brassey's, 1985). See also Hedley Bull, *The Control of the Arms Race: Disarmament and Arms Control in the Missile Age* (Praeger, 1965).

6 Henry Kissinger's testimony to the US Senate on June 15, 1972 leaves no doubt that stable equilibrium was the US objective in SALT. By contrast, Nikolai Ogarkov, Marshal of the Soviet Union, former Chief of the General Staff of the USSR (1977–1984), was the author of the *Soviet Military Encyclopedia's* article stating that nuclear tipped ballistic missiles serve the traditional function of artillery.



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The Checkered History of Arms Control

Walter Russell Mead

Arms control agreements have become an accepted part of the diplomat's toolkit. They're taught in seminars at places like Johns Hopkins' SAIS and Harvard's Kennedy School; they're name-checked alongside peace treaties and trade agreements as things diplomats do; negotiating and monitoring them is even a career track. And yet in their current form, they have a very short—and even more checkered—history. The truth is, for someone looking for past examples of how arms control treaties, such as the Iran nuclear agreement, might work in the present, history provides only a handful of directly analogous examples.

Of these, not many are promising. As my colleague Adam Garfinkle, the Editor of *The American Interest* (and former speechwriter to Colin Powell and

Condoleezza Rice) has written before, "No arms control agreement can achieve within the four corners of a document what the parties are unwilling to achieve outside of them. An arms control agreement can ratify, and perhaps stabilize, strategic reality; it cannot create it."

The history of arms control offers some useful if not reassuring examples. The Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have been observed when they don't matter (decades of successfully restraining Paraguay's nuclear program!) and honored in the breach when they do (North Korea). Israel, a state which has never joined the NPT, stopped dangerous programs in Syria and Iraq by direct action—and for its pains was denounced as a lawbreaker by many NPT signatories whose inaction would have allowed these two states to develop and deploy nuclear weapons.

One of the most successful arms control treaties of the modern era was the Washington Naval Treaty (WNT), which limited dreadnought construction to fixed quotas among the major powers after World War I. Often seen as emblematic of the West's unrealistic pacifism in the wake of the War to End Wars, the WNT was actually a US policy success, allowing Washington to maintain parity with the United Kingdom, stay ahead of all other rivals, and save money in the process. Moreover, at the time, anything that reduced the naval power of potentially hostile countries tended to privilege American security. Yet even this agreement had flaws. The Washington Naval Treaty did not solve our security problems between the two world wars, and by creating an illusion of safety it may have made World War II more likely.



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What insight do past efforts offer for the current agreement between Iran and the P5+1 powers? There are two points worth bearing in mind. The first is that the deal is ultimately only as strong as the commitment of both parties to it. Both parties are free to walk away from the agreement, and Iran has the additional option of attempting to cheat. Iran had already signed the NPT; that an additional agreement was required illustrates the limits on treaties to block nuclear programs by determined states.

The second point is that successful arms control treaties tend to arise out of a favorable geopolitical balance. The United States entered the Washington Naval Conference from a position of great strength, and was able to achieve virtually all of its goals in the ensuing talks. Similarly, the fall of the Soviet Union ushered in a period of very successful arms control agreements. The Americans didn't want an arms race, and the Russians couldn't afford one.

It is here that the disjuncture between American policy and the kind of policy most likely to result in strong and durable arms control agreements becomes troubling. The Obama administration had an historic opportunity to create such a situation when a Sunni rebellion against the Assad dictatorship swept across Syria. The destruction of

Iran's client regime in Damascus would have broken the land route from Iran and Iraq into Lebanon. That, plus the loss of the protection of Assad's Syria, would have weakened Hezbollah considerably and strengthened the hand of more moderate groups in Lebanon.

By failing to capitalize on the opportunity in Syria (instead diverting US political and military power to the tragically ill-considered adventure in Libya, an adventure whose adverse consequences have created a continuing humanitarian disaster and security threat in and around that country), the Obama administration gave the impression to Iran and its neighbors that the United States was determined to exit the Middle East under virtually any conditions. This perspective shaped Iran's approach to the negotiation, encouraging those who urged the negotiating team to resist western demands, and providing ammunition for the argument that the Obama administration was desperate for almost any deal and would accept almost any terms.

The same perception undermined the confidence of longtime American allies in the region, contributing to a much more violent and unsteady atmosphere in a part of the world that the United States would normally be trying to destabilize. The tragedy is still playing out; the costs will continue to mount.

These are not the conditions that successful arms control treaties need to endure. The United States now faces a choice. It can undertake a strong program of containing Iran in the region, an approach that would entail an aggressive approach to monitoring treaty compliance and punishing breaches, or it can continue the current policy of accommodating Iran and hoping that as Iran's power grows, its political ideas will mellow.

If, as seems likely, the Obama administration stays on the second course of action, the growing geopolitical instability in the region is likely to undermine the nuclear agreement as well.



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Lessons of Past Arms Control Agreements for the Proposed Iran Deal

Barry Strauss

The history of arms control agreements is the history of violations. States sign agreements when they must, but break them when they wish. Secret violations are especially hard to monitor in dictatorships and closed societies.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, Weimar Germany (a democracy) secretly built and tested arms in the Soviet Union (a dictatorship), which was a violation of the Treaty of Versailles. Classically educated Germans might have justified this behavior with the example of Athens. Defeated by Sparta in the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC), Athens agreed to tear down its

walls, and fortifications and to limit its 200+ ship navy to a mere 12 ships. Flute girls accompanied the destruction of the walls and the fleet was duly handed over to Sparta. But nine years later the Athenians joined Sparta's enemies and soon had a fleet of forty ships (later to grow) and rebuilt most of their walls.

But treaty violations are hardly limited to those imposed on the defeated by the victors. Arms control agreements negotiated among equals in peacetime have all suffered violations and cheating. Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union for example, all bent or broke the limitations on shipbuilding of the 1930 or 1936 London Naval Treaties. More recently, in the 1970s and 1980s, the Soviets engaged in numerous violations or probable violations of arms control agreements ranging from biological and chemical to nuclear weapons and antiballistic missiles.

Chemical weapons have not gone away, in spite of the Geneva Protocol of 1925. Saddam Hussein's Iraq, a treaty signatory, used them in its war against Iran beginning in 1983 and against its own Kurdish population in the Halabja massacre of 1988. More recently, the weapons have been used in the Syrian civil war. In 2013, Syria admitted to having mustard gas and other banned chemical weapons, also in violation of Geneva, of which it was a signatory. The United States and Russia made a deal with the Syrian government to destroy those weapons, but US intelligence believes that the Syrians concealed some from international



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inspectors. It appears that ISIS has now used mustard gas against Kurdish troops in Iraq, and some think the gas came from Syria's caches.

Turning to the most terrible weapon of all, in 1970 a Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty came into effect. Virtually all of the world's states have signed the treaty except for South Sudan, India, Israel, and Pakistan. India and Pakistan are now admitted nuclear states, and Israel is universally thought to be one although it does not admit to that status.

Several signatories have nonetheless tried to develop nuclear weapons, including Iraq under Saddam Hussein (until the Israelis destroyed his nuclear reactor under construction in 1981) and Libya under Gadaffi (until he agreed to give up his weapons of mass destruction program in 2003). And then there is North Korea.

In spite of decades of western negotiations, bribes, and threats, North Korea has violated the treaty with impunity. North Korea first signed (1985), then violated (first accused by the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1993), and ultimately withdrew from the treaty (2003). It has developed and tested nuclear weapons over many years—in short, it has become a nuclear

power. In May of this year, North Korea claimed to be able to miniaturize nuclear weapons, a major step toward building nuclear missiles; the US government received the claim with skepticism.

North Korea is also a *proliferating* nuclear power. The North Koreans have sold (nonnuclear) ballistic missiles to Vietnam and a series of countries from Libya and Egypt to Iran and Pakistan. They also helped Syria build a clandestine nuclear reactor capable of producing plutonium for nuclear weapons (destroyed by Israel in 2007). For over a decade now journalists from a variety of countries have published reports claiming that North Korea and Iran are collaborating on nuclear weapons, specifically on helping Iran develop a nuclear warhead. The US government has never confirmed the reports, however.

Autarchic, communistic, authoritarian, and militaristic, North Korea is a garrison state that behaves like a pirate. The regime seems to have no hesitation about breaking agreements, being cut off from the world economy (to say nothing of suffering obloquy) in return for becoming a nuclear power.

And what of Iran? Iran is widely thought to be in the process of developing nuclear weapons, and the UN Security Council has declared it to be in noncompliance with its NPT obligations. Unlike North Korea, Iran wants to be back in the world economy after sanctions—and given the alacrity with which many states have reopened talks, the world is eager to have it back. Iran's potential business partners have good reason to wink and nod at any treaty violations. Given the weakness of the proposed treaty's verification regime, violations would not be difficult to put into effect. Will Iran stand by its promises in the proposed nonproliferation deal?

The long history of evasions, transgressions, and infringement of arms control treaties does not encourage optimism.



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Greece—and Western Civilization was named one of the best books of 2004, by the *Washington Post*. His latest book, *The Death of Caesar: The Story of History's Most Famous Assassination* (Simon & Schuster, March 2015), has been hailed as "clear and compelling" by *TIME* and received three starred reviews from book journals (*Kirkus*, *Library Journal*, *Shelf Awareness*). His *Masters of Command: Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar and the Genius of Leadership* (Simon & Schuster, May 2012), was named one of the best books of 2012 by Bloomberg.

RELATED COMMENTARY

Related commentary includes both original material commissioned by the Hoover Institution as well as relevant material from other news sources that include print and digital publications and citations.

THE DAWN OF IRANIAN EMPIRE

Max Boot

<https://www.commentarymagazine.com/2015/07/14/iranian-empire-iran-nuclear-deal>

WHY IS THE IRAN DEAL BAD? THINK NORTH KOREA.

Max Boot

<http://www.maxboot.net/articles/195-why-is-the-iran-deal-bad-think-north-korea.html>

OBAMA'S INTENTIONALLY DIVISIVE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL RHETORIC

Max Boot

<https://www.commentarymagazine.com/2015/08/10/obama-iran-deal-rhetoric>

THE SHADOW OF MUNICH HAUNTS THE IRAN NEGOTIATIONS

Victor Davis Hanson

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/416309/shadow-munich-haunts-iran-negotiations-victor-davis-hanson>

APPEASING IRAN IGNORES THE LESSONS OF HISTORY

Victor Davis Hanson

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/421484/iran-deal-appeasement-nuclear>

REPEATING HISTORY YET AGAIN

Bruce Thornton

<http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/254543/repeating-history-yet-again-bruce-thornton>

THE IRAN FAILURE HAS MANY FATHERS

Bruce Thornton

<http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/259475/iran-failure-has-many-fathers-bruce-thornton>

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Hedley Bull, *The Control of the Arms Race: Disarmament and Arms Control in the Missile Age* (Praeger, 1965).
- Stuart Croft, *Strategies of Arms Control: A History and Typology* (Manchester University Press, 1996).
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- John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Nemesis of Power: The German Army in Politics, 1918–1945* (Viking Press, 1967).
- A detailed bibliography is available on NATO's Multimedia Library website under the heading "Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation"; <http://www.natolibguides.info/armscontrol/home>

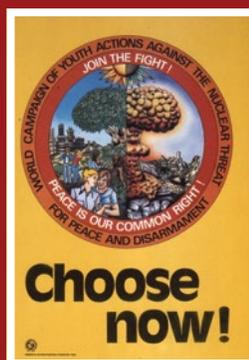
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

DO PAST ARMS CONTROL TREATIES OFFER INSIGHT ABOUT THE PROPOSED IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT?

1. Do arms limitation agreements with enemies worry allies and weaken alliances?
2. Despite cheating, do even partially successful arms agreements offer benefits?
3. Does altruism ever explain why nations seek to make international arms agreements?
4. Does enforcement of arms agreements sometimes lead to tensions and war that might not otherwise arise?
5. Should arms agreements include wider accords about national behavior?

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

GIVEN THE SPECTER OF MORE EMERGING NUCLEAR POWERS—INCLUDING ENEMIES, FRIENDS, AND NEUTRALS—HOW AND WHERE SHOULD THE UNITED STATES FOCUS ITS MISSILE-DEFENSE CAPABILITY?



Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of “War, Revolution, and Peace.” Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: “The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man’s endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life.” From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the “Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict” has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution’s dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.



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