

PAROCHIAL OPPOSITION TO DISARMAMENT REGIMES: HISTORICAL TRENDS AND
IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DISARMAMENT POLICY

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By

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ABSTRACT

Modern proponents of nuclear disarmament frequently cite the success of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) as a model regime for future efforts to abolish nuclear arsenals. Similarly, opponents of disarmament frequently point to the failed interwar naval disarmament conferences as an example of disarmament's inevitable folly. The question for policymakers considering either side of the nuclear debate is this: why was national accession to one regime ultimately possible, while cooperation within the other regime failed? More importantly, what impact does that have for today's efforts to engage viable nuclear disarmament policy?

Using a case study methodology, I look for patterns and trends shared by the states involved in these disarmament regimes. I conclude that the differing effectiveness levels of parochial opposition between these two regimes were due to the differing perceptions of strategic value attached to the weapons involved. As such, using the CWC as an example of future gains in nuclear disarmament or the naval conferences as evidence of multilateral folly misses the broader message. Instead of initially addressing disarmament through the lens of multilateral engagement or through well-designed technical regimes, the long-term viability of any future disarmament regime will likely be determined by entrenched perceptions of the strategic value of the arsenals involved.

For my Dad, who kick-started my love for national security issues and history when he took me to see *The Hunt for the Red October* at the tender age of 8 (despite Mom's hesitations), and who filled my young imagination with vivid stories of growing up on Strategic Air Command bases during the Cold War. For my Grandma and Grandpa Podguski, whose military service won the Cold War and secured freedom for my generation. For my wife, who took the big risk of getting married to me while I worked on this degree and to whom I owe a life-long debt of gratitude for her tireless patience and love.

Ad majorem, Dei gloriam,

MICHAEL D. PODGUSKI

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction..... 1

Hypothesis..... 3

Thesis Mechanics 5

Methodology and Scope 5

Working Definitions 6

Case Study Selection and Case Study Caveats 7

Conceptual Foundations..... 9

Foundations of Nuclear Disarmament 9

Other Literature..... 14

Historical Analysis—The Interwar Naval Conferences and the Chemical Weapons Convention..... 18

The Interwar Naval Conferences—Background..... 18

The Interwar Naval Conferences and the United Kingdom..... 21

The Interwar Naval Conferences and the United States 24

The Interwar Naval Conferences and Japan 28

The Chemical Weapons Convention—The American Experience, Including the Geneva Protocol of 1925..... 30

The Chemical Weapons Convention—The Russian Experience..... 38

Implications for Policymakers and Scholars 41

Conclusion 46

Bibliography 47

INTRODUCTION

In April 2009, President Barack Obama stood before a crowd in Prague and delivered what some have hailed a landmark speech on the future of nuclear weapons in the 21st Century. The centerpiece of the president's address was a call to reinvigorate the global nuclear nonproliferation regime in the 21st Century and a renewal of "America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons."¹ Following the speech, Mr. Obama and his policy team began implementation of an ambitious policy agenda that reflected this commitment and pushed nuclear security to the top of the international security agenda.

The president's speech catalyzed a new wave of serious consideration for nuclear disarmament among policymakers and nuclear scholars. While proposals for nuclear abolition had a presence in the policy community since the dawn of the Atomic Age, the "unprecedented" intellectual and political heft provided by the Obama Administration moved disarmament from an idea once relegated to the dusty shelves of progressive activists, to one that is now spreading "from op-ed pages to cabinet rooms."²

The growing popularity of this disarmament agenda developed alongside growing debate over the nature of the post-Cold War nuclear threat and the role of the U.S. nuclear arsenal in backing national security. Where previous presidential administrations addressed nuclear threats to American strategic security with a combination of a robust nuclear deterrent and efforts to engage adversaries in measured arms control initiatives, a growing sentiment among some nuclear experts has been that this is no longer adequate

¹ Barack Obama, "Remarks by President Barack Obama" (speech, Hradcany Square, Prague, Czech Republic, April 5, 2009).

² Josef Joffe and James W. Davis, "Less Than Zero: Bursting the New Disarmament Bubble," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 1 (2011): 7–13.

to fully resolve today's threats. In their opinion, complete nuclear disarmament is now "the only way to eliminate the nuclear threat."³

Alongside nuclear disarmament, abolition proponents have called for greater multilateral engagement—normally through multilateral disarmament regimes—to resolve the security and disarmament challenges remaining from the end of the Cold War. Pointing to the historic precedent for arms control created by the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and highlighting the potential for a future nuclear disarmament regime to adopt the approach taken by the CWC⁴, disarmament advocates believe that future security will result from multilateral inspection regimes and internationally intrusive verification mechanisms. And while they agree that political challenges to ratifying and complying with such regimes are a natural feature of any diplomatic effort, they believe the historic precedent established by the CWC demonstrates the power of such regimes to conquer parochial opposition.

Yet, critics of nuclear disarmament would be correct to assess that it is far too easy to use the CWC as a historic "straw man" for advocating the potential viability of future nuclear disarmament efforts. The myth of the CWC-as-disarmament-gold-standard not only overlooks the impact of strategic perceptions preceding the Convention on the successful ratification push in the U.S., but also ignores failures in previous global efforts—such as the interwar naval disarmament conferences—to secure disarmament over weapons of strategic importance.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Sean P. Giovanello, *The Domestic Politics of Arms Control Treaty Ratification: The Case of the Chemical Warfare Convention* (Proceedings of the Georgia Political Science Association Conference, 1996), 1. Giovanello writes, "The CWC also marked the first treaty to ban an entire class of WMD and as such raised the possibility of serving as a model for future disarmament efforts."

As such, the question facing researchers is why one regime—commonly used by disarmament skeptics as an example of the folly of multilateral disarmament—imploded so dramatically over a relatively brief period of time, while the other (cited by disarmament proponents as the ideal model for nuclear disarmament) gained favor in the eyes of leading world powers. From this stems a variety of other, equally important questions. Was the success of one and the failure of the other the by-product of a broader, more fundamental maxim? Or was the difference between these two regimes merely the product of a variety of different variables unique to the circumstances and timing of the regimes themselves? Are states in disarmament situations ultimately prone to maintain realist urges for self-sufficiency and relative advantages, even as they engage multilateral regimes? And perhaps most important to modern-day policymakers is this question: does the difference between these two regimes tell us anything about the potential viability of a future nuclear disarmament regime?

The answer to these questions rests, I believe, on the perceptions of strategic value given to weapons involved in disarmament and the effectiveness of parochial stakeholders in opposing treaty accession. Thus, this paper examines the questions above through the lens of the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: Domestic parochial interests are more likely to effectively obstruct national cooperation with or accession to multilateral disarmament regimes, when the weapons involved are widely perceived to be strategically or existentially important to some facet of the nation's defense.

This paper examines the historical role these oppositional forces have played in the ratification debates surrounding both the CWC and the interwar naval conferences. I conclude that while states in both sets of regimes faced opposition from parochial sub-state groups, the effect of this opposition on the ability of states to accede to—or cooperate with—differed dramatically. Based on the historical analysis of these two cases, I conclude that the difference in opposition effectiveness is due to the differing perceptions of strategic value attached to these weapons by those involved in the ratification debates.

The purpose of this research is not to establish a causal link between the effectiveness of disarmament regime opposition and the strategic perception of the weapons addressed by that regime. Instead, the purpose of this work is to establish a historical baseline pattern of correlation between these two variables, which then may be used later under test conditions that tightly control for the myriad of unique variables associated with the ratification of these individual disarmament regimes.

This paper is divided into four main sections. The first addresses the research methodology used in my analysis, the scope of analysis covered, definitions, case selection and any caveats regarding the choice of case study selection. The second section is a conceptual framework examining the literature related to multilateral regimes and nuclear disarmament, as well as the theoretical frameworks associated with prior work on strategic perceptions and disarmament. The third section is a historical analysis—conducted through a case study analysis—of the trends that emerge in the relationship between perceived strategic value of weapons and parochial stakeholders in the three case studies I have chosen. Finally, the fourth section highlights conclusions

derived from the case study analysis, and examines its relevance to policymakers and scholars.

THESIS MECHANICS

Methodology and Scope

This paper will not examine arms control proper, but will focus instead on disarmament as it pertains to specific classes and types of weaponry. The author understands that there are a variety of unique and single variables—from particular economic conditions, social values, and cultural considerations—which ultimately comprise the full calculus determining the exact outcome of the historical cases examined below. Accordingly, the present paper’s research does not seek to establish the full universe of causes that were at work in the success of the CWC and failure of the naval conferences. Within the limited confines and structure of this piece, it is impossible for the present research design to effectively and accurately account for all of the many factors at work in the various cases we will examine.

Instead, this paper uses qualitative analysis within each of the case studies to establish a linkage between the types of weaponry addressed by various disarmament regimes and the likelihood of success for opposition groups to disengage or stall national entanglement in multilateral regimes. Accordingly, the bulk of the analysis presented here will focus on historical and qualitative trends which emerged over time—rather than statistical and quantitative data points that may be processed as part of a complex algorithm devoid of narrative context.

The hypothesis will be proven correct if—in the analysis of the case studies—we see national parochial stakeholders and entities effectively blocking that nation’s accession to a multilateral disarmament regime, combined with evidence that suggests the

weapon in question was considered to be strategically or existentially necessary for advancing that state's national security interests. Alternatively, the hypothesis posed above also implies that opposing parochial forces are likely to be less effective in blocking a nation's accession to a multilateral disarmament regime when the weapon in question is deemed either unnecessary strategically and existentially, or otherwise perceived to be of little or no utility.

Working Definitions

For this analysis, I use the following concepts and definitions:

- **Arms Control**—As used within this text, this term “refers to the management of levels of weaponry through the mutual acceptance of qualitative or quantitative limitations. As a result, a balance emerges, but the parties to the agreement retain a residual capacity to use these weapons in an armed conflict.”⁵
- **Disarmament**—As used in this thesis, disarmament “refers to the total elimination of a specified (sub)category of weaponry, and not to the worldwide elimination of all weapons.”⁶ The differentiation here between disarmament and arms control is important, particularly as it relates to the elimination of an entire sub-class of weaponry.
- **Parochial Interest**—Parochial interests are sub-state stakeholders, agents, and other entities—including business conglomerates, media outlets, the military, or individuals with institutional stature, such as presidents and members of Congress—that have an interest in preserving the existence and deployment

⁵ Jean Pascal Zanders, “Challenges to Disarmament Regimes: The Case of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention,” *Global Society* 15, no. 4 (2001): 361.

⁶ *Ibid.*

(either strategic or non-strategic) of weaponry subject to disarmament under the regime in question.

- **Strategic**—Used here to describe a certain type of perception attached to a weapon subject to multilateral disarmament. A “strategic” weapon is one that provides leaders within a state with the raw military force capability, strategic power projection, or perceived international leverage necessary in order for the leader and state to execute policies, strategies, and operations which promote the national security interests of the state within the international system.
- **Non-Strategic**—This term is used here to describe a certain type of perception attached to a weapon subject to multilateral disarmament. For our purposes, a “non-strategic” weapon is one that provides military leaders and national command authorities with tactical, battlefield-scope military capabilities whose effects are used to shape the outcome of operations or maneuvers in combat situations, or whose purposes are for securing combat objectives in smaller areas of operations.

Case Study Selection and Case Study Caveats

Case selection was designed specifically to balance disarmament regimes dealing with weaponry of perceived “strategic” value, against disarmament regimes addressing “non-strategic” weaponry. Cases for this thesis simultaneously represent regimes that address weapons with distinctive security differences and military profiles, and that are often discussed in other disarmament selections.

This latter selection criterion is important. Proponents and skeptics of nuclear abolition often cite both the interwar naval conferences and the CWC as the historical

precedents for their respective policy agendas.⁷ More modern literature on the interwar naval conferences refers frequently to the importance of the conferences for future nuclear disarmament and arms control activities. Similarly, those writing about the CWC are often quick to point out comparisons to potential nuclear disarmament. Toward this end, one observer writes, “The Chemical Weapons Convention...was the final crown in the trinity of global treaties regulating the three classes of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). It deserves to be talked up far more in efforts to pursue nuclear disarmament.”⁸

Finally, my choice of the interwar naval conferences and CWC cases has been driven in part by the states taking center stage throughout much of the literature and ratification discussions. In the case of the CWC, the United States and Russia—with the two largest chemical arsenals at the time—experienced the greatest level of opposition domestically to treaty ratification. As we shall later examine, this resistance is not entirely dissimilar from recent debates in the U.S. over ratification of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) with Russia.

Similarly, the case of the interwar naval conferences offers a compelling multilateral analogue to today’s multi-polar world. Within this case, the primary states featured in my analysis include the United Kingdom, the United States, and Japan. Although this case was drawn from a pre-nuclear security era, the conditions of the international system at the time in which the case took place—including the roles

⁷ It should be noted here that while it is not uncommon to hear nuclear abolition skeptics discuss failed disarmament regimes such as the interwar naval conferences in discussions about historical lessons, the degree to which this regime is referenced is far out-paced by the frequency with which pro-abolition advocates discuss the success of the CWC. For more about the commonalities between the interwar naval conferences and modern day efforts to control nuclear weapons, see Robert G. Kaufman, *Arms Control During the Pre-Nuclear Era: The United States and Naval Limitation Between the Two World Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 200-201.

⁸ Ramesh Thakur, “Learning from the Chemical Weapons Convention,” *The Hindu (India)*, 1 October 2007, <http://www.cigionline.org/articles/2007/10/learning-chemical-weapons-convention>.

assumed by the actors within the case—are closely paralleled to those witnessed today. The naval conferences occurred in a post-conflict era marked by the absence of a clear global hierarchy of power, attempts by multiple states to attain superpower status, and the growing influence of multilateral institutions such as the League of Nations. This situation is not unlike today’s era, where events of the past decade have led to questions about the role and power of the U.S. abroad, efforts to engage multilateral institutions have grown, and new powers—primarily China and the European Union—have risen as economic and security competitors in regions once dominated by U.S. power. In light of this multilateral aspect of today’s world, this case also offers a chance to test my hypothesis across the range of political and cultural diversity demonstrated in these three nations.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

Foundations of Nuclear Disarmament

In January 2007, four retired, senior U.S. statesmen—many of them acclaimed adherents to the realist school of foreign policy, and who quickly became dubbed as the “Four Horsemen” by those in the nuclear policy community—jointly published an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* that reignited calls for a serious public policy agenda whose goal is the eventual realization of a “world free of nuclear weapons.”⁹ On the heels of that publication, the Four Horsemen established public policy organizations dedicated to advancing this agenda and sought politicians and government officials to join them in advancing this dream.

⁹ George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger and Sam Nunn, "A World Free of Nuclear Weapons," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 4, 2007: A15.

One such figure was President Barack Obama, who took the vision articulated in *The Wall Street Journal* and transformed it into a bold, electrifying piece of policy oratory delivered in 2009 to a packed international crowd gathered in Hradcany Square in Prague, Czech Republic. To be certain, the president's words and message were not markedly different than many of his White House predecessors. However, in the minds of many nuclear disarmament advocates—and indeed, in the minds of those around the world—the speech represented a milestone moment in American history in which an American president took bold steps of personal dedication to move the U.S. and the rest of the world toward realizing the dream of a non-nuclear planet. Since that day, discussions about nuclear disarmament have become synonymous with the so-called “Prague vision” reflected by the President on that day in April.

However, before Mr. Obama and the Four Horsemen brought the message of nuclear disarmament into the domain of popular culture and “mainstream” America, pro-disarmament scholars such as Jan Lodal and Ivo Daalder began quietly laying the groundwork for the intellectual foundation of the resurgent nuclear abolition movement. In their piece, “The Logic of Zero”, Lodal and Daalder propose four steps—a unilateral American declaration of nuclear use policy, a unilateral reduction in U.S. strategic weapons, a comprehensive multilateral nonproliferation regime, and a vigorous diplomatic campaign to get other nations onboard with nuclear disarmament—that the United States should engage in order to enable the realization of a disarmament policy goal.¹⁰ Underpinning these steps are three principles they believe provide the fundamental foundation for disarmament: “that a world without nuclear weapons is the

¹⁰ Ivo Daalder and Jan Lodal, “The Logic of Zero: Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 6 (2008): 80–95.

only way of guaranteeing that such weapons will never be used, that in the interim the only valid purpose of nuclear weapons is to prevent their use by others, and that all fissile material must be subject to international comprehensive accounting and control.”¹¹

Though Daalder and Lodal’s piece does not fully represent the specificities of the Obama Prague speech or the Four Horsemen *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, the three pieces do share significant similarities. First, each suggest that nuclear weapons will be the greatest security threat facing the U.S. in the post-Cold War era, particularly given the rise of the non-state actor as a threat to great power states. Second, all three contend that nuclear weapons—though of increasingly little or no deterrent value—will be a necessary “evil” for the United States to retain until complete disarmament occurs. And finally, they each hold to the belief that a grand, sweeping multilateral verification and enforcement regime is the only way to ensure complete nonproliferation.

This last commonality is a central pillar upon which the modern day nonproliferation and nuclear disarmament movements are built. Stemming from a reaction to the power void left by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the trend toward multilateralism in the post-Cold War era is largely an outgrowth of the belief that the United States—acting in the capacity as the world’s lone superpower—is no longer capable of sufficiently mitigating threats from nuclear proliferation or nuclear arsenals on its own. Without a multilateral regime of allies and like-minded nations—disarmament proponents believe—the United States will not be able to effectively guarantee its own national security goals and ensure the lasting safety of Americans and global citizens alike.

¹¹ Ibid., 91.

Nuclear disarmament advocate and nonproliferation scholar Joseph Cirincione discusses the necessity of multilateral approaches in advancing the nuclear abolition agenda thusly,

Those who believe that maintaining absolute U.S. superiority is the only reliable defense strategy must recognize that international institutions and laws are essential to U.S. legitimacy and security. As Weekly Standard contributing editor Robert Kagan says, ‘The United States can neither appear to be acting only in its self-interest, nor can it, in fact, act as if its own national interest were all that mattered.’ British Prime Minister Tony Blair put it more directly: ‘If America wants the rest of the world to be part of the agenda it has set, it must be part of their agenda, too.’¹²

The emergence of this rationale has been driven largely by changes in common thinking related to nuclear weapons, national security, and national sovereignty. During the Cold War, nuclear weapons provided the U.S. with a mechanism to offset the conventional dominance of the Communist Warsaw Pact and the threat from a war against the Soviet Union. The American nuclear arsenal gave policymakers a means for managing the risk of general war with the Soviet Union and mitigating its potential consequences for allies in Western Europe.

But with the Cold War over and the threat of general war largely diminished, some have argued that these weapons are no longer needed. A perceived lack of a role for superpower deterrence, trends of increased nuclear proliferation—accompanied by the prospects of “rogue” nuclear powers—and recent concerns about the security of nuclear weapons and materials generated serious momentum within the disarmament community behind the idea that nuclear weapons are no longer a guarantee of safety, but rather a liability exacerbating our risks.

¹² Joseph Cirincione, *Bomb Scare: The History and Future of Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), Kindle Edition, position 2394.

Scholars addressing this point essentially argue that retaining nuclear weapons in an age of U.S. conventional superiority gives other nations incentives to pursue their own nuclear programs¹³, ergo weakening traditional Cold War deterrence. As these states pursue their own nuclear arsenals, they also raise the risk of unintended proliferation. This proliferation makes sensitive materials or devices prone to theft by terrorists like al Qaeda, which in turn raises the prospect of a “nuclear 9/11”. To disarmament advocates, this possibility—and that of a rogue nuclear state—is an untenable risk that outweighs any perceived value of a nuclear deterrent.¹⁴

In their eyes, the new “balance of power” relationship that exists in the post-Cold War environment is one of shared risk, mutual vulnerability, and economic competition. As such, they argue that states continuing to rely on nuclear arsenals for strategic deterrence only increase the overall vulnerability of the international order and detract from the ability of the U.S. to be a full partner in the new global community.¹⁵ One disarmament advocate asserts that, “Traditional deterrence is obsolete in the age of asymmetric warfare.”¹⁶

¹³ Hillary Clinton, “Remarks at the U.S. Institute for Peace,” Speech, United States Institute for Peace, Washington, D.C.: October 21, 2009. Clinton asserts, “Clinging to nuclear weapons in excess of our security needs gives other countries the motivation or the excuse to pursue their own nuclear options.”

¹⁴ George P. Shultz, “The New Age of Diplomacy,” *Reflections*, (Spring 2009): 5-9. Former Secretary of State Shultz writes on this very phenomenon and observes, “Terrorists who now seek nuclear weapons essentially cannot be deterred. If they get a weapon, they will use it.”

¹⁵ Clinton, “Remarks at the U.S. Institute for Peace.”

¹⁶ Tyler Wigg-Stevenson, *U.S. Evangelicals Join the Nuclear-Weapon-Free World Movement*, May 6, 2009, <http://www.thebulletin.org/web-edition/op-eds/us-evangelicals-join-the-nuclear-weapon-free-world-movement> (accessed October 1, 2010).

Other Literature

While many within the disarmament movement see abolition as the “most ‘complete’ grand strategy for dealing with nuclear weapons in the post-Cold War era,”¹⁷ most proponents either ignore or brush off the inherently sub-state level issue of challenges arising from parochial entities. Largely underscoring this action is the assumption that such issues are simply a matter of garnering the political will necessary to make disarmament possible, and that it is too trivial to seriously consider the interference of stakeholders throughout the ratification process.¹⁸

Despite this disregard within the disarmament community, numerous scholars in the academic literature have examined the effect of stakeholders and external actors in the context of specific arms control and disarmament agreements. Unlike the study I undertake here, however, each of these studies examines the particular activities of individual groups in the process of ratification or support for specific policies and regimes—often with an explicit emphasis on what activities were successful or the degree to which their involvement affected the nature of the regimes.

Kai Opperman and Dagmar Röttches are among those who have explored the role played by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in catalyzing arms control initiatives, particularly as it relates to the CWC and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

¹⁷ Tyler Wigg-Stevenson (Director, Two Futures Project), interview with the author, Washington, D.C., January 2011.

¹⁸ Cirincione, *Bomb Scare*, position 2463. In discussing efforts to secure loose nuclear materials and vulnerable weaponry, Cirincione writes, “Lacking is the high-level political commitment and adequate funding to fully implement them. That is, though these are tough problems and there are often national bureaucratic obstacles to overcome, these programs work. As numerous independent studies have found, they need presidential leadership to energize them.”

(CTBT).¹⁹ In their research, Opperman and Röttsches identified two pathways that NGOs used to push for ratification of the regimes: the mobilization of external public pressure on regime veto holdouts, and the persuasion of veto holdouts based on the merits of the regime in question. Although this second pathway pertains indirectly to the power of perception to sway a state's leadership to support or defeat a regime, Opperman and Röttsches stop short of drawing further conclusions. Instead, they elect to “not probe into possible alternative explanations of the ability of NGOs to further the domestic ratification of the CWC and the CTBT in the US.”²⁰

Others such as Lindsay, DeLaet, Rowling, Scott, and Carter examine the roles of congressional partisanship and parochialism in decisions about arms control and strategic weapons systems. Regarding the latter, Lindsay attempts to examine—under controlled conditions—the “conventional wisdom” that pork barrel politics and parochialism shapes the votes of members of Congress on major strategic weapons systems.²¹ His research concludes that member votes “do not always express their own policy preferences” when voting on strategic systems, though it is “likely that *most* members do in fact vote... according to their private policy preferences.”²² Even though my research does not focus on the factors that drive individual stakeholders, the conclusions reached by Lindsay are consistent with the actions of stakeholders and parochial interests covered in my analysis.

¹⁹ Kai Opperman and Dagmar Röttsches, “NGOs as Catalysts for International Arms Control? The Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in the United States,” *Journal of International Relations and Development* 13, no. 3 (2010): 239–267.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 246.

²¹ James M. Lindsay, “Parochialism, Policy, and Constituency Constraints: Congressional Voting on Strategic Weapons Systems,” *American Journal of Political Science* 34, no. 4 (1990): 936–960.

²² *Ibid.*, 950.

In their paper, Carter and Scott assess the assertiveness of Congress in U.S. foreign policy, covering a period from 1946 to 1997.²³ While the data show that Congress has become less active in that period, they conclude that the overall assertiveness of Congress has actually increased. Because of their statistical analysis of congressional engagement in foreign policy, they conclude that the old “acquiescence-resurgence” model is outmoded. In its place, they offer four new models—“competitive” Congress, “disengaged” Congress, “supportive” Congress, and “strategic” Congress—in order to “better reflect the range of congressional foreign policy behavior” highlighted within their data.²⁴

While the four models described in Scott and Carter’s paper partially explain the actions of congressional stakeholders assessed in my analysis, the issue of congressional assertiveness is relatively assumed to already be ongoing in at least one of the cases examined. Furthermore, the behavior of Congress is only one partial explanation for the historical behavior witnessed in my case studies, and thus does not fully explain why parochial interests are effective in the obstruction of regime accession. Thus, while Scott and Carter’s analysis is worthwhile for understanding the rise of an assertive Congress in the modern era as the by-product of specific forces, it has very little to say about whether this assertiveness is an explanation for the success and failure of Congress to effectively block or support ratification efforts in the arms control and disarmament domains. To this end, it is not incorporated within my paper’s analysis.

DeLaet, Rowling, and Scott narrow this emphasis on congressional intervention in U.S. foreign affairs down to examine the role and consequences of congressional

²³ James M. Scott and Ralph G. Carter, “Acting on the Hill: Congressional Assertiveness in U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Congress and the Presidency* 29, no. 2 (2002): 151-169.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 151-164.

partisanship as it relates to the fate of arms control treaties in the U.S. Senate.²⁵ Using analysis that controls for background, career, region, and other variables, these authors attempt to “gauge the relative importance of three determinants of congressional voting—partisanship, ideology, and electoral concerns.”²⁶ Using a case study that samples the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), CWC, CTBT, and Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT), the authors conclude the appearance of a greater level of partisanship “on major foreign policy issues” alongside “greater congressional assertiveness and resistance to presidential initiatives.”²⁷

When taken in conjunction with Carter and Scott’s analysis on the assertiveness of the U.S. Congress, DeLaet, Rowling, and Scott offer an explanation for Congressional obstruction in the past 20 years that is compelling. As my analysis of the history behind the CWC ratification debate in the United States demonstrates, their findings corroborate the partisan shell games played between the Republican-controlled Congress in 1996 and the Clinton White House and more recently, Republican opposition to the New START with Russia.

However, as with most other pieces discovered in the literature on parochial powers in treaty ratification debates and accession discussions, this analysis only explains a very small part of the overall resistance phenomenon alluded to previously in this paper. While scholars have been very effective at explaining the reasons why various stakeholders have been as assertive or aggressive in their approach to treaty debates and foreign policy, no one has yet to put forth a solid explanation at the meta-narrative level

²⁵ C. James DeLaet, Charles M. Rowling, and James M. Scott, “Politics Past the Edge: Partisanship and Arms Control Treaties in the U.S. Senate,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 33, no. 2 (2005): 179–209.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 200.

for why these parochial opposition groups may be more or less effective in different regimes. As such, my analysis here focuses on whether the efforts of parochial interests to oppose multilateral regimes are more likely to successfully block a state's engagement in a disarmament regime when the regime in question deals with an arsenal of strategic importance. It is toward assessing the validity of this claim through the lens of history to which we now turn.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS—THE INTERWAR NAVAL CONFERENCES AND THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

Modern day advocates of disarmament see great promise for the success of nuclear disarmament policy that is brought about and guaranteed through multilateral regimes. Below, we examine two different case studies of multilateral disarmament and the opposition these regimes faced. In each of these cases, we assess the nature of the regime's opposition in blocking each nation's accession to or ratification of the regime, and juxtapose that against the perceived utility of the weaponry addressed by the regime.

The Interwar Naval Conferences—Background

The series of naval conferences held between the United States, Japan, and Great Britain during the period between World War I and World War II (referred to in this paper as the “interwar” period) demonstrates the overall effectiveness of parochial opposition—acting through bureaucratic politics and interests driven by parochial agendas—when the disarmament regime in question deals with a weapon or class of weapons deemed to be strategically valuable to those actors.

It should be said from the start that there is room to debate whether the naval conferences constitute “arms control” or “disarmament”, as defined by us above. Scholars and historians writing on the issue have generally fallen along either pole of that

construct, though most have referred to the conferences as attempts at disarmament. And for this, there is good precedent. When the first naval conference—the Washington Conference on the Limitation of Armaments—convened on 11 November 1921, those gathered in Washington heard Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes greet delegates with a stern charge to make the process of naval disarmament a hard reality.²⁸

The naval conferences of the interwar period—including the Washington, London, and Rome sessions—took shape as the world emerged from an era of intense struggle and bloody conflict. As a natural reaction to the horror witnessed on the battlefields of Europe during World War I, policymakers and civilians in each of the major world powers reacted favorably to initiatives to prevent man-made catastrophes from happening in the future. In this spirit, the League of Nations—the forum that handled much of the naval conference activity and later, other disarmament activities, including the Geneva Protocol—was established in order to stem the threat of war and provide institutional means for preventing future conflict.²⁹

The naval conferences—set within this ideological context—were an effort to limit and eventually get rid of the major military strategic platform of the day: capital ships. When taken in conjunction with the charge by Secretary of State Hughes to the delegates attending the Washington conference, statements by other world leaders in the run-up to the first naval conference, and the definition of “disarmament” provided above, the interwar naval conferences constitute one of the first modern attempts at disarmament. Although the final disposition of *actual* disarmament was a distinct failure,

²⁸ Thomas H. Buckley in Michael Krepon, and Dan Caldwell, eds., *The Politics of Arms Control Ratification* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 65.

²⁹ This view is commonly shared throughout the historical literature on this subject. Most authors encountered in the course of research for this paper have prefaced their examination of the naval conferences against this backdrop.

the outcome of the Washington Conference was that the great powers involved elected to hold onto existing naval systems, while abandoning plans for the newer naval systems that the naval stakeholders wanted to incorporate into their respective fleets at home.³⁰ Abandoning this sub-category of naval weaponry and discussions to eventually eliminate most naval forces is what leads many historians—in accordance with our definition of disarmament—to categorize the naval conferences as an attempt at disarmament.

For the governments of the United States and Great Britain, the decision to engage in these conferences was not driven by convictions that naval forces were of little strategic value. Instead, American and British leaders perceived naval arms limitations “as a necessity: to satisfy public opinion, and to relieve pressure on their own defense budgets.”³¹ At a time when people in each country were pressing for reduced taxes, government efficiencies, and increased social program spending, committing to build bigger and faster naval vessels seemed politically out of the question for most in leadership.

The perceived value of bigger and more destructive ships was not lost on military leaders in either nation, however. While civilians in the naval conference states initially—at least at the onset of the interwar conference series—favored domestic spending on social issues above defense spending, the underlying strategic value attributed to naval arsenals remained strongly imprinted on the minds of strategists and parochial leaders in each of the nations involved. As a result, U.S., British, and Japanese policymakers who were successful at negotiating disarmament in Washington—as well

³⁰ Erik Goldstein and John H. Maurer, eds., *The Washington Conference, 1921-1922: Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability, and the Road to Pearl Harbor* (Portland: Frank Cass, 1994), 282.

³¹ Robert G. Kaufman, *Arms Control During the Pre-Nuclear Era: The United States and Naval Limitation Between the Two World Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 197-198.

as those who were successful in London and Rome—faced stiff (and even deadly) opposition from parochial forces upon their return home.³²

This is not to say that all of the parochial powers were able to block national ratification of the regime treaties resulting from the interwar naval conferences. However, as I shall demonstrate below, the general arc of the experience in this case demonstrates the shift in strategic values attached to disarmament weapons—a shift in this case which goes from a low priority value attached to capital ships, to one of critically high value—dramatically tilts the balance of support for the regime toward those parochial interests that are opposing it.

The Interwar Naval Conferences and the United Kingdom

The initial reaction to the disarmament conferences in the United Kingdom by parochial groups were that they provided a “neat solution” to resolving the dilemma of avoiding a costly naval rivalry with the United States.³³ The British government at the time was intent on reasserting its primacy in the international system, and this so-called “neat solution” gave the government what it believed was a firm policy to “maintain its superiority but avoid an expensive naval construction programme at a time of considerable financial difficulty.”³⁴ In light of the significant economic downturn facing the U.K. at the time—and the low strategic value the general populace attached to additional capital ships in the British fleet—British negotiators of naval disarmament

³² Herbert P. LePore, *The Politics and Failure of Naval Disarmament, 1919-1939: The Phantom Peace* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), 248.

³³ Goldstein and Maurer, eds., *The Washington Conference*, 273.

³⁴ Gerard Silverlock, “British Disarmament Policy and the Rome Naval Conference, 1924,” *War in History* 10, no. 2 (2003): 184.

received a warm reception by the British press, civil society institutions, and members of organized labor for their work on the Washington Conference treaties.³⁵

It wasn't long after the Washington Conference, however, that opposition within Britain's naval and parliamentary parochial groups quickly revealed their intent to use the naval disarmament conferences not as a path to lasting disarmament and peace, but rather as a way to maximize British strategic success in the naval domain. For these parochial interests, the capital fleet was a necessary strategic asset to project the power of the British Empire. Although British naval forces had enjoyed relative dominance on European waters following WWI—thanks in part to the strategic vacuum created by the forced disarmament of the German navy and the weakness of French and Russian naval forces—the capacity of the British fleet to project strategic influence away from Continental waters had diminished quite severely. In the minds of the naval parochial opposition, this naval anemia “threatened to undercut Britain's diplomatic standing as a great power and its leadership within the Empire... [and] made the Empire more vulnerable to attack.”³⁶

Key figures within British naval circles blamed the naval disarmament conferences for this loss of influence. The most vocal opponents of Britain's efforts in the naval disarmament movement “lamented Britain's voluntary resignation from its traditional position of naval supremacy”, because with this “loss of authority went a corresponding loss of prestige; thus Britain had won the late sea war, only to lose it at the

³⁵ Richard Dean Burns and Donald Urquidi, *Disarmament in Perspective: An Analysis of Selected Arms Control and Disarmament Agreements Between the World Wars, 1919–1939* (Los Angeles: California State College at Los Angeles Foundation, 1968), 3:51-53.

³⁶ Goldstein and Maurer, eds., *The Washington Conference*, 271.

conference.”³⁷ Accordingly, the strategic value that these parochial groups attached to British naval assets following the Washington Conference was extremely high. Winston Churchill, in remarks to colleagues, cautioned, “Nothing in the world, nothing that you may think of, or dream of, or any may tell you; no arguments, however strong, no appeals, however seductive, must lead you to abandon that naval supremacy on which the life of our country depends.”

To rectify the perceived disadvantages brought about by the Washington Conference, British naval interests set about using the framework of the regime itself to achieve reductions and eliminations that would benefit only the U.K. Unlike the other countries we examine in this case, the British approach was unique in that the parochial Admiralty did not forcefully oppose accession of the naval disarmament treaties. Instead, these forces subtly subverted the overall intent and purpose of the conferences to achieve further gains for British sea power. Faced with the prospects of diminished British strategic reach, the Admiralty quickly seized “an opportunity to achieve through the League a desirable outcome, namely, naval arms limitation by low risk means.”³⁸

This subversion of the naval conferences agenda for the purposes of British naval expansion was no less devastating for the viability of the regime than if the Admiralty had forcefully blocked ratification of the conference treaties to begin with. As Robert Jervis observes, “Even if all major actors would settle for the status quo, security regimes cannot form when one or more actors believe that security is best provided for by expansion.”³⁹

³⁷ Burns and Urquidi, *Disarmament in Perspective*, 3:73.

³⁸ Silverlock, “British Disarmament Policy,” 187.

³⁹ Stephen D. Krasner, ed., *International Regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 177.

From this, it is unsurprising that the interwar naval conferences eventually fell out of style in British policy circles and ultimately collapsed shortly before the start of World War II. While the strategic application of naval weapons proper did not cause the collapse of the naval conferences structure, it did increase the perceived pay-off for parochial groups resisting the regime. British imperial ambitions—which they believed could only advance under the banner of naval supremacy—gave the parochial forces within the Admiralty sufficient incentive to undermine the naval conferences. Given this incentive, the Admiralty cleverly adopted the regime to its own ends, ultimately creating an artificial barrier to British participation in the regime and eventually assisting in the collapse of naval disarmament.

The Interwar Naval Conferences and the United States

It would be unfair to pin the blame for naval disarmament's demise squarely on the British. Other accounts of interwar naval disarmament indicate that American parochial forces also effectively opposed American participation in the regime, and in so doing led to the demise of naval disarmament.

Like their British counterparts, American efforts to pursue naval disarmament under the Washington Naval Conference treaties were greeted with admiration and praise from the public, key press outlets, and even members of more conservative-leaning organizations and institutions. The public reaction, as one author assessed, was “warmly sympathetic” to the overall goal of naval disarmament.⁴⁰ For members of the policy community, the public reasoning behind this warm reception was immediately apparent.

⁴⁰ Burns and Urquidi, *Disarmament in Perspective*, 3:51.

During the early part of the twentieth century, the U.S. rose to superpower status, bringing with it a growth of its strategic naval force projection. This growth was fueled both by expanding American commercial enterprises and the fact that WWI had “awakened a security consciousness among American decision makers about the political and strategic importance of naval power.”⁴¹ However, as the U.S. became an increasingly dominant strategic actor on the high seas, British forces that had previously ignored the American navy began to take notice. The perception amongst the British was that the growth of American forces—combined with the growing Japanese fleet—“seriously eroded the hegemony exercised by Britain on the high seas.”⁴²

Very quickly, the swelling tensions around this Anglo-American issue made it apparent that a potential naval arms race was preparing to erupt. Not only would such an arms race impose significant economic harms on the American economy, but it also became rapidly apparent to many American decision makers that in a very short period, “England and the United States would be in the same attitude toward one another... as England and Germany had been in the past.”⁴³ To U.S. leadership, the consequences of such an attitude would be publicly disastrous. During the negotiations surrounding the London Naval Conference, President Hoover concluded that a failure to ratify the London Treaty would inevitably lead to another world war between the United States and Great Britain.⁴⁴ It was against this backdrop that the American public greeted the initial U.S. involvement in efforts to pare down global naval forces with widespread warmth and affinity.

⁴¹ Goldstein and Maurer, eds., *The Washington Conference*, 269-270.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 271.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 269.

⁴⁴ LePore, *Politics and Failure*, 248.

However, after returning to the American Senate to report on the treaties from the Washington conference, negotiators were surprised to learn that not everyone shared the same strategic perceptions about the dis-utility of strong naval forces. Although the parochial U.S. naval establishment had initially favored disarmament, it quickly came to see the naval disarmament efforts as strategic liabilities with regards to Japan.⁴⁵ Like their British counterparts, the American naval establishment expressed significant misgivings about the strategic impacts of the naval disarmament treaties on the growing power of the U.S., particularly during congressional hearings for the Washington Conference treaties. While naval disarmament was a morally pleasing consideration, these parochial groups ultimately attached a strategic value to the capital ship program in the United States.

The result of this perceived naval strategic value was stiff opposition from the U.S. Navy. Herbert LePore observes,

During ratification testimony, no less than 19 officers in the U.S. Navy testified and came out against the treaty, primarily because they believed that the reductions would leave American commerce in the Far East undefended, and because they believed that the Administration should have held firm for a better bargaining position which would not have so drastically cut into U.S. naval interests.⁴⁶

Such prominent and wide-spread dissent from the Navy flew in the face of the spirit of the times that initially drove leaders in the U.S., U.K., and Japan to work on the naval disarmament issue, and was shocking at first. However, the perceived strategic value of naval forces to bolster American interests in areas abroad quickly spread from military parochial opposition to the civilian population as well. As the strategic value of

⁴⁵ Burns and Urquidi, *Disarmament in Perspective*, 3:117-118.

⁴⁶ LePore, *Politics and Failure*, 250-251.

capital ships rose in the minds of many Americans, domestic opposition to U.S. accession to the naval disarmament regime ultimately trampled on considerations of the “greater good” in naval disarmament.

Not long after President Harding stopped shipbuilding activities following the Washington Conference—a measure for which the public had initially been largely supportive—union leaders affected by the loss of work quickly realized not only the strategic value of naval forces abroad, but also the significant value to their own domestic economic interests. Following Harding’s failure to follow through on reconversion plans for the industries hit hardest by the shipbuilding moratorium, union support quickly turned into wary skepticism. This skepticism soon spread to the rest of the American populace writ-large.

This groundswell of opposition and disenchantment—beginning with changed American naval perception of strategic value and continuing with union acceptance of this value—grew such that after the London Naval Conferences, President Hoover and Undersecretary of State Joseph Cotton returned home and “voiced astonishment at the lack of interest shown by Americans as to what had taken place at the conference.”⁴⁷

As the American experience demonstrates, a shift in perceptions about the strategic utility of weapons facing disarmament can dramatically shift public support for a regime into growing opposition that ultimately disrupts a state’s engagement in the regime. What had begun initially as current of resistance to the Washington Conference from within the naval establishment, quickly exploded into a massive wave of public

⁴⁷ Ibid., 243.

opposition that eventually made the next round of conferences in Rome all but a guaranteed failure.

The Interwar Naval Conferences and Japan

Much like the Anglo-American experience with navigating the naval disarmament landscape, the Japanese experience also featured a clash of support and political agendas between the civilian and military sectors of society. By one account, “Opposition appeared in the Diet, in the militant press, and from naval officers during the long, bitter struggle over ratification. And yet the government, backed by an apparent public majority, succeeded in successfully pressing formal sanction of the treaty.”⁴⁸

Much like the American and British experiences, the government’s success in touting the virtue of the naval disarmament conferences was short-lived. Not long after the first series of naval disarmament agreements came into force,

verbal hostility spilled over into the government, the general public, and the military. Newspapers challenged acceptance of the treaty on grounds it was purportedly diplomatically short-sheeted by the United States and Britain.⁴⁹

This division also carried over into the Japanese delegation, which quickly became embroiled in scandal when Japanese naval representative Admiral Takarabe accepted a compromise during negotiations against the vehement protest of his civilian counterparts.⁵⁰

Unlike the American and British experiences with disarmament, however, the tone and action surrounding this disarmament regime backlash became surprising hostile.

Unlike Anglo-American culture—which had significant historical precedent for

⁴⁸ Burns and Urquidi, *Disarmament in Perspective*, 3:144.

⁴⁹ LePore, *Politics and Failure*, 256.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 255.

establishing the proper boundaries between civilian and military leadership in matters of law and diplomacy—the Japanese ratification debate erupted into “a conflict between the military and civilian sectors of government dealing with who had authority and responsibility.”⁵¹

Like the Americans and British experiences, the source of this schism was primarily rooted in the differing strategic values associated with naval armaments. Japan, like the United States, was an emerging force in the Pacific region and its naval leadership perceived the possession of capital ships to be intrinsically important to guaranteeing the ability to pursue an expansionist policy. Like the British Admiralty, parochial forces in the Japanese navy had their sites trained on advancing their own political agenda, even at the expense of the disarmament efforts.

For the parochial powers in the Japanese navy, this meant beating American attempts at naval dominance in the Pacific. As historian Herbert LePore observed, “The Japanese navy was in actuality determined to be superior to the American navy, no matter what the costs—though the civilian government, as mentioned previously, knew Japan could not win a naval race with the United States.”⁵² Because naval power was strategically vital to this goal, the Japanese navy fiercely opposed efforts aimed at capital ship disarmament.

Unfortunately, this perceived strategic value incentivized Japanese parochial forces to go out of their way to achieve their agenda and ultimately sacrificed Japan’s long-term compliance with the disarmament regime. Like their British allies at the time, Japanese naval officials sought to leverage the naval disarmament treaties to their

⁵¹ Ibid., 257.

⁵² Ibid., 255-256.

advantage—even as they continued to vocally and violently oppose efforts aimed at compliance. Despite the civilian leadership’s desire to comply with the terms of the interwar conference treaties, Japan’s military proceeded apace with building additional naval forces in violation of the rules of the disarmament conferences.

This parochial opposition went a tragic step further when the rancor in Japan’s civilian-military divide turned violent. Shortly after Japanese Prime Minister Hamaguchi Osachi—one of the leading voices for Japanese engagement in international regimes and naval disarmament—was able to wrestle lawmakers into approving Japanese accession to the naval disarmament regime, a Japanese naval officer who opposed these efforts assassinated him. Though this act could be categorized as an unrelated and senseless act of violence unrelated to Japanese engagement in naval disarmament, many scholars in the literature interpret it as a turning point in Japan’s domestic political culture and in the nation’s willingness to engage external security regimes like the naval conferences.

The Chemical Weapons Convention—The American Experience, Including the Geneva Protocol of 1925

Even as the previous case study demonstrated the power of strategic perceptions to magnify parochial opposition under disarmament regimes, the Chemical Weapons Convention case—particularly set within the context of the American ratification debate—demonstrates the declining power of parochial opposition as the perceived strategic value of a weapon decreases to a non-strategic level.

Born from the trenches of the First World War—where the world witnessed for the first time the devastating effects of chemical weapons used in combat—the Geneva Protocol of 1925 emerged as an international regime designed to prohibit the future use of chemical and biological weaponry in war. Although the Geneva Protocol lacked

measures to prevent the production, acquisition, and stockpiling of chemical arsenals—and thus could technically be classified as an “arms control” agreement by modern standards—the Protocol was, in principle, designed to fit within the broader catalogue of disarmament regimes undertaken by the League of Nations at the time. The absence of measures dealing with production, acquisition, and chemical stockpiling was a function of omission by oversight, rather than omission by explicit intent.

Still, major state powers like the United States—which had initially signed the Protocol and stood behind its overall mission—“refused to bind themselves [to the Protocol] and many states came to view the agreement as a no-first use pledge rather than a total ban on chemical warfare.”⁵³ To be sure, the Protocol’s demise was far from ever certain. Initially, the Protocol received the endorsement of both the White House and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as early as 1926, and it showed promise as part of the broader disarmament agenda pursued by the United States during the interwar period.

However, as the ratification debate began to unfold and take shape within the U.S., both the American Chemical Society—acting as the interlocutor for the U.S. chemical industry—and the U.S. Army Chemical Warfare Service lobbied extensively against the Protocol. While the U.S. would continue to abide—the use of certain chemical defoliants during the Vietnam War withstanding—by the spirit of the Protocol’s no-first use commitment throughout the Cold War, the opposition of the military and

⁵³ Sean P. Giovanello, *The Domestic Politics of Arms Control Treaty Ratification: The Case of the Chemical Weapons Convention* (Proceedings of the Georgia Political Science Association Conference, 1996), 3.

chemical industry effectively killed any attempts to ratify the treaty and ultimately prevented it from ever reaching a vote on the Senate floor.⁵⁴

For the chemical industry, opposition to the Protocol was based on a variety of factors, including “the need to be prepared in this area for future wars, and, significantly, the control that the League of Nations might acquire over the chemical industry in the United States.”⁵⁵ The scientific community of chemists in the United States—persuaded by the ongoing strategic value of the chemical arsenals and convinced of the potentially less-than-lethal applications chemical warfare offered for the battlefield—quickly moved to speak out against the Protocol.

Appearing before community groups and civic organizations—and in launching a full-scale media blitz which included letters to the editor and critical members of Congress—American chemists actively promoted their opposition to the Protocol on ground of patriotism and national security. At a national meeting of the American Chemical Society in August 1925, the council representing the membership of the Society passed a unanimous resolution that established it as “strongly on record against ratification of the Geneva protocol on poisonous gases, as against National safety and on the grounds of humanity.”⁵⁶

The strategic value attached to the chemical arsenal by this parochial opposition was clearly heard in the halls of the U.S. Senate. When the resolution calling for the ratification of the Protocol reached the floor of the Senate for open debate, Senator Joseph Ransdell of Louisiana made a deliberate note of the opposition of the American

⁵⁴ Jonathan B. Tucker, ed., *The Chemical Weapons Convention* (Monterey: Monterey Institute of International Studies, 2001), 1. It is important to note here that the Protocol did briefly appear on the Senate floor after it was voted out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

⁵⁵ Daniel P. Jones, “American Chemists and the Geneva Protocol,” *Isis* 71, no. 3 (1980): 432.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

chemical industry—and of the strategic value they perceived in the chemical arsenal. In his floor speech, he urged the Senate to quickly kill the resolution and ensure that the Protocol be “sent back to the Committee on Foreign Relations and buried so deep it would never appear before us again.”⁵⁷ Shortly after his speech, the resolution was quickly withdrawn from the floor and pigeonholed in the Foreign Relations Committee. The Protocol was not heard from again, until 1947 when President Truman formally withdrew the Protocol from Senate consideration.

The literature on the evolution of chemical disarmament in the halls of Congress between the time of the failed ratification debate in 1926 until the time of the Protocol’s eventual ratification in 1974 remains unclear. However, the literature is quite clear about the value which chemical weaponry held for parochial interests in the U.S. military during this period.

Within the U.S. strategic planning sector, ongoing opposition to the Protocol grew from the belief that the chemical weapon “appeared to the military as a blunt spear to be used defensively as well as offensively.”⁵⁸ When coupled with the “theories of Giulio Douhet on airpower as a final and complete weapon and the illusion of a Blitzkrieg that could ‘surgically’ obtain the Clausewitzian result of taking down the adversary without having to go through a prolonged war”, the historical era preceding World War II witnessed a significant restocking of chemical weapons.”⁵⁹

The arrival of the Soviet Union on the international scene as a counter-balancing force to emerging American power further entrenched the perceived value of chemical

⁵⁷ Ibid., 438.

⁵⁸ Riccardo Cappelli and Nicola Labanca, *Proliferation and Disarmament of Chemical Weapons in the NATO Framework: Lessons from History* (Report for the Forum for the Problems of Peace and War, Florence, Italy, 2001), 6.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 6.

arsenals for the American military, perpetuating its long-standing resistance to supporting anything other than signatory status within the Geneva Protocol. During the early stages of the Cold War, both superpowers amassed “significant stocks of chemical weapons.”⁶⁰ Each side considered chemical weapons to be “an important arena of Cold War military competition”, with the militaries of both nations working chemical warfare doctrine into their broader deterrence and war-planning strategies.⁶¹

The logic for American military planners at the time was that the “Soviets might try to start a ‘nonnuclear blitzkrieg’ invasion in Central Europe supported by surgical chemical weapons strikes.” Accordingly, the chemical weapons supporters within the military suggested that the “use of chemical weapons during such a surprise invasion might make a strategically relevant difference” for the Soviet Union, which would be undeterred by the existence of a protocol banning the use of such weapons.⁶² Given the perceived strategic value of chemical weapons for the U.S. during this time, it seems unsurprising that formal accession by the United States to the Geneva Protocol never took place.

American thinking about chemical disarmament, however, changed as the perception of strategic value attached to chemical weapons was reduced to a sub-strategic level. While the U.S. military had previously ascribed—both during the Cold War and in the time leading up to WWII—a relatively high strategic value on the chemical arsenal, the end of the Cold War quickly brought about a reassessment of this value. While Western military planners during the Cold War had asserted an existential necessity for

⁶⁰ Giovanello, *Domestic Politics*, 5.

⁶¹ Oliver Thränert and Jonathan B. Tucker, *Freeing the World of Chemical Weapons: The Chemical Weapons Convention at the Ten-Year Mark* (Berlin: German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 2007), 9.

⁶² Brad Roberts, ed., *Chemical Disarmament and U.S. Security* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992), 26.

maintaining chemical arsenals—primarily because of their ability to help off-set the value of a Soviet sneak attack into central Europe—the Cold War’s end convinced many within the strategic community that the appropriate response to chemical aggression was not response-in-kind strikes using American chemical weapons, but rather preparedness and defensive operations designed to mitigate the effects of chemical weapons used against American forces.⁶³

Chemical disarmament expert Brad Roberts observes that

there is no conceivable threat scenario—even under a worse-case analysis—in which NATO’s renunciation of chemical weapons might turn into a strategically significant disadvantage for the Western alliance. In light of the new strategic framework, such apprehensions are no longer valid. The political-military status quo ante cannot be reestablished. There is no longer a possibility of a Soviet blitzkrieg invasion, because the reduced strength and the dislocation of Soviet forces no longer would allow for such an operation.⁶⁴

This perception about the lessening value of chemical weaponry for deterrence in war was reinforced by the successful military campaign waged by the United States and Western allies to oust Saddam Hussein’s occupation of Kuwait. Among other lessons the military learned over the course of the conflict, the Persian Gulf War “demonstrated the U.S. ability to meet the threat of chemical warfare with massive conventional power—and to win decisively.”⁶⁵ During the CWC ratification hearings held in the Senate, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili, testified that

[Operation] Desert Storm proved that retaliation in kind isn't required to deter chemical warfare use.... The U.S. military's ability to deter chemical warfare in a post-chemical warfare world will be predicated upon both a robust chemical-warfare defense capability, and the ability to rapidly bring

⁶³ A good of this shift from offensive chemical warfare to defensive chemical warfare preparation can be found in Brad Roberts, ed., *Ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994).

⁶⁴ Roberts, ed., *Chemical Disarmament*, 26-27.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

to bear superior, overwhelming military force in retaliation against a chemical attack.⁶⁶

Of course, all of this is not to say that the CWC ratification debate was without opponents. Initially, parochial opposition to the treaty ratification was a by-product of “election year politics.”⁶⁷ Even though the CWC had “enjoyed a long history of Republican backing” when it was signed by the U.S. and other nations in 1993, Senate Republicans—led by Senator Jesse Helms—immediately sensed an opportunity to deny President Clinton a critical foreign policy victory ahead of his bid to win a second term in office. Capitalizing on the vulnerability that a CWC defeat in the Senate would have on Clinton’s electoral chances, Senator Bob Dole—then the Republican candidate for president—issued a “poison pen” letter to his colleagues, illustrating business and military concerns about the CWC and effectively catalyzing the Republican opposition in the Senate. Rather than face the potentially devastating consequences of a CWC defeat, President Clinton withdrew consideration of the Treaty until after his successful re-election.⁶⁸

When the Treaty was reintroduced for Senate consideration after the 1996 election, the Republican-controlled Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) attempted to block Convention ratification by expressing concerns about the CWC’s lack of verifiable enforcement mechanisms for guaranteeing treaty compliance, and on the grounds that it could weaken or erase an American military capability to respond to chemical weapons attacks with a measure of deterrence-in-kind. Some Republicans even

⁶⁶ Peter L. Platteborze, “Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention: Strategic and Tactical Implications,” *Military Review* (2005): 56.

⁶⁷ Amy E. Smithson, “Playing Politics with the Chemical Weapons Convention,” *Current History* 96, no. 609 (1997): 164.

⁶⁸ Giovanello, *Domestic Politics*, 17.

quietly expressed concerns that an inability to use chemical weapons under a deterrence-in-kind posture would leave the U.S. with little recourse but nuclear attacks for retaliation against chemical adversaries.⁶⁹

As the ratification debate wore on, however, it became quickly apparent that such arguments were generally without merit and stemmed primarily from partisan ideologies, rather than from perceptions about the strategic value of chemical weapons. The criticisms stemming from the Committee were eventually “refuted by an array of prominent individuals advocating ratification, including former Secretary of State James Baker, former Director of Central Intelligence John Deutch, Persian Gulf War commander General Norman Schwarzkopf, and an impressive list of distinguished military commanders headed by General Colin Powell.”⁷⁰ Each of these individuals assured the Committee that ratification of the CWC would not impact or take away from the ability of the United States to respond to the threat of chemically-armed adversaries, and that there was no loss of strategic deterrence involved with abandoning an offensive chemical weapons program.

Other partisan parochial actors attempted to imply a significant impact for the American chemical industry in the event of the CWC’s ratification. Senator John Kyl joined ranks with other Republicans resisting the treaty, perpetuating “the myth that the Convention would ravage United States industry” and that “small businesses would be overwhelmed by the burdens the Convention would place on them.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ Frederick J. Vogel, *The Chemical Weapons Convention: Strategic Implications for the United States* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 1997), 8-10.

⁷⁰ Amy Smithson in Jonathan B. Tucker, ed., *The Chemical Weapons Convention* (Monterey: Monterey Institute of International Studies, 2001), 24.

⁷¹ Smithson, “Playing Politics,” 163.

But while this myth began to grow among Senate opponents of the treaty, the perceived strategic value of chemical weapons had also shifted for industry since the time of the Geneva Protocol. Although the American chemical trade had previously opposed U.S. accession to the Protocol on the grounds of the potential costs to the industry and national security, the industry shifted its stance substantially. At the time, the industry claimed that chemical manufacturing was the nation's single largest exporting sector, and that—at least by one estimate—the potential cost if ratification of the CWC failed would be at least \$600 million “and many American jobs.”⁷² The industry—realizing the potential cost to their business and no longer believing this to be lower than the value it attached to chemical weaponry during the Geneva Protocol debate—provided near-unanimous support for the CWC.

In the end, attempts to use parochial opposition to stop CWC ratification failed. Bolstered by the military's lack of strategic value placed on the remaining chemical arsenal and private industry's shifting strategic prioritizations made the remaining critics of the Treaty lonely voices amidst a sea of ratification.

The Chemical Weapons Convention—The Russian Experience

Information on the CWC ratification debate within Russia proved to be generally scarce. However, what is available indicates that like the U.S. military, Soviet planners near the end of the Cold War began to accord decreasing value to the strategic worth of the Soviet chemical arsenal. Before the end of the USSR, Soviet military operations and the strategic value given to chemical weapons were driven by a combination of Mikhail Gorbachev's revolutionary political thinking and the forecasted force requirements for

⁷² Ibid.

future war created by Soviet General Staff. Taken together, these components of Soviet policy indicate that the USSR did not place a high priority on chemical warfare in its plans for war in Europe.⁷³ As the Soviet military complex slowly dwindled in the last days of the USSR, planners began turning to “air-launched search and destroy complexes” as the new factors which would provide the edge in future conflict. Accordingly, the strategic value of chemical warfare in Soviet military culture grew substantially less important.⁷⁴

Much like the American debate over CWC ratification, Russian accession to the treaty was defined by domestic concerns related to vulnerabilities created by the regime. However—quite unlike the American experience—the Russian opposition was borne from a combined distrust of the government’s capacity to safely dispose of chemical weapons in a safe fashion and from significant concerns over the economic sustainability of such operations by the government. Elisa Harris—writing for the Henry L. Stimson Center’s guide to the debate over the CWC—framed the convergence of these two points within the Russian opposition thusly,

In the aftermath of the Chernobyl nuclear accident, the Russian people have little confidence in the ability of their government to safely destroy large quantities of highly toxic material. Moreover, chemical weapons destruction is expensive. The Russian stocks may well prove to be cheaper to destroy than U.S. weapons, in part because they are configured differently. Nevertheless, the total price tag is likely to be at least several billion dollars.⁷⁵

This resistance from Russian parochial interests was not without deep roots in the experience of Chernobyl, either. Following that accident, the Bryansk oblast region fell

⁷³ Joachim Krause, ed., *Security Implications of a Global Chemical Weapons Ban* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1991), 6.

⁷⁴ Roberts, ed., *Chemical Disarmament*, 26.

⁷⁵ Elisa D. Harris in Amy Smithson, ed., *The Chemical Weapons Convention Handbook* (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1993), 13.

particularly victim to the harmful radioactive fallout caused at the plant in neighboring Ukraine. Thus, when the issue of building a chemical weapons destruction facility at Pochep was raised, local oblast officials promptly dismissed the proposal based largely on fears from the local population that chemical weapons “destruction could worsen the existing problems of environmental contamination.”⁷⁶

While Russian parliamentary leaders in Moscow noted these concerns, there the main point of opposition that emerged during the CWC ratification debate related to concerns that “implementing the CWC would be far more expensive than the ailing Russian economy and the strapped federal budget could sustain.”⁷⁷ Leaders worried that international support—which amounted to only two percent of the overall cost of the Russian destruction program—would not be forthcoming as the Russian program proceeded; others resisted out of a belief that unilateral eliminations of chemical weapons outside of the Convention were cheaper than those done through internationally-enforced programs.⁷⁸

But much like the American debate, this opposition quickly withered in the face of the decreased utility the Russian military placed on chemical weapons. Even as the opposition expressed concerns about the fiscal ramifications of the CWC in the Russian economy, Russian President Vladimir Putin quickly mobilized forces outside of Russia’s chemical weapons depots to secure the arsenal against unauthorized intrusion or theft ahead of disposal. The Russian legislature also ignored the fiscal concerns of parochial

⁷⁶ Alexander Pikayev in Jonathan B. Tucker, ed., *The Chemical Weapons Convention* (Monterey: Monterey Institute of International Studies, 2001), 32.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

stakeholders, and quickly moved on legislation that made the CWC “binding on citizens living both at home and abroad.”⁷⁹

Like the U.S. experience with the CWC, parochial concerns about costs associated with the regime were defeated. Like the Americans, the Russian military assessed that the value of the arsenal no longer justified its existence, making it easier for Russian leaders to justify accession to the CWC.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND SCHOLARS

Several implications for policymakers and opportunities for academics emerge from this research. First, the historical trends I have observed in this paper are not a general statement about the likelihood of success or failure for future disarmament regimes. In this study, I have illustrated the success parochial groups have had in blocking their respective state’s cooperation with or accession in various disarmament regimes, when the weapon addressed by that regime is of a high strategic value to the state.

However, due to the small case sample in this study and the lack of a controlled test for other variables that may affect a state’s participation over the history of a disarmament regime, it is not possible to isolate strategic perception as the deciding factor in all disarmament cases. For academic scholars exploring this phenomenon, further investigation should include a broader sample size of failed and successful disarmament regimes, with appropriate controls provided for the variables not examined. Additionally, those who study the decision-making processes and factors determining the

⁷⁹ Platteborze, "Ratification," 57.

behavior of sub-state parochial groups may wish to assess the precise mechanisms involved in group negotiations on disarmament regimes, both externally and internally.

The qualitative nature of my analysis does not preclude us, however, from using the trends observed in my historical survey to evaluate today's nuclear disarmament debate—particularly considering how widely the CWC story is used when discussing the potential and promise of nuclear disarmament. The critical take-away for policymakers who think the CWC offers hope about a future world where nuclear weapons have been abolished is this: the CWC as a historical precedent for strategic disarmament is inaccurate.

My analysis of the events and calculations informing the CWC ratification case demonstrates the strategic value attached to chemical weaponry prior to the Persian Gulf War and the strategic shift brought about by the end of the Cold War. Before those two events, the United States and former Soviet Union each had ample opportunity to engage in meaningful chemical weapons disarmament, but avoided doing so due to significant concerns about losing strategically valuable chemical weapons for deterrence. Those nuclear disarmament advocates who assert that the CWC was a demonstration of bold vision and principled global cooperation overlook the more basic reason for its success: namely, that the end of the Cold War and the Revolution in Military Affairs effectively stripped chemical arsenals of their perceived worth for U.S. and Russian military plans, while the Gulf War demonstrated the utility of conventional power against a chemically-armed adversary.

As policymakers and academics digest claims by nuclear abolition advocates that nuclear deterrence is dead in the post-Cold War era, it is important to remember that there

is no evidence that the same sub-strategic value attached to chemical weapons during CWC ratification exists for nuclear weapons today. While no immediate adversary may exist to fill the deterrent void left by the former Soviet Union, some work done by scholars suggests that nuclear weapons—albeit smaller than Cold War models—may still have a use for strategic deterrence.⁸⁰ Indeed, even in statements about pursuing a world free of nuclear weapons, proponents of nuclear disarmament are quick to state that we will keep our arsenal until the threat is secured. If this is not an implied statement about the strategic value we attach to these weapons—and by extension, a statement about the likelihood of failure for attempts to pursue nuclear disarmament—it is hard to see what would be.

Furthermore, the CWC and interwar naval conferences suggest that current proposals for engaging a nuclear disarmament policy may be shortsighted. Disarmament scholars such as Daalder and Lodal argue that the U.S. must begin to undertake efforts now to unilaterally reduce its strategic dependence on nuclear deterrence.⁸¹ Their logic is that doing so will decrease the perceived value of nuclear weapons globally and decrease the perceived risk from U.S. nuclear weapons for other states. This, in turn, will make the viability of a nuclear disarmament regime possible.

Unfortunately, this thinking overlooks—as I have demonstrated in this paper—the transformative power of strategic perception amongst individual parochial groups in a variety of states. Some parochial interests in states of concern see nuclear weapons as the ultimate means of deterring the United States, regardless of whether the U.S. is attacking with a conventional or nuclear strike package. Others, such as Iran, see the nuclear

⁸⁰ For a compelling examination of this idea, read Keir Lieber and Daryl Press, “The Nukes We Need: Preserving the American Deterrent” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 6 (2009): 39–51.

⁸¹ Daalder and Lodal, “Logic of Zero,” 80–95.

weapon not only as a means of deterring the U.S., but also as a tool for advancing its own interests as a regional hegemon. For yet other states, nuclear weaponry may offer a path to international prestige and status.⁸²

As such, my research—particularly in the case of the interwar naval conferences—suggests that perceptions of risk and threat may remain among various parochial groups, even as the disarmament regime eliminates the weapons that initially generated concerns. In the case of Japan during the naval conferences, the agreement of the United States to suspend shipbuilding activities did not stem concerns by the Japanese navy over perceived American empiricism. Indeed, even attempts by the conferences to establish ratios that would ease Japanese strategic concerns did not dispel the myth that the limits actually placed Japan at a strategic disadvantage. Instead of easing tensions, disarmament efforts targeted mainly at dealing with the weapons themselves—rather than their underlying strategic concerns—only perpetuated the fear and distrust among certain critical parochial groups.

The same would likely be true in the nuclear realm under many of the current weapons-centric disarmament proposals. The U.S. could, in theory, eliminate nuclear weapons and rely solely on conventional means for war fighting and deterrence. But, even if this were done as part of a good faith effort to build international credibility and global partners around the agenda of nuclear disarmament, there is no guarantee that it would actually decrease the value that “rogue” states place on nuclear arsenals. In fact, recent strikes against Libya would likely remind many parochial forces in “rogue” states that cooperation with the U.S. in nuclear disarmament is no guarantee of future safety,

⁸² For more on this, read Scott D. Sagan, “Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb,” *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1996): 54-86.

and that a strong U.S. conventional force could be just as fearsome as a U.S. nuclear arsenal. Without addressing other states' underlying security concerns, unilateral disarmament measures offer no guarantee of success or progress.

Despite the continued emphasis that many disarmament advocates place on technical verification, norm setting, and multilateral transparency mechanisms, my research suggests that lowering the perceived strategic utility of these weapons—a value which the interwar naval conferences suggest may be driven by a multitude of factors and concerns—is required before any attempt at disarmament can be successful. While some of the measures proposed by disarmament advocates may be part of a package of U.S. policies designed to achieve this end, the scale and potential conflicts involved with undertaking such an effort could prove fatally cumbersome to the desired goal. Similarly, establishing an organization to oversee the technical verification and implementation of such a regime wouldn't be beyond historical precedent, though a further erosion of trust and creation of fear could emerge during attempts to adjudicate the individual strategic concerns of each parochial actor.⁸³ Addressing the strategic perceptions of parochial groups will be critical to the success of disarmament, but problems such as those specified above will ultimately make this perceptions-oriented strategy both risky and potentially unfeasible.

⁸³ The best analogy I can use in explaining the peril of such an effort would be peace negotiations between warring factions and tribes in failed states in the Middle East. Such activities are undertaken with the intent of calming the fears and changing the strategic perceptions of the parties involved, such that peace and disarmament are possible. In spite of this promise, however, the activities one would undertake to change the strategic perception of one parochial group could unintentionally be perceived as a threat to the survival or existence of another. The fallout from such a conflict risks further complicating or destroying the strategic position that existed before the effort was undertaken. This risk of this in the nuclear domain carries particularly serious consequences.

CONCLUSION

As we have demonstrated in our assessment of the CWC and interwar naval conferences case studies, successful national cooperation in multilateral disarmament regimes cannot depend solely on the will of the people, principled, ideological stands taken by executive leadership, or the adequacy of technical verification measures. Based on my historical examination of the trends that developed during the interwar naval conferences and CWC accession processes, I conclude that the differing effectiveness levels of parochial opposition between these two regimes was due to the differing perceptions of strategic value attached to the weapons involved. As such, using the CWC as an example of future gains in nuclear disarmament or the naval conferences as evidence of multilateral folly misses the broader message. Instead of initially addressing disarmament through the lens of multilateral engagement or through well-designed technical regimes, the long-term viability of any future disarmament regime will likely be determined by entrenched perceptions of the strategic value of the arsenals involved.

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