

Synopsis of Problem Areas and Resolutions for 2019-2020

PROBLEM AREA I: ARMS SALES

Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially reduce Direct Commercial Sales and/or Foreign Military Sales of arms from the United States.

In the movie *Iron Man*, upon his triumphant return to the United States, arms dealer Tony Stark reflects upon the world his products helped shape:

"I saw young Americans killed by the very weapons I created to defend them and protect them. And I saw that I had become part of a system that is comfortable with zero-accountability...I had my eyes opened. I came to realize that I had more to offer this world than just making things that blow up. And that is why, effective immediately, I am shutting down the weapons manufacturing division of Stark Industries."

Just as Tony Stark faced his day of reckoning, the United States is on the verge of facing a similar fate. President Trump is actively increasing the number of arms contracts offered and authorized by the United States. One must ask whether arms sales make us safer and strengthen our economy, or create blowback which increases terrorism or fuels conflicts in a variety of regions across the globe. Direct Commercial Sales affirmatives would limit the number or type of sales by American companies to foreign militaries. These affirmatives could prohibit the sale of drone technology, reduce small arms sold to nations like Saudi Arabia which are used to perpetrate human rights abuses, or strengthen export controls to prevent future resale of our technology. Foreign Military Sales affirmatives would reduce sales by the Departments of State or Defense to foreign militaries. These affirmatives could prohibit sales of F-35s to Israel which are used for bombing raids, prevent Japanese acquisition of Tomahawk missiles which would provoke China or North Korea, or prevent sales to Qatar which may give US munitions to terrorist organizations. Affirmatives addressing either type of sales could net advantages such as: Terrorism, proliferation, human rights credibility, hegemony, and increasing stability in the world's most volatile regions. Negative teams will have access to alliance-based disadvantages highlighting the need for arms sales to create commonly equipped militaries, defending arms sales as a credible deterrent to prevent conflicts, acknowledging the economic impact of reducing the role of one of the largest economic sectors, or arguing countries like Russia or China would fill in and negate solvency. The only constant element of President Trump's foreign policy is to increase arms sold by the United States, which makes the literature base broad and accessible, we have not embraced the opportunity to debate arms sales since 1983, and the time to rekindle this debate is now.

PROBLEM AREA IV: NUCLEAR STRATEGY

Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially change its nuclear weapons strategy.

The debate over America's nuclear weapons strategy is essential to our military and diplomatic relations throughout the world. This topic engages debaters on the timely question of: *What should our nuclear weapons strategy be?* President Trump expresses a strong preference for relying more heavily on the nuclear elements of our deterrent posture. His administration wastes no time in issuing a new Nuclear Posture Review that radically differs from his predecessors. Media coverage of Iran, North Korea, and other countries showcase the wide interests and fears in a changing nuclear climate.

On the affirmative, debaters will find a variety of cases ranging from negotiating international nuclear arms control, declaring no first use, reducing the U.S. arsenal, reducing U.S. alert status, clarifying deterrence posture regarding non-nuclear attacks, clarifying U.S. deterrence/use posture in different regions such as Asia or the Middle East, or increasing U.S. commitment to nuclear treaties. "Change" is a word that has been absent from policy resolutions for over 20 years mostly because of the possibility of creating unlimited, bidirectional topics. The relative narrowness of the content area of this topic, focused on an established nuclear posture review, limits the affirmative to changing course from the existing strategy.

On the negative, debaters will find a variety of strategies from which to engage the affirmative and will enjoy core topic arguments that cover all facets of the topic. Specific disadvantages like deterrence and allied proliferation will cover every affirmative regardless of their direction and create vibrant link debates based on the literature on both sides. Specific counterplans would include consultation, condition/quid pro quo, doing a smaller change than the affirmative, excluding components of the strategy change, creating exceptions to the change, actions unrelated to changing the existing nuclear strategy, and taking actions outside the normal means. Specific critical arguments surrounding international relations, the evolution of nuclear weapons (testing, exclusion, securitization, etc.) and other critical approaches will provide plenty of negative approaches.