

# The Economics of U.S. Arms Sales

(Direct Commercial and/or Foreign Military)



## Policy Debate – 2019-2020 Topic

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

Note: Some slides include URL link to articles. If link doesn't work, copy and paste into browser rather than click on link.

<https://economicthinking.org/UII2019/>

[www.uilutexas.org/academics/student-activities/ut-2019](http://www.uilutexas.org/academics/student-activities/ut-2019)

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## POLICY DEBATE: Synopsis of the Problem Areas for 2019-2020

From the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHA)

### 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."*

<https://www.speechanddebate.org/wp-content/uploads/2019-2020-Policy-Debate-Topic-Synopsis.pdf>

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

- *President Trump is actively increasing the number of arms contracts offered and authorized by the United States. ...*
- *[Do] 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[?]*
- *Aff: Restrict arms sales to authoritarian states, restrict sales to Taiwan (provokes China), to Qatar which may pass to terrorists...*
- *Neg.: hurt alliances, cut weapons interoperability, hurt economy. foreign firms gain arms sales.*

<https://www.speechanddebate.org/wp-content/uploads/2019-2020-Policy-Debate-Topic-Synopsis.pdf>

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**HOW DID ISIS GET ITS WEAPONS? EUROPE WANTS TO LIMIT U.S. AND SAUDI ARABIA ARMS SALES BECAUSE GUNS WENT TO MILITANT GROUP** **Newsweek**

BY TOM G. PARSONS FOR NEWSWEEK'S SPECIAL REPORT

- *ISIS's rapid takeover... was assisted by U.S. weapons looted from government forces in Iraq and from Syrian fighters... a report... accused the U.S. and Saudi Arabia of intentionally violating EU rules by purchasing "large numbers" of European arms and ammunition and then quietly diverting them to nonstate actors in Syria without telling the suppliers.*
- *...sales ...through deals between Eastern European members of the EU, as well as the U.S. and Saudi Arabia... the 2017 report found.*

<https://www.newsweek.com/europe-limit-us-saudi-weapons-sales-went-isis-1215758>

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**WORLD** **Newsweek**  
**HOW DID ISIS GET ITS WEAPONS? EUROPE WANTS TO LIMIT U.S. AND SAUDI ARABIA ARMS SALES BECAUSE GUNS WENT TO MILITANT GROUP**

BY TOM G. PARSONS FOR NEWSWEEK'S SPECIAL REPORT

- *[continued] Saudi Arabia, which has drawn criticism for alleged war crimes committed amid the Yemen civil war it leads against ... the Houthis, is also the top U.S. weapons export partner.*
- *Beyond Saudi Arabia, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute found last year that 49 percent of U.S. arms sales abroad went toward the Middle East, where the Pentagon has been involved in numerous military operations under the umbrella of counterterrorism.*

<https://www.newsweek.com/europe-limit-us-saudi-weapons-sales-went-isis-1215758>

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**Congress Should Nix Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates**

Steve Klaid • Wednesday July 3, 2019 12:02 PM EDT • 0 Comments

<https://blog.independent.org/2019/07/03/congress-should-nix-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia-and-united-arab-emirates/>

- Congress is mounting resistance to the administration's declaration of an emergency to get around required congressional approval for \$8 billion in arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- In its notification to bypass the Arms Export Control Act's normal requirement for a 30-day congressional review period for a sale, the administration cited another questionable emergency to expedite the export—that of Iran's behavior in the Middle East.
- The administration needs some opposition to this excessive use of "emergencies" to get what it wants.

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- To begin with any such presidentially declared emergency, or law allowing it, is constitutionally suspect.
- The framers of the Constitution, concerned about tyranny by the central government or a rogue executive, provided for no such emergency proviso in the document.
- In fact, the only "emergency" power provided in the Constitution is listed in Article II—which enumerates congressional powers, not executive ones—and concerns the suspension of habeas corpus (the right of people to challenge their detention by the government in court) during the extreme cases of an invasion or insurrection.
- The last thing the framers would have wanted was a muscular executive declaring numerous emergencies, especially to circumvent Congress on mundane things like a border wall, import tariffs, and arms sales to foreign countries.

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**CAIO INSTITUTE**

**Risky Business: The Role of Arms Sales in U.S. Foreign Policy**

By A. Trevor Thrall and Caroline Doernbecher  
March 13, 2018

- Since 2002, the United States has sold more than \$197 billion worth of major conventional weapons and related military support to 167 countries....
- The United States has repeatedly sold weapons to nations engaged in deadly conflicts...horrendous human rights records... impossible to predict where the weapons would end up or how they would be used.
- On repeated occasions, American troops have fought opponents armed with American weapons.

<https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/risky-business-role-arms-sales-us-foreign-policy>

**ARMS SALES TOPIC: AFFIRMATIVE**

Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially reduce Direct Commercial Sales and/or Foreign Military Sales of arms from the United States. A look at possible affirmative cases provided by Rich Edwards, Baylor University

**REDUCE ARMS SALES TO TAIWAN**

- The U.S. policy of containment and its refusal to accept the rise of China will inevitably lead to war.
- The U.S. continues to sell arms to Taiwan with increasing regularity in the Trump administration – a highly provocative policy that embodies the U.S. commitment to containment.
- The U.S. should reduce its arms sales to Taiwan.

Ching-Yi Lin, (Research Fellow, Institute of European and American Studies, Taiwan) **TAIWAN AND THE "CHINA IMPACT"**, 2016, 268

In recent years, Beijing has waded with interest the debate within the US on whether to abandon Taiwan. Charles Glaser, a professor at George Washington University, believes that the rise of China might lead China and the US into a conventional and nuclear arms race if the US continues to sell arms to Taiwan.

[https://www.nfhs.org/media/1020321/arms-sales-topic\\_affirmative-cases.pdf](https://www.nfhs.org/media/1020321/arms-sales-topic_affirmative-cases.pdf)

**OBSERVATION DECK**

**The Thucydides Trap** **IP**

When one great power threatens to displace another, war is almost always the result -- but it doesn't have to be.

BY INEZAHAR ALLIDJIV | JUNE 9, 2017, 10:21 AM

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/09/the-thucydides-trap/>

**The Thucydides Trap: How to stop the looming war between China and the U.S.**

The Thucydides Trap leads us to believe a U.S.-China war is inevitable. But is a 2,400-year-old school of thought really what the U.S. should base its foreign policy on?

CHARLES ROGER FOUNDATION

**What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta.**

<https://bigthink.com/mike-colagrossi/thucydides-trap-historical-conflicts-of-nation-states>

**ARMS SALES TOPIC: AFFIRMATIVE**

**RE-SIGN AND ACCEDE TO (OR RATIFY) THE ARMS TRADE TREATY**

- The U.S. helped negotiate the Arms Trade Treaty and was one of its original signers, but the Senate has refused to ratify it. Now President Trump announced before a cheering NRA audience that he is "un-signing" the Arms Trade Treaty.
- The Arms Trade Treaty offers the best hope for stopping the worst abuses in the world arms trade, where arms sellers promote human rights abuses and feed both sides of regional conflicts.

**REDUCE SALES OF ARMED DRONES**

- The use of drone strikes has made war more likely by making it more thinkable, armed drones turn war into a video game.
- The U.S. is the major world user of drones and the Trump administration is ramping up the sale of armed drones.
- The sale of armed drones should be reduced.

**REDUCE THE SALE OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS**

- Small arms do most of the killing in armed conflicts throughout the world.
- The U.S. -- already the world's leader in the selling of armaments -- is now trying to deregulate the selling of assault weapons by moving them from the U.S. Munitions List (where Congressional notification is required) and placing them instead on the Commerce Control List (where no notice is required).

[https://www.nfhs.org/media/1020321/arms-sales-topic\\_affirmative-cases.pdf](https://www.nfhs.org/media/1020321/arms-sales-topic_affirmative-cases.pdf)



## Forum on the Arms Trade

- The Forum on the Arms Trade is a network of civil society experts and a point of contact for strengthening public efforts to address the humanitarian, economic and other implications of arms transfers, security assistance, and weapons use.
- Forum-listed experts are located around the world and work on diverse topics including human rights, development, arms control, humanitarian disarmament, cybersecurity, arms and the environment, anti-corruption, and related fields.

<https://www.forumarmstrade.org/>

EXPERT OPINION  
"EMERGENCY" U.S.  
ARMS SALES TO  
SAUDI ARABIA &  
UNITED ARAB  
EMIRATES

RESOURCE  
U.S. ARMS SALES  
TO TAIWAN

RESOURCES  
HIGH SCHOOL  
DEBATE  
2019-2020

## High School Policy Debate Resources - 2019-2020

During 2019-2020, the US high school policy debate topic is:

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

This resource page is designed to provide condensed information and links to assist students in their research. We intend to update it throughout the school year. We would also welcome questions, and suggestions for topics to tackle. Email us with "High School Debate" in the subject field. See below for links to answers thus far, or check out those answers on our blog.

Forum-listed experts\* willing to be contacted, as they have time available, include: [Jeff Abramson](#), [Rachel Stohl](#), [William Hartung](#), [Sharon Dick](#), [Seth Binder](#), [Allison Pytko](#) (especially on global trade and the Arms Trade Treaty), [Andrew Feinstein](#), [N.R. Janzen-Jones](#) (especially on technical weapons questions).

Page last updated August 8, 2019.

<https://www.forumarmstrade.org/hspolicydebate.html>

RESOURCES  
HIGH SCHOOL  
DEBATE  
2019-2020

The Heritage Foundation

REPORT Global Politics

### Key Steps for the U.S. After the Unsigning of the Arms Trade Treaty

May 22, 2019 12 min read Download Report

Theodore Bromund  
Senior Research Fellow in Anglo-American Relations

<https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/key-steps-the-us-after-the-unsigning-the-arms-trade-treaty>

The American Conservative

Daniel Larison

### Poll: Arms Sales Make the U.S. Less Secure

By DANIEL LARISON - July 11, 2019, 11:45 AM

<https://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/poll-arms-sales-make-the-u-s-less-secure/>

The American Conservative

Daniel Larison

### Poll: Arms Sales Make the U.S. Less Secure

By DANIEL LARISON - July 11, 2019, 11:45 AM

... newly completed survey of US public opinion finds that most Americans oppose the US sale of weapons in general...

- The survey found that a large majority of Americans (70%) believes that arms sales to other governments makes the U.S. less safe, and 50% believe that the relationship with the Saudis weakens U.S. national security.
- Somewhat surprisingly, there were large majorities that said arms sales made the U.S. less safe regardless of political affiliation.

<https://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/poll-arms-sales-make-the-u-s-less-secure/>









Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But [America] goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.



She has, in the lapse of nearly half a century, without a single exception, respected the independence of other nations, while asserting and maintaining her own. She has abstained from interference in the concerns of others, even when the conflict has been for principles to which [32] she clings, as to the last vital drop that visits the heart. ...

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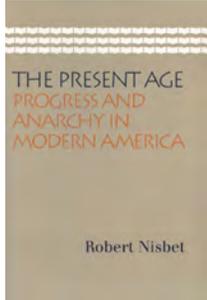
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### Nisbet, The Prevalence of War

Source: Chapter in Nisbet's *The Present Age: Progress and Anarchy in Modern America* (Indiatapolis: Liberty Fund, 2003).

Related Link:  
• Robert Nisbet  
• Subject Area: War and Peace

**The Prevalence of War**

Of all faces of the present age in America, the military face would almost certainly prove the most astounding to any Framers of the Constitution, any Founders of the Republic who came back to inspect their creation on the occasion of the bicentennial. It is indeed an imposing face, the military. Well over three hundred billion dollars a year go into its maintenance; it is deployed in several dozen countries around the world. The returned Framers would not be surprised to learn that so vast a military has inexorable effects upon the economy, the structure of government, and even the culture of Americans; they had witnessed such effects in Europe from afar, and had not liked what they saw. What would doubtless astonish

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