



Unanswered questions for the nuclear alliance states

Non-nuclear-weapon states that are members of a nuclear alliance (“nuclear weasel states”) often make assertions about nuclear disarmament that raise obvious questions. They have never answered these.

Why can’t a ban treaty be pursued now as part of a step-by-step or building-block process?

Weasel states often dismiss the proposed treaty banning nuclear weapons as an impractical and unrealistic “short cut”. They argue instead for step-by-step, incremental measures or “building blocks”. But they have never explained why a ban treaty could not *be* one of these steps or building blocks, to be pursued in parallel with other measures such as the CTBT, FMCT, bilateral stockpile reductions, verification work, etc. There is no reason a ban treaty could not be pursued alongside these other measures, and concluding a ban treaty would only reinforce and strengthen such efforts.

How exactly would a ban treaty disrupt or damage nuclear disarmament prospects?

A number of weasel states have claimed that pursuing a ban treaty would hinder progress towards nuclear disarmament, or somehow discourage nuclear-armed states from taking necessary steps. But they have never explained how or why this would happen. Negotiation by non-nuclear-weapon states of a ban treaty would not absolve the NPT nuclear-weapon states of their disarmament obligations. It would not prevent negotiation of an FMCT, or interfere with stockpile reductions. So how exactly would it damage nuclear disarmament prospects?

Why would pursuing a ban treaty undermine trust with nuclear-armed states?

Weasel states often refer vaguely to the need to ensure trust and build confidence between nuclear-armed states and states without nuclear weapons. They assert that pursuing a ban treaty would “polarize” the international community and undermine this trust and confidence. But

why would this happen? All nuclear-armed states are committed to nuclear disarmament, so why would they be offended by non-nuclear-weapon states negotiating a legal ban?

And why exactly is trust between nuclear-armed and non-nuclear-armed states seen as a vital prerequisite for nuclear-armed states to move forward with disarmament? Nuclear-armed states do not, in general, keep nuclear weapons in order to deter non-nuclear-weapon states. They keep them to deter each other. Increased trust *between nuclear-armed states* may well be helpful for disarmament. But even a total breakdown in trust between nuclear-armed and non-nuclear-armed states would have no particular relevance for the ability of nuclear-armed states to pursue disarmament (provided all states continue to abide by their NPT non-proliferation obligations). Nuclear disarmament is an obligation, not a favour to be bestowed on non-nuclear-weapon states as a reward for good behaviour.

What steps are nuclear alliance states taking, or planning to take, to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their security and defence strategies?

Weasel states frequently call on nuclear-weapon states to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their security doctrines, in line with NPT agreements. But no weasel state ever mentions any steps that it is taking to reduce its own reliance on nuclear weapons, or even to start considering or discussing this. Why not?

How is nuclear disarmament possible, if alliance states will rely on nuclear weapons “for as long as nuclear weapons exist”?

Some weasel states say that a legal prohibition will be needed once nuclear weapons have been eliminated. But how can nuclear weapons be eliminated, if weasel states plan to rely on them for as long as the weapons exist? It is like trying to remove floorboards while you are standing on them. Weasel states have never explained how they plan to overcome this logical impossibility.