# External Threats, Internal Threats, and State Support for Arms Control

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# External Threats, Internal Threats, and State Support for Arms Control

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

In February 2022, the Russian army invaded Ukraine. This war of aggression has not only caused more than 5,000 civilian casualties to this point (OHCHR 2022), but it has also sparked renewed debates on matters of military policies, security, and armament. The sudden development of an intrastate conflict between Ukraine and separatist groups, backed with Russian arms supplies (UCDP 2022), to a full-scale interstate war initiated by a major power has led many states to reconsider their arms policies (Leonard 2022: 162). While Ukraine has increased its military expenditure by 72% since the conflict onset in 2014 (Lopes da Silva, Tian, Béraud-Sudreau, Marksteiner, & Liang 2022: 9), Western states were reluctant to provide extensive military support until recently (Abramson 2022). However, many countries, including other major powers such as the United States and the United Kingdom, have now started to deliver large numbers of weapons to the Ukrainian government (ibid.).

At the same time, several states have initiated various self-defense measures to prevent Russian attacks in the future. For instance, the German government announced a substantial increase in its annual military spending (Leonard 2022: 162). Finland and Sweden – strong advocates of nuclear disarmament – consider joining NATO's defense umbrella, while Denmark will hold a referendum to overturn its opt-out from the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (ibid.). This argument also translates to other contexts: The war in Ukraine has revived South Korean discussions on the development of nuclear weapons to deter North Korea from invading (Sang-Hun 2022).

The recent developments accelerate more long-term trends. After seven years of consecutive growth, global military expenditures in 2021 crossed the threshold of $2 trillion for the first time in history (Lopes da Silva et al. 2022). Moreover, most states have steadily increased the volume of arms transfers over the past decades (Tan 2010: 3), so that in 2017 these reached the highest level since the end of the Cold War (Wezeman & Fleurant 2018). This development applies to conventional and nuclear weapons alike: Although the total number of nuclear warheads has declined since the end of the Cold War, the nuclear states have been constantly developing and deploying new nuclear weapons systems (Kile & Kristensen 2020).

This is highly problematic because arms kill people – more than 2.7 million have died in organized armed violence since 1989 (Pettersson et al. 2021) – and threaten international peace and stability (Bauer 2010). In addition, armament ties up a large number of resources and, thereby, hinders global development (ibid.). Although some states' demands for increased armament are arguably driven by legitimate security concerns, these originate from the

aggressors' excessive accumulation of weapons in the first place. While we cannot know whether the current crisis could have been prevented in any way, tighter regulations on armament generally hold the potential to restrict states' access to arms and therefore reduce insecurity and decrease the risk of war (ibid.).

The United Nations, among other organizations, has therefore laid a primary focus on international arms control since its creation (Müller, Below, & Wisotzki 2013). Yet, the closure of and compliance with arms control agreements is contingent on its member states' commitments (ibid.). This is particularly the case in the multilateralized international system of the post-Cold War period (Krause 1998: 1), which has led to a diversification of interests and positions in the field of arms control (Gallagher 1997; Sands 1997: 130). This leads to the question of what determines whether states support or oppose arms restrictions.

The current developments, however, cast serious doubt on states' willingness to deepen cooperation over arms control (Williams 2022). This is in line with theories of international relations, in particular structural realism, which have identified external threats by other states as the main driver of states' opposition to arms control (see, e.g., Rosert 2011: 257; Sagan 1996: 54). Multiple scholars have argued that an external threat increases a state's demand for armament to deter or even fight its opponent (e.g., Gray 1992; Jervis 1978; Sagan 1996). As a result, states reject agreements that limit their need for more weapons (e.g., Glaser 1994; Gray 1992; Jervis 1978). Gray (1992) labels this relationship the "arms control paradox". States oppose cooperative measures when they feel threatened by each other. Accordingly, arms control is irrelevant when it is possible and impossible whenever it is needed (ibid.; see also Kydd 2000).

However, empirical evidence for this argument has so far been scarce and limited to case studies of specific countries or regions (e.g., Jones 1998; Steinberg 1994; 2005). Quantitative analyses across countries and over time have primarily focused on variables that capture actual armament rather than states' positions toward arms control (e.g., Blomberg & Tocoian 2016; Collier & Hoeffler 2007; Singh & Way 2004). While these variables are related, they are certainly not equivalent (Kreps, Saunders, & Schultz 2018). Put differently, if an external threat increases arms acquisition, this does not necessarily imply that it simultaneously decreases support for arms control. The systematic assessment of states' positions toward arms control thus requires a new approach.

This is particularly relevant as there are strong arguments against a strictly negative relationship between external threats and arms control support. On

the one hand, arms control entails added costs for threatened states, as it limits their own access to arms. On the other hand, arms restrictions also apply to the adversary state. It can thus be beneficial to embrace arms control in the event of an external threat (Glaser 1994). This raises not only the question if but also under which circumstances these virtues outweigh the drawbacks or vice versa.

Furthermore, the extant literature on that matter has almost exclusively focused on external threats. Yet, despite the Russo-Ukrainian war, threats from within the state are far more common today and most weapons are used in intrastate rather than interstate conflicts (Bauer 2010: 307; Blanton 1999: 233). Accordingly, states' threat perceptions as well as arms control efforts have shifted to the domestic arena and non-state actors (Bauer 2010: 307; Krause 2001). Nevertheless, the impact of internal threats has been largely neglected in the study of states' positions toward arms control.

In sum, we still lack a systematic study of how security threats influence states' arms control support – theoretically and empirically. This includes a comprehensive assessment of the impact of external threats and support for arms control and of specific contexts that shift this relationship into one direction or the other. Moreover, it so far remains open if and how threats by non-state actors affect states' position taking in this field. For this reason, the aim of this dissertation is to answer the following research question: *How do security threats affect state support for arms control?*

Apart from the present summary, this dissertation contains three solo-authored papers, which are listed in Table 1. Each of these papers deals with one of three sub-questions that complement the main research question: 1. *How do external threats affect state support for arms control?* 2. *How do external threats by major powers affect state support for arms control?* 3. *How do internal threats affect state support for arms control?*

**Table 1.** Overview of Papers in the Dissertation

| | |
|---|---|
| **Paper A** | "External Threats and State Support for Arms Control". Forthcoming at *Journal of Peace Research*. |
| **Paper B** | "Interstate Rivalry, Major Power Status, and State Support for Arms Control". Working Paper. |
| **Paper C** | "Civil War and State Support for Conventional Arms Control". Working Paper. |

To answer the three sub-questions as well as the overarching research question, it is first necessary to clarify what I refer to by arms control. While arms control can be of unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral nature, it primarily de-

scribes international agreements between states that aim to regulate armament (Goldblat 2002: 3).[1] This includes, inter alia, treaties that aim to prevent the spread of certain weapons such as nuclear-weapon-free zones or the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). It also encompasses measures that prohibit weapon categories in their entirety, for example the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Ottawa Treaty). I thus understand arms control in a broad sense that excludes neither disarmament nor non-proliferation efforts, covers global as well as regional agreements, and measures that deal with any type of weapons ranging from small arms to nuclear weapons.

In this dissertation, I argue that contrary to conventional wisdom, security threats do not necessarily induce opposition to arms control. As indicated earlier, a security threat increases the costs of arms limitations because these hinder the higher demand for armament to deter or fight the adversary state or rebel group. Yet, security threats also raise the benefits of arms control, because agreements impose restrictions on the threatening state or rebels. Whether the relationship between security threats and support for arms control is negative or positive should therefore depend on the context and the specific type of threat determining the relative weights of these costs and benefits.

I first focus on the role of external threats in the explanation of states' positions toward arms control. As an external threat can take various forms, the term has been used to describe, for example, conflicts, disputes, or rivalries between states (e.g., Arbatli & Arbatli 2014; Gibler & Miller 2014; Thies 2007). I use it to denote interstate rivalries, that is, "serious militarized relationships" between two states, in which "the threat of war is present and states are preparing for its occurrence" (Goertz, Diehl, & Balas 2016: 4). This is because several studies on the relationship between external threats and arms control support have explicitly examined rivalries (e.g., Gray 1992; Sagan 1996) and identified these as the most important cause of arms races (Diehl & Crescenzi 1998). Nevertheless, I will mostly use the term external threats rather than interstate rivalries, because it is much more common in arms control studies (e.g., Glaser 1994; Jervis 1978; Jones 1998).

While structural realist scholars have argued in favor of a negative impact of external threats on arms control support, I argue that this is not the case. Instead, I propose that external threats generally increase the virtues and drawbacks of arms restrictions to similar degrees because they apply to both the threatened state and its rival. Accordingly, the two mechanisms cancel

[1] For the sake of readability, I leave out the exact definition of arms control as employed by Goldblat (2002: 3) here. It can be found in all three papers.

each other out, so there is no observable effect of external threats on arms control support in the aggregate.

Yet, I argue that this relationship is contingent on states' major power status. A major power is a country "that is regarded by others [...] as one of that small 'oligarchy' [...] that dominates not only in the region of each member, but globally as well. These states have taken on global 'interests' and do a fair job of defending them" (Singer 1988: 119).[2] This variable has been neglected in previous studies on this relationship, although structural realists regard power as "the currency of international politics" (Mearsheimer 2021: 51).

Major powers, more than other states, are able to shape international agreements to suit their own preferences and remain largely unrestricted. I argue that this makes arms control less beneficial for non-major powers that face a major power threat. In contrast, two major powers involved in a rivalry with each other can balance out their influence on the outcome of arms control negotiations. Accordingly, I expect a negative relationship between major power threats and state support for arms control – but only among non-major powers.

Turning to internal threats, this term can also refer to different events and actors, such as coup attempts or opposition parties (Miller & Toritsyn 2005). I focus on the most extreme form of an internal threat (Han & Thies 2019), which I argue is the most relevant with regard to arms control: civil wars. Civil wars are arguably a very specific phenomenon that has little in common with the aforementioned types of internal threats and given rise to its own field of research (see, e.g., Blattman & Miguel 2010). For this reason, I will primarily rely on the terms civil war, civil conflict, and intrastate conflict rather than internal threat in the following.

For my study of civil wars and arms control support, I focus on restrictions on conventional weapons, which are the most relevant weapon category in this context. Conventional arms control primarily constrains states' rather than rebel groups' armament. Nevertheless, I argue that cooperative measures can be beneficial for states that are involved in civil wars, though not for strategic reasons. Limiting the availability of conventional weapons in an intrastate conflict can reduce the conflict's lethality and duration as well as its negative impact on the economy, environment, and public health. Therefore, I argue that civil wars lead to higher levels of support for conventional arms control.

[2] Other scholars have referred to these states as great powers instead or employed different definitions (e.g., Goldgeier & McFaul 1992), but most identify seven of them after the end of the Cold War: China, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Corbetta & Dixon 2004: 7).

To investigate my theoretical arguments, I create the first comprehensive measure of state support for arms control that includes all countries, all subfields of arms control as well as variation over time and thus enables the systematic quantitative study of this variable. I manually code 1,178 arms control resolutions adopted in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) after the Cold War to assess whether these strengthen or weaken arms control and whether other factors than states' arms control support might drive their voting behavior. Contingent on the category a resolution is coded into, every vote is then assigned a value that reflects the voting state's support for arms control.

I demonstrate that my measurement strategy successfully captures the variable of interest and eliminates biases through other conflict dimensions. I use this indicator to conduct regression analyses and investigate the impact of external threats and major power threats on arms control support. Moreover, my measure also identifies positions on several subfields. This allows me to focus on restrictions dealing with conventional weapons and examine how civil wars shape states' positions in this specific issue area.

Furthermore, I complement the analysis of civil wars and support for conventional arms control with a second data source. I conduct a manual content analysis of 446 UNGA speeches held by states involved in civil conflicts on the topic of conventional arms control. I code not only whether states announce their support or non-support for arms control in these speeches, but also whether they refer to the ongoing civil wars as well as the costs and benefits of arms restrictions to justify their positions. I also code alternative explanations of the empirical association between civil conflicts and arms control support. This provides valuable insights into the underlying motives that drive states' voting behavior and allows me to investigate the mechanisms that link civil wars to states' positions toward arms control.

The empirical analysis largely confirms my theoretical expectations. First, I find no significant relationship between external threats and state support for arms control, which arguably reflects two opposing mechanisms that cancel each other out in the aggregate. Second, states that face major power threats are less supportive of arms control than other states. This relationship holds for non-major powers but not for major powers. This suggests that arms control provides less benefit for non-major powers threatened by major powers, as their more powerful rivals can avoid restrictions on their own armament. Third, civil wars are positively associated with support for conventional arms control. The content analysis indicates that this finding is indeed driven by states' demands to constrain rebel groups' armament and curb the negative consequences of armed violence – although they consider the drawbacks of limiting their own access to arms.

This dissertation's contribution to the existing academic literature is therefore twofold. First, I shed new light on the relationship between security threats and states' arms control support. I show that external threats do not necessarily induce opposition to arms control and that the concerned states' major power status is a crucial factor in this regard. Identifying a positive association between civil wars and support for conventional arms control, I further illustrate that not only external but also internal threats shape states' positions toward arms control. Taken together, I establish that security threats increase the costs as well as the benefits of arms control. Their impact on state support for arms control is thus not strictly negative but depends on the origin of the threat as well as characteristics of the state under consideration.

Second, I provide new tools to study state support for arms control empirically. My novel measure enables the systematic, quantitative analysis of this variable, and thus allows for more generalizable conclusions than previous studies. I use this indicator to assess the influence of different types of security threats, but it offers insights into states' positions toward arms control that go beyond this. Hence, my measure will also be valuable for future studies on the determinants of state support for arms control.

This summary proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 presents the extant literature relevant to the study of security threats and states' positions toward arms control. I illustrate that we lack not only a systematic assessment of how security threats affect arms control support but also suitable data for this purpose. In the third chapter, I therefore introduce a comprehensive theoretical framework of this relationship. I introduce a general model, which I then adapt to three different types of threats: external threats, major power threats, and civil wars. The fourth chapter continues by expounding my data and methodological approach. This includes, inter alia, the presentation of my main dependent variable – state support for arms control – and of the content analysis of UNGA speeches. Chapter 5 describes the main findings of the regression analyses of all three papers as well as the content analysis in Paper C, which largely support my theoretical expectations. In Chapter 6, I discuss the limitations regarding my central concepts, theoretical framework, and empirical approach. The final chapter then concludes by summarizing the central findings, considering their implications for researchers as well as policymakers and pointing to directions for future research.

# Chapter 2: Extant Literature

In this chapter, I expound the existing academic literature relevant to my main research question as well as my sub-questions in order to illustrate how I aim to contribute to research on security threats and arms control. I first illustrate that despite a small number of quantitative studies on related concepts, we lack a comprehensive assessment of what explains state support for arms control. I further show that although scholars have pointed to various different determinants in qualitative studies, structural realist scholars have identified external threats as the main driver of states' opposition to arms control.

Yet, this argument has so far not been examined in a systematic cross-country study. Moreover, previous studies suffer from several shortcomings. They largely fail to acknowledge that in certain situations, arms control can be beneficial for states exposed to external threats. Accordingly, scholars have also neglected the role of third factors, in particular states' power status, in shaping the relationship between external threats and arms control support. In addition, the exclusive focus on interstate rivalries dismisses internal threats as an explanatory factor, although these are far more common. The study of the relationship between security threats and state support for arms control thus requires an updated theoretical foundation and a new empirical approach.

## 2.1. Determinants of State Support for Arms Control

During the Cold War, research on the determinants of state support for arms control was scarce. Studies laid their main focus on the United States and the Soviet Union, as they were the actors that determined the success and failure of arms control negotiations (Rosert 2011: 216; Schörnig 2017: 964). After the end of the bipolar international order, the world has been seeing a much more complex global system and a "multilateralization" of security (Krause 1998: 1). This has not only led to an increased importance of a much larger number of states in arms control negotiations, but also to a diversification of their interests and positions (Gallagher 1997; Sands 1997). This has drawn increased attention to the question of why states embrace or reject arms control (Gallagher 1997).

However, comprehensive, generalizable research on the determinants of states' arms control support is rare. Although there are a number of quantitative studies related to this question, these suffer from various shortcomings.

Knopf (1998) measures the United States' willingness to engage in arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union and finds it to be positively related to anti-nuclear protests. As his approach solely focuses on one country and bilateral talks, it is unsuitable for an assessment of states' preferences on arms control over time and across countries.

Other studies have investigated the adoption or ratification of arms control treaties (Brender 2018; Vaynman 2014). Brender (2018) finds, for example, that treaty ratification is positively related to states' democracy levels and human rights records. In a dyadic analysis of bilateral and multilateral treaties, Vaynman (2014) shows that states are more likely to engage in formal arms cooperation when one of them experiences a situation of domestic volatility, for example a leadership change. Yet, while treaty signature and ratification are indeed related to states' commitment to arms control, they are also dependent on other factors, including for instance institutional constraints (e.g., Hug & König 2002; Kreps et al. 2018) or international pressure (Price 2019).[3] On top of that, they only cover existing treaties. Measuring arms control support through treaty signature or ratification would therefore induce severe selection bias.

Gleditsch, Hug, Schubiger, and Wucherpfennig (2016) also examine treaty signature, focusing on the Ottawa Treaty, but complement it with the study of treaty compliance, here, the abandonment of anti-personnel landmines. They find, inter alia, that previous mine use reduces, and the total number of signatories increases, commitment to the Ottawa Treaty. Moreover, they show that the behavior of states involved in civil wars is significantly driven by characteristics and behavior of rebel groups. Although their study provides useful insights, for instance regarding the interdependence of states and rebel groups, their approach is hardly applicable to the study of states' positions toward arms control more broadly speaking.

Also focusing on a certain weapon category, Efrat (2010) studies states' preferences on restrictions of the trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW) through a survey among government officials from 118 countries. While democracy level and the provision of humanitarian aid increase support for restrictive measures, economic development and arms production have

[3] With regard to the role of international pressure, Price (2019) illustrates that the Syrian accession to the CWC primarily resulted from the desire to avoid a US intervention rather than an embracement of the "chemical weapons taboo". An example for institutional constraints is provided by the Republican-led Congress in the United States, which for instance prevented the ATT ratification despite the Democratic government's support (Erickson 2015: 473; Kreps et al. 2018).

the opposite effect. Yet, his survey was only conducted once and does not capture developments over time. Moreover, it only deals with the specific issue of SALW trade control, making it impossible to infer states' positions on arms restrictions in general. Hence, we so far lack a systematic assessment of the determinants of state support for arms control, in part due to the lack of a measure across countries and over time.

However, a broad range of qualitative studies of single states or regions has pointed toward and theorized about a variety of potential factors that could affect states' position taking in the field of arms control. While some of these reflect the aforementioned quantitative results and refer to the same determinants, others identify variables that go beyond these findings. On the interstate level, existing studies have argued that as Gleditsch et al. (2016) illustrate with regard to the mine ban, states follow other states' preferences. This can be driven by several factors. First, states are expected, at least to a certain degree, to align themselves with their allies (Müller et al. 2013). Second, other states can exert pressure on a government to force its agreement to cooperative measures (Gill & Medeiros 2000). Finally, the emergence and diffusion of regional or global norms in favor of arms control can also lead states to embrace arms restrictions (ibid.; Hansen 2016).

Turning to developments within the state, several studies have argued in line with the studies by Brender (2018) and Efrat (2010) that democracies are more favorable toward arms control. This is due to their stronger preferences for cooperative measures, the rule of law, and the peaceful solution of disputes (e.g., Becker, Müller, & Wisotzki 2008; Krause & Latham 1998). Others have pointed to the role of economic development in shaping states' arms control preferences (e.g., Johnston 1996; Jones 1998). In this regard, the relationship could go in either direction. While less developed countries could reject restrictions, as they hinder their technological progress (Jones 1998), they could also embrace arms control to release resources for economic development that would be otherwise spent on armament (Johnston 1996). Findings by Efrat (2010) rather speak in favor of the latter mechanism, although he accounts his findings to poorer countries' inabilities to prevent SALW flows on their own.

Moreover, multiple scholars have unfolded the roles of different non-state actors in states' position taking. For instance, public opinion can influence the government's stance on arms control in democracies, as Knopf (1998) illustrates, but also in autocratic regimes (Jones 1998). Nongovernmental organizations push governments toward more favorable positions, but occasionally, as the gun lobby in the United States shows, also in the opposite direction (Müller et al. 2013). The arms industry can also be influential in pushing for less restrictive measures (Gill & Medeiros 2000).

To which degree these actors affect the government's preferences depends on its openness to outside influences (ibid.). This is in turn contingent on its ideology and centralization of power (Sands 1997). Moreover, government ideology plays a role in itself: Leftist governments have been characterized as more "dovish" and favorable toward international cooperation. In contrast, those on the political right are generally seen as more "hawkish", that is, more inclined toward aggressive foreign policy, and thus less supportive of arms control (Kreps et al. 2018).

However, while all of these factors might affect state support for arms control, it remains, first and foremost, a matter of security. Accordingly, the most prevalent explanation of states' positions toward arms control, both during and after the Cold War, has pointed toward their security considerations and threat perceptions. The systematic study of what determines state support for arms control should therefore begin by investigating the role of security threats. For this reason, the next section will expound existing arguments on the relationship between security threats and arms control support.

## 2.2. Structural Realism and the Role of External Threats

Scholars of international relations, in particular structural realists, have argued that security threats are the most important – if not the only – factor shaping positions toward arms control (Rosert 2011: 257; Sagan 1996: 54). In this regard, they have argued that domestic processes are irrelevant in international politics (Mearsheimer 2021; Waltz 2000). Dismissing the role of internal developments, they have thus solely focused on external threats by other states in the explanation of state support for arms control (Rosert 2011: 257; Sagan 1996: 54).

This argument is based on the assumption that states exist in an anarchical system and are above all striving for security (Mearsheimer 2021; Waltz 1979). To achieve this goal, they can either cooperate in the form of arms control or defect and arm themselves (e.g., Glaser 1994; Jervis 1978; Kydd 2000). A security threat by another state triggers the demand for self-defense and thus for armament (e.g., Glaser 1994; Jervis 1978; Sagan 1996). As a result, they reject arms control, which is facilitated by their distrust of the threatening state (Jervis 1978).

For this reason, states' needs for security causes cooperative measures to fail – although cooperation would reduce insecurity. This is what Jervis (ibid.) as well as other scholars have labeled the security dilemma. He argues that cooperation proves difficult in any case when states perceive each other as ad-

versaries but that the likelihood of achieving arms control agreements increases when defensive weapons have an advantage over offensive ones and when the two categories of weapons are distinguishable.

Taking an even more "hawkish" point of view, Gray (1992) contradicts this, coining the term of the arms control paradox. He asserts that threatened states will *always* reject arms control, irrespective of the offense-defense balance and distinguishability. As a security threat is arguably the only situation where arms control is necessary, he claims that it is irrelevant when it is possible – and impossible when it is needed. Thus, while Jervis (1978) and Gray (1992) disagree on whether arms control is actually possible in the event of a dispute or rivalry, both postulate that an external threat generally induces opposition to arms control.

This is illustrated by arms control talks in the Middle East. Steinberg (2005) contends that failed negotiations on arms control agreements are the result of ongoing armed conflicts, rivalries, and a focus on national security. For instance, the need for deterrence prevents the Israeli government from giving up its nuclear weapons. As a result, Israel rejects a nuclear-weapon free zone and remains outside the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) (ibid.; Steinberg 1994).

In line with this, Jones (1998) argues that Iran's ambiguous position toward arms control, especially in the nuclear field, is driven by its rivalries with Israel and the United States. North Korea has also repeatedly referred to the US threat to justify its opposition to arms control measures, including, but not limited to, its withdrawal from the NPT (Wunderlich, Hellmann, Müller, Reuter, & Schmidt 2013: 276). Thus, the assumption that external threats decrease arms control support is widespread and has been employed by multiple scholars.

However, comprehensive empirical evidence on this relationship that goes beyond the analysis of single cases or regions is lacking so far. Quantitative research dealing with the impact of external threats has focused on actual arms acquisition rather than position taking on arms control. Although a small number of studies have provided somewhat ambiguous results (Dunne & Perlo-Freeman 2003; Jo & Gartzke 2007), most have identified a positive relationship between external threats and armament, be it in the form of military spending (Collier & Hoeffler 2007), arms imports (Blomberg & Tocoian 2016), or nuclear proliferation (Fuhrmann & Horowitz 2015; Singh & Way 2004).

Yet, I argue that armament and opposition to arms control are not equivalent. While the two variables are certainly connected, states can reject arms restrictions while refraining from armament and support arms control with-

out simultaneously disarming. Kreps et al. (2018) even argue that states occasionally increase their armament not despite but *because* they are in favor of additional arms restrictions. Hence, existing findings that suggest a positive impact of external threats on states' armament levels do not necessarily imply a negative effect on their arms control support. While indicators of military spending, arms imports, and nuclear proliferation are certainly useful to capture states' own access to arms, they tell us little about their preferences on restricting *all* states' armament and thus the prospects of international cooperation in this field. Therefore, the systematic study of state support for arms control requires a different measurement strategy.

Furthermore, structural realist accounts of the impact of external threats on arms control support suffer from two additional shortcomings. First, while structural realists have argued that the negative relationship between the two variables should hold regardless of the weapon type, states, and severity of the security threat under consideration (Gray 1992), this is not necessarily the case. As Glaser (1994) notes, the impact of external threats on arms control support should not be strictly negative – even from a realist perspective. He argues instead that it is dependent on the context whether states respond to an external threat by defecting and rejecting arms control or by seeking cooperative measures. Under certain circumstances and in particular conditional on the relationship between offensive and defensive weaponry, it is rational for states to push for more arms restrictions in order to maximize their security and avoid arms races.

His line of argument also rests on the realist assumption that armament and arms control support are mutually exclusive, which, as explained earlier, does not hold. Nevertheless, it provides a useful starting point to illustrate that arms control can, in certain situations, be beneficial for a state that is exposed to a security threat. In the next chapter, I will further elaborate on why I do not expect a strictly negative relationship between external threats and arms control support.

Moreover, I will expound in which circumstances the postulated negative effect holds – and when it does not. Unlike Glaser (ibid.), I do not focus on the offense-defense balance and distinguishability in this regard, a factor that hardly varies over time and across countries. Instead, I introduce states' power status as a decisive variable shaping the impact of an external threat on position taking toward arms control. Structural realists and others have labeled the distribution of power as crucial in international politics and matters of peace and conflict (e.g., Fey, Hellmann, Klinke, Plümmer, & Rauch 2013; Waltz 1990), yet so far not considered it in the relationship between external threats and arms control support.

The second shortcoming of previous analyses concerns one of the basic assumptions of structural realism. As indicated earlier, structural realists have argued that international politics are not affected by domestic developments and have therefore only focused on *external* threats as a determinant of state support for arms control. However, threats from within the state are far more common in the post-Cold War period, and the vast majority of weapons are used in intrastate conflicts. States' threat perceptions now primarily focus on non-state actors, and arms control agreements of the post-Cold War period are also designed to curb armed violence within states. Nevertheless, internal threats have mostly been neglected as an explanatory variable of states' position taking toward arms control. For this reason, I will expand on the relationship between security threats and states' arms control support by considering threats by other states as well as by non-state actors.

## 2.3. Summary

Examining the relevant literature in detail, this chapter served the purpose of unfolding two major gaps in previous research on security threats and arms control. First, we lack a comprehensive measurement of state support for arms control over time and across countries that enables the systematic study of this variable. Existing quantitative measures either do not cover arms control in its entirety or suffer from other shortcomings. Previous studies on the impact of security threats investigate actual armament, which, though related to position taking toward arms control, is not equivalent.

Second, existing theoretical accounts on the relationship between security threats and state support for arms control suffer from several shortcomings and need to be revisited. Many scholars – in particular structural realists – have assumed that external threats are the most important factor inducing opposition to cooperative measures. Yet, they have failed to take into account arguments in favor of a context-specific, rather than a strictly negative, relationship between the two variables. Accordingly, they have also overlooked important third factors in that regard – especially states' power status. Moreover, as structural realism black boxes the domestic arena, previous studies have solely focused on external threats and neglected those from within the state. In the next two chapters, I elaborate on how I aim to fill these gaps.

# Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

The aim of this chapter is to propose a theoretical framework for the impact of security threats on state support for arms control. As a first step, I introduce a model that deals with the relationship between these two variables more generally speaking and neither distinguishes between external and internal threats nor between states of different power status. I argue that security threats increase not only the costs, but also the benefits of arms control, which restricts both sides of a conflict or rivalry. Afterwards, I adjust this model to three specific contexts to illustrate under which circumstances security threats affect states' positions toward arms control in which ways.

First, I argue that, in the aggregate, the added costs and benefits of arms control should cancel each other out in the event of an external threat, so that it does not have any significant impact on states' arms control support. Second, I distinguish between major powers and non-major powers in this regard. I propose that a threat by a major power decreases support for restrictive measures, yet only among non-major powers. Third, I turn to the domestic arena and civil wars as the most severe version of an internal threat. Focusing on conventional weapons, I argue that restrictive measures are more beneficial for states involved in civil wars, because limiting the availability of arms can help to contain its detrimental consequences. I thus expect a positive impact of civil conflicts on support for conventional arms control.

## 3.1. Security Threats and the Costs and Benefits of Arms Control

In my theoretical framework, I follow the structural realist notion that a security threat induces the need for self-defense. For this purpose, the threatened state requires arms. A security threat thus increases the demand for armament. As postulated, multiple studies support this claim, finding that external (Blomberg & Tocoian 2016; Collier & Hoeffler 2007; Fuhrmann & Horowitz 2015; Singh & Way 2004) and internal threats (Blomberg & Tocoian 2016; Collier & Hoeffler 2007; Dunne & Perlo-Freeman 2003) are positively related to the acquisition of arms. Arms control naturally runs counter to this higher demand for armament, as it limits the concerned state's access to weapons.

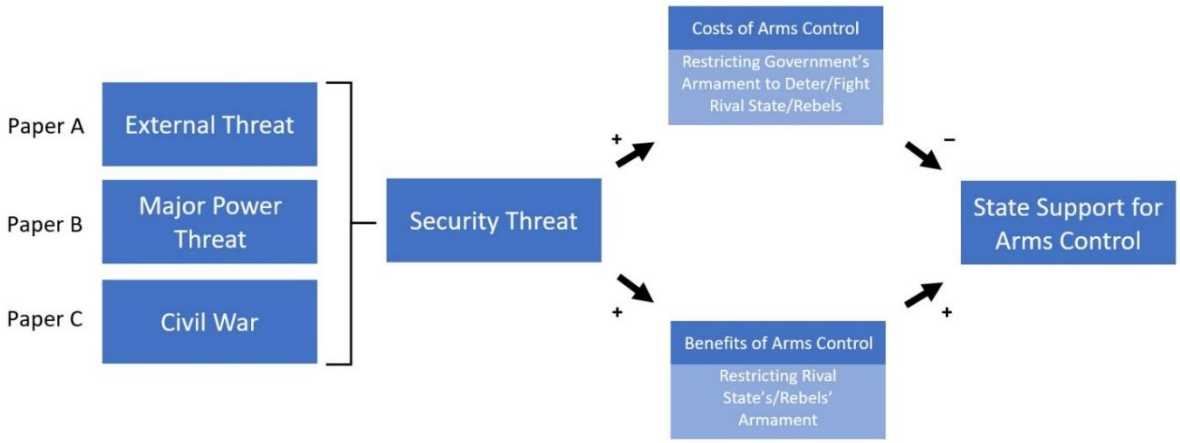
Exposure to a security threat thus raises the costs of arms control, because self-defense through armament is hampered by arms restrictions. This, in turn, creates incentives to oppose these restrictive measures. In other words, this argument speaks in favor of a negative effect of security threats on state support for arms control – in line with structural realist arguments.

However, I argue that a security threat not only increases the costs but also the benefits of arms control. While a threat leads to an increased demand for armament, it simultaneously induces the need to restrict the availability of arms for the adversary. As arms control also restricts the opponent of the threatened state, be it another state or a rebel group, more arms limitations can help to alleviate this threat. Instead of a negative relationship, this suggests that security threats can also lead to higher levels of states' arms control support.

Figure 1 summarizes my theoretical argument and the two causal mechanisms. As expounded earlier, I argue that experiencing a security threat increases the costs and the benefits of arms control at the same time. On the one hand, arms restrictions hamper the concerned state's higher demand for armament induced by the security threat. On the other hand, they also affect the adversary's access to weapons. In sum, I propose that the relationship between security threats and support for arms control is neither strictly negative nor positive. Instead, it depends on the specific context and the type of security threat as to whether the added costs outweigh the benefits or vice versa.

I will elaborate on this in the next sections. First, I expound how external threats in general affect arms control support. Second, I demonstrate why and how the major power status of the rivaling states is crucial in shaping this relationship. Finally, I turn to the domestic arena and internal threats, presenting the impact of civil wars on state support for conventional arms control.

**Figure 1.** The Effect of Security Threats on State Support for Arms Control



## 3.2. How External Threats Affect State Support for Arms Control

As explained in Chapter 2, external threats by other states have been the most prevalent explanation of state support for arms control, primarily employed by structural realists. They have argued that a threat by another state induces opposition to arms control, as restrictive measures collide with the threatened state's increased demand for arms to fight or deter its adversary (Glaser 1994; Jervis 1978; Sagan 1996). In line with the theoretical model introduced earlier, an external threat thus increases the costs of arms control.

This is illustrated by the aforementioned cases of Iran and Israel. The unstable and hostile environment in the Middle East has led Israel to pursue nuclear weapons, and, for instance, refuse to join the NPT and reject a nuclear-weapon free zone (Steinberg 1994; 2005). The Israeli nuclear threat has in turn been one factor leading to Iran's continuous violation of NPT obligations (Jones 1998; Wunderlich et al. 2013). Given that Israel views Iran as one of its most acute threats and vice versa, this reflects the arms control paradox (Gray 1992): Although it could potentially decrease tensions, both states oppose arms control because they feel threatened by each other.

However, in line with Glaser (1994), I argue that an external threat not only enhances the threatened state's demand for armament, but also creates incentives to push for measures that restrict the availability of weapons for its rival. While structural realists have argued that the insecurity about adversaries' compliance prevents states from embracing cooperation, I argue that the promotion of arms control holds benefits for states involved in an interstate rivalry, even if the adversary state is expected to reject arms restrictions.

First, cooperation can be facilitated through the exercise of pressure and the diffusion of norms (Gibbons 2018: 11-12). Second, a variety of arms control measures has an impact on all states and not only those that are parties to a treaty or agreement. For instance, the ATT aims to prevent the transfer of weapons to areas where they might be used to undermine peace and security, human rights, or UN arms embargoes (Nystuen & Egeland 2019), and thus also affects those states that remain outside the treaty.

As indicated, empirical evidence on a positive relationship between external threats and armament does not necessarily contradict this argument. In fact, an arms build-up could even be a strategy to coerce the adversary state to agree to arms restrictions and states might be willing to disarm again as soon as relevant measures are adopted. In line with this argument, South Korea is supporting arms control efforts and pursuing cooperation to alleviate the North Korean threat (e.g., Kane, Lieggi, & Pomper 2011), while at the same time modernizing and developing its military sector (Moon & Lee 2008).

Moreover, even states that are in general rather reluctant in their support for arms control push for measures that restrict their rivals: International cooperation and non-proliferation initiatives have been part of the United States' North Korea strategy (Tagma 2010: 181). Similarly, the Israeli threat has made Iran, alongside other Middle Eastern states such as Egypt, a strong proponent of nuclear disarmament – while the Iranian government itself explores the nuclear option (Jones 1998; Wunderlich et al. 2013).

In sum, I argue that exposure to an external threat leads to added costs but also added benefits of arms control. It restricts the concerned state's own armament, but can also be a useful tool to limit the rival state's military capabilities. Therefore, such a threat creates incentives to embrace as well as to oppose arms control. In the aggregate, I argue that these two mechanisms cancel each other out and expect no significant effect of external threats on state support for arms control.

Yet, if this is indeed the case, it leads to the question of when the added virtues of arms control outweigh the drawbacks and the other way round. In the next section, I will therefore introduce states' status as a major power or a non-major power as a crucial factor conditioning the relationship between external threats and their arms control support.

## 3.3. Why Major Power Status Matters

In this section, I argue that it is necessary to consider the rivaling states' major power status in the study of the impact of external threats on state support for arms control. As the preferences and interests of major powers are crucial for the design and adoption of agreements between states, they are able to tilt negotiations in their own favor (e.g., Gruber 2000; Krasner 1991). Major powers can influence who participates in interstate negotiations, shape the bargaining process, and convince or coerce other states into following the major powers' preferences (Krasner 1991). In the field of arms control, this is facilitated by the fact that the major powers are also the most "militarily significant states" (Goldblat 2002: 35) and possess the lion's share of weapons in the world.[4] Accordingly, their consent is crucial for the achievement of meaningful measures, which further increases their power to dictate the content of negotiations and agreements (ibid.; Krause 2018).

[4] For instance, over 97% of the world's nuclear weapons belong to China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Kile & Kristensen 2020). In addition, all of the major powers are ranked in the top ten states with the highest military expenditures (Tian, Wezeman, Lopes da Silva, Wezeman, & Kuimova 2020).

Hence, arms control tends to impose more severe restrictions on non-major powers than on major powers and consolidates the existing power structure. In the event of a rivalry between a major power and a less powerful state, the latter state aims to raise its armament and also to restrict its rival – as is the case with any other type of rivalry. Yet, in contrast to external threats in general, the costs and benefits of arms control do not change to the same degree in this case.

A major power threat leads to a higher demand for armament and therefore to added costs of arms control, potentially even more so than compared to a threat by another state. The major power might use its ability to shape negotiations to tailor restrictions to its less powerful rival. On top of that, major powers pose a greater threat due to their higher military power – as indicated earlier. In contrast, the benefits of arms control do not increase substantially, although the threatened non-major power seeks to restrict its major power rival. As explained, major powers can shape negotiations in their own favor and block agreements that impose restrictions on themselves. Smaller states do not hold this power to the same degree, so that arms control is not a useful tool to limit the rival's armament and thus alleviate the major power threat. I thus expect a negative effect of major power threats on non-major powers' support for arms control, because they increase the costs of cooperation to a larger degree than the benefits.[5]

This argument is reflected by two of the most relevant arms control treaties: the ATT and the NPT. As the United States is the largest arms exporter and can persuade other states into treaty compliance, its support for the ATT was crucial for the adoption of the treaty and its acceptance among other states (Erickson 2015: 450). Therefore, a variety of significant demands regarding the negotiation procedure as well as the treaty itself – especially related to export controls – were met to ensure US support (Bromley, Cooper, & Holtom 2012; Erickson 2015). Their rivalries with the United States have therefore led both North Korea and Iran to oppose the ATT. The regime in Pyongyang has argued that "[t]here is no balance between the interests of exporters and those of importers" (UNGA 2013a: 16). Iran claimed that "certain countries that are very well known for committing acts of aggression and occupation" (ibid.: 18) would benefit from the treaty.

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[5] In this regard, it is important to note that this argument does not primarily refer to differences in military power but focuses on major powers' exceptional abilities to shape measures in their own favor. Accordingly, it does not extend to all kinds of asymmetric rivalries but is limited to those between a major power and a non-major power. For example, while the rivalry between Sudan and South Sudan is asymmetric, neither of the two is able to exert decisive influence on arms control negotiations.

The NPT is even more clearly tilted in the favor of the powerful states, as it separates nuclear weapon states (NWS) from non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) and thus establishes an asymmetry by design (Müller 2017). It lists only the five major powers that possess nuclear weapons as NWS and prohibits any other state from obtaining nuclear arms (ibid.). Although the treaty obliges NWS to pursue nuclear disarmament, this provision remains vague and has led to repeated criticism from NNWS (ibid.). While North Korea acceded to the NPT in 1985, it withdrew in 2003, following the revelation of its nuclear weapon program and arguing that this was a necessary countermeasure to the US threat (Wunderlich et al. 2013). As indicated earlier, Iran has also refused to follow NPT guidelines and argued "that international instruments and guarantees are only useful if you are a friend of the great powers" (Jones 1998).

While I thus expect that less powerful states decrease their arms control support following a major power threat, I argue that this is not the case for major powers involved in rivalries with each other. As major powers have a similar impact on arms control negotiations, they may counterbalance their rivals' efforts to achieve agreements favorable for themselves. In certain situations, arms control can even be "a weapon of the strong against the strong" (Tannenwald 2005: 39) that consolidates the status quo and thus ensures strategic stability. For a major power, a threat by another major power thus increases not only the costs but also the benefits of arms control and should not decrease its support for arms control.

This is illustrated by the cases of China and Russia who despite their mixed arms control record have pushed for certain restrictive measures to contain the United States' armament (Fey et al. 2013). For example, Russia has promoted the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In a similar vein, China has repeatedly joined NNWS in their calls for disarmament and multilateral cooperation (ibid.).

I thus argue that major powers have the ability to influence and block negotiations, leading to the adoption of measures that limit less powerful states' armament rather than their own. This implies that exposure to a major power threat leads to significantly more added costs than benefits for non-major powers. In contrast, an interstate rivalry between two major powers increases the costs and benefits of arms control for both states. Therefore, an external threat by a major power leads to less support for arms control among non-major powers but not among other major powers.

## 3.4. Turning to Internal Threats: The Role of Civil Wars

I have so far expounded how external threats affect state support for arms control. In this section, I argue that threats from within the state can also have an impact on states' positions toward arms control. More precisely, I focus on civil wars – arguably the most severe form of an internal threat (Han & Thies 2019). As weapons of mass destruction are largely irrelevant in the context of intrastate conflicts (Moore 2012),[6] I argue that these conflicts should only affect support for restrictions that deal with conventional weapons.[7]

As civil conflicts are primarily fought with conventional weapons (ibid.), a civil war increases the concerned state's need for these weapons. Limitations on conventional armament naturally run counter to this demand. For example, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, which have been frequently used in intrastate conflicts, are banned by the Ottawa Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), respectively (Wisotzki 2013). The ATT, as explained, has introduced stricter arms export controls and disallows transfers to areas where they undermine peace and security (Bromley et al. 2012). Accordingly, a civil war outbreak increases the costs of conventional arms control.

In line with this, Israel has for instance not acceded to the Ottawa Treaty, arguing that it needs landmines to protect its borders against terrorist groups (Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor 2019). Similarly, Syria has opposed the ATT (Garcia 2014: 428). After arms control proponents framed Russian exports to Syria as a prime example of arms transfers that the ATT should prevent (Zughni 2012: 36), the Syrian government feared being subject to stricter transfer controls (Bromley et al. 2012: 1040).

While arms control instruments also aim to constrain non-state actors' access to weapons, they do so less successfully. The adoption of the ATT has led to an increase in transparency and export controls (Varisco, Maletta, & Robin 2021), but the treaty does not categorically rule out arms transfers to rebel groups. As indicated earlier, it only prohibits those transfers that undermine peace and stability, arms embargoes, or human rights (Nystuen & Egeland

[6] There are some, yet few, notable exceptions such as the Syrian civil war (Gillis 2017; Trapp 2014).

[7] This category of weapons includes, inter alia, "armoured combat vehicles (personnel carriers and tanks, for example), combat helicopters, combat aircraft, warships, small arms and light weapons, landmines, cluster munitions, ammunition and artillery" (Gillis 2017: 71). In contrast, weapons of mass destruction include nuclear as well as chemical and biological weapons (CBW) (ibid.).

2019). This mostly leaves the assessment of the legitimacy of a transfer with the exporters, who might apply varying standards (ibid.).

On top of that, rebel groups oftentimes operate in secrecy. Hence, they rely on illicit arms transfers anyway, raising the question to which degree stricter rules actually affect their access to arms (Jackson 2010). Yet, previous research has illustrated that multilateral arms embargoes, despite a mixed track record (Tierney 2005), can help to prevent arms transfers to crisis areas (Baronchelli, Caruso, & Ricciuti 2021) and therefore limit rebel groups' military capabilities (Radtke & Jo 2018).

Furthermore, global norms in the field of arms control not only apply to states, but also to non-state actors (Krause 2011: 30), though it remains difficult to engage these in agreements: This would lead to their legitimization – which states fighting these groups aim to prevent (Florquin & Decrey Warner 2008). However, while non-state actors can generally not join arms control treaties, the nongovernmental organization Geneva Call has developed a "deed of commitment" that rebel groups can sign and which resembles the provisions of the Ottawa Treaty (Gleditsch et al. 2016). Fifty-four groups have signed such documents so far to show their commitment to the mine ban, and the vast majority of them comply with it (Bongard & Somer 2011: 688; Geneva Call 2022).

Hence, arms control can effectively restrict rebel groups, but arguably to a lesser degree than states. One could therefore expect a negative relationship between civil wars on state support for conventional arms control, as the added costs of restrictions are higher than the added benefits. I argue instead that the opposite is the case and civil wars in fact lead to higher levels of arms control support, as states' cost-benefit analyses in this context are not limited to strategic considerations.

More precisely, the benefits of conventional arms control in the event of a civil war go beyond the containment of rebels' armament in order to gain a military advantage. An increased availability of arms increases the duration and lethality of conflicts (e.g., Gallea 2019; Moore 2012). Conventional weapons, especially indiscriminate weapons such as landmines and cluster munitions, have detrimental effects on the concerned country's environment, economy, and public health (Hoteit & Fares 2014; Newman & Mercer 2000; Somasundaram & Renol 1998).

Arms restrictions can help to curb these consequences of armed violence. Some governments might not be concerned about environmental conservation or the well-being and survival of the civilian population. Yet, the failure to maintain order and security and to protect its people delegitimizes and challenges the government in democracies as well as autocracies (Singh 1996). On top of that, the destruction of environment and economy can inflict serious

economic costs on the government in a situation of already limited resources. I thus argue that containing the negative impact of arms is in the interest of the government in the vast majority of cases.

In line with this, multiple conflict-ridden states have embraced conventional arms control instruments. For instance, Colombia, experiencing a decade-long civil war, consistently supported a comprehensive ATT and showed ongoing commitment to implement the treaty's provisions (Bromley & Malaret 2017; Zughni 2012).[8] The Colombian government emphasized the negative effects of armed violence, for instance on development, and particularly pushed for the prevention of arms transfers to non-state actors (Cancillería de Colombia 2022). Sudan – one of the countries most severely affected by the planting of landmines – supported the Ottawa Treaty and demanded international assistance in mine-clearing efforts (Herr 2010). Prior to this, the rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army had announced that they were willing to abandon landmines if the government committed to the treaty (ibid.). This illustrates not only that states acknowledge the potential of restrictive measures to curb the negative consequences of armed conflict but also that arms control can affect rebel groups' armament, too – at least to a certain degree.

On the one hand, a civil war thus increases the costs of conventional arms control, restricting the government's capabilities to fight their internal opponents. On the other hand, it also increases the benefits of conventional arms control. Arms restrictions target not only states, but also curb the armament of rebel groups, though not necessarily as effectively. While arms control therefore does not constitute a suitable tool for governments to obtain a strategic advantage, limiting the availability of arms can lead to shorter and less severe conflicts and have a positive impact on the economy, environment, and public health. Therefore, I argue that an intrastate conflict increases the advantages of cooperation to a larger degree than the drawbacks, leading to a positive relationship between civil wars and support for conventional arms control.

[8] Colombia has signed but so far not ratified the ATT primarily due to the prioritization of other issues, such as ongoing peace negotiations. An initial ratification proposal was rejected by the Constitutional Court because of procedural issues (Kytömäki 2017). This further illustrates the shortcomings of treaty ratification as a proxy for arms control support.

## 3.5. Summary

In this chapter, I have presented my theoretical framework, starting with a general model of the relationship between security threats and arms control support. I argued that exposure to a security threat increases the demand for armament, but also incentivizes the state to push for measures that restrict its adversary. Thus, a threat simultaneously increases the costs as well as the benefits of arms control. It is therefore contingent on the context whether arms control is more beneficial or more costly in the event of a security threat and, consequently, whether this threat increases or decreases state support for arms control.

Subsequently, I focused on three specific contexts that shape the relationship between security threats and states' arms control preferences in one way or another. I argued, first, that external threats in general neither increase nor decrease arms control support. Taking into account the major power status of the rivaling states, I then argued that a threat by a major power leads to a more negative stance toward arms control among less powerful states but not among other major powers. Finally, I proposed a positive effect of intrastate conflicts on state support for conventional arms control. The next chapter will proceed by introducing my data and methodological approach to illustrate how I investigate these theoretical arguments empirically.

# Chapter 4: Data and Method

My empirical strategy to investigate the impact of different types of threats on state support for arms control consists of two approaches, which I will describe in the following. First, I run regression analyses to examine the relationship between different types of security threats and state support for arms control in the aggregate. To do so, I introduce a novel measure of the latter variable, which combines manual coding of UNGA resolutions with states' voting records on these resolutions. This constitutes the first comprehensive indicator of states' positions toward arms control that covers all aspects of arms control, all countries, and variation over time. Through a variety of validation checks, I demonstrate that it allows me to capture arms control support, while avoiding biases through unrelated conflict dimensions. This illustrates that my measure provides a useful tool to assess quantitatively how external threats, major power threats, and civil wars affect state support for arms control.

To analyze the relationship between civil wars and support for conventional arms control, I complement the regression analysis with a second data source. I conduct a manual content analysis of UNGA speeches held by states involved in civil conflicts that deal with conventional arms control. I code states' references to the ongoing civil wars, the costs and benefits of arms restrictions, and alternative explanations in their justifications of their support for and opposition to arms control. This allows me to unravel the underlying mechanisms driving the relationship between the two variables and assess more comprehensively to what degree the regression results align with my theoretical arguments.

## 4.1. Measuring State Support for Arms Control

To measure state support for arms control across countries and over time, I combine UNGA voting data with manual coding of 1,178 resolutions adopted between the 49th and the 71st sessions (1994/95 to 2016/17). As a first step, a student assistant and I code all resolutions dealing with arms control during that time period.[9] Depending on the respective resolution's coded category, every vote is then assigned a value reflecting the voting state's support for arms control.

[9] This includes all resolutions drafted in the First Committee, which deals with disarmament and international security, or drafted in the plenary and assigned an agenda item that belongs to the category of disarmament.

Resolutions in the UNGA are of soft law character and not binding for member states (Panke 2014). It is therefore important to note that the use of UNGA voting in this context is a means to an end and not an end in itself. In other words, I am not interested in explaining states' voting behavior per se but utilize it to proxy their sincere policy preferences. This is for multiple reasons.

First, while critics of the UNGA have labeled negotiations as "cheap talk" (e.g., Czaika 2008), others have argued that it is in fact the lack of severe consequences that allows states to express their true preferences through their votes (e.g., Bailey, Strezhnev, & Voeten 2017; Mattes, Leeds, & Carroll 2015). Accordingly, scholars have recognized the UNGA as the arena where all states can openly announce their foreign policy positions (Kim & Russett 1996: 629) and used states' voting records to measure these (Bailey et al. 2017: 430). Second, the non-binding nature of resolutions has led to the repeated introduction of many resolutions on a yearly or biennial basis (Panke 2014). This limits agenda changes and allows for a better comparability of voting behavior over time. Finally, the UNGA deals with the entire range of issues related to arms control (Müller et al. 2013; Thakur 2017), making UNGA voting a fruitful data source to infer states' positions on that topic.

However, existing techniques to derive states' policy preferences through UNGA voting mostly capture states' positions in relation to each other rather than their substantial views on certain policy areas. They measure, for instance, the degree to which states align themselves with the Western states (e.g., Bailey et al. 2017; Voeten 2000), the global North (e.g., Bailey & Voeten 2018; Kim & Russett 1996), the United States (e.g., Carter & Stone 2014; Dreher & Jensen 2013), or China (e.g., Carmody, Dasandi, & Mikhaylov 2019; Flores-Macías & Kreps 2013).

An exception is the study by Boockmann and Dreher (2011) who measure state support for human rights. As one cannot assume that every resolution on that matter strengthens human rights, they identify four states – France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom – that are strong proponents of human rights. They use these states' votes as a benchmark for the vote in favor of human rights and derive other states' positions from their agreement with the votes of these four states.[10]

Although the measurement of states' arms control support suffers from a similar problem – that is, not all resolutions are in favor of restrictive

[10] The aforementioned studies on alignments with the United States and China pursue similar approaches, using these states' votes as the benchmark to identify other states' agreement with their positions.

measures[11] – Boockmann and Dreher's (ibid.) approach is not applicable to this policy field for two reasons. First, it requires one or several countries that are known to *always* vote in favor of arms control. This is not the case: As Becker-Jakob, Hofmann, Müller, and Wunderlich (2013) illustrate, even strong proponents of arms control hold ambivalent positions on some types of restrictions. Second, in order not to produce biased estimates, all votes need to reflect states' support – or non-support – for arms control. Yet, voting divergences in this field might stem from other conflict dimensions, as states for example disagree on the prioritization of non-proliferation or disarmament (Barnum & Lo 2020), multilateral or bilateral agreements (Krause 1998: 17), nuclear or conventional arms control (Meyer 2016), and vertical or horizontal non-proliferation (Schörnig 2017: 966).

Instead, I therefore developed a manual coding scheme to assess for all 1,178 resolutions whether, first, they tend to strengthen or weaken arms control, and second, whether voting decisions might be driven by preferences on other conflict dimensions than the one of interest. The coding procedure consists of up to five steps (see Figure 2), leading to the assignment of every resolution to one of five different categories.[12]

Similar to the approach by Boockmann and Dreher (2011), each vote is assigned a value reflecting the voting state's arms control support, contingent on the respective resolution's category (see Table 2; see Figure 2 for examples). Resolutions in Category 1 strengthen arms control. Hence, states that support these resolutions are coded as being in favor of arms control and assigned a numerical value of 1, while abstentions and no-votes are neutral and against arms control with values of 0.5 and 0, respectively. Category 2 contains resolutions that also tend to strengthen arms control but contain potentially controversial passages that can lead states not to vote in favor, despite being supportive of arms control. Accordingly, abstentions on these resolutions are also coded as favorable of arms control, while opposing votes are coded as neutral. If a resolution weakens certain aspects of arms control but strengthens others, it is assigned to Category 3.[13] In this case, states that abstain or vote against the resolution are assigned values of 1, while yes-votes

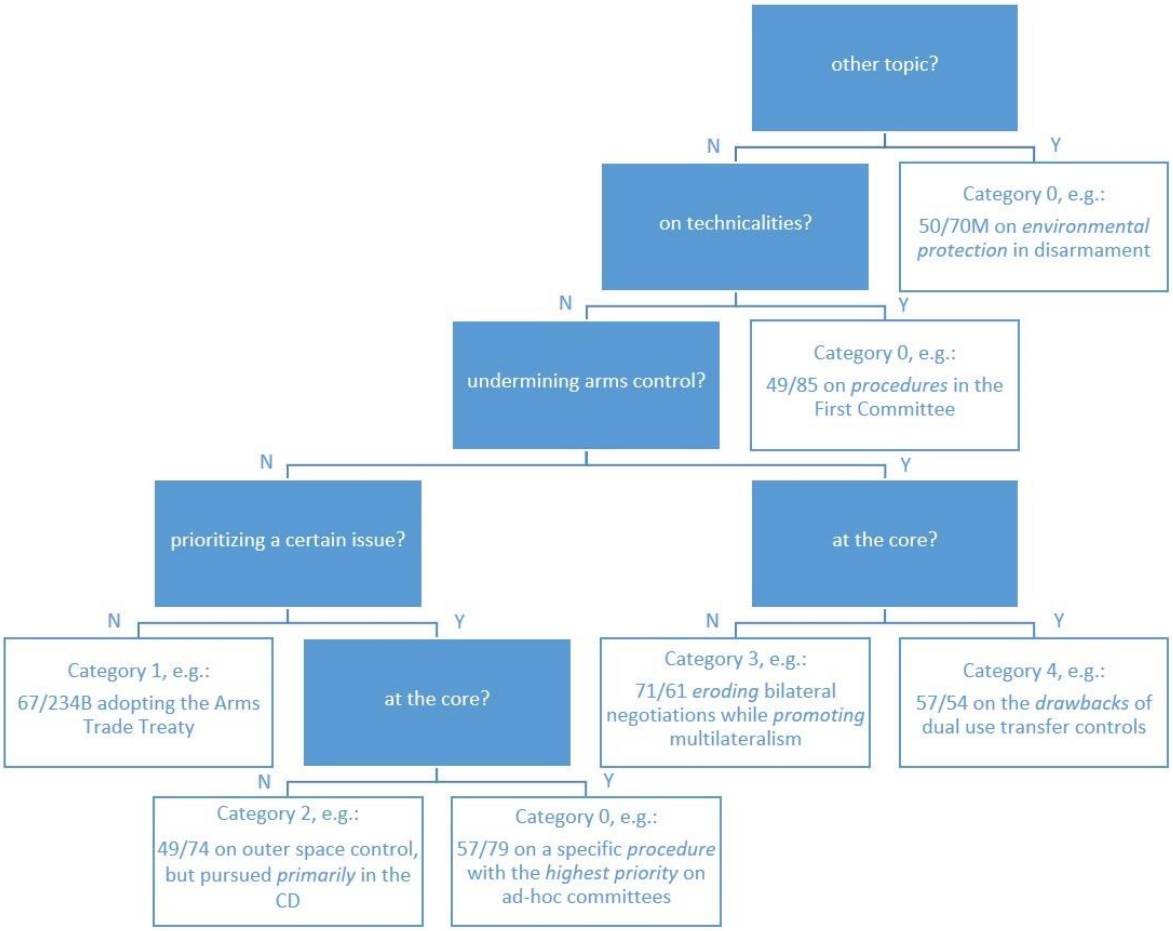
[11] For example, several resolutions demand less restrictive export controls (e.g., UNGA 2002).

[12] Paper A contains a more detailed description of the coding procedure.

[13] One could argue that strong proponents of those arms control measures that are promoted by such a resolution vote in favor. I argue, however, that states that are truly in favor of arms control do not support a resolution that undermines any of its aspects.

are against arms control.[14] Category 4 includes resolutions that primarily aim to weaken arms control. Votes in this category are therefore assigned values inverse to those in the first one; that is, yes-votes, abstentions, and no-votes are coded as against, neutral, and in favor, respectively. Finally, a number of resolutions primarily discuss other issues than the strengthening or weakening of arms control. I label them as Category 0 and exclude them from the analysis, as one cannot derive states' arms control support from their votes on these resolutions.

**Figure 2.** Coding Procedure



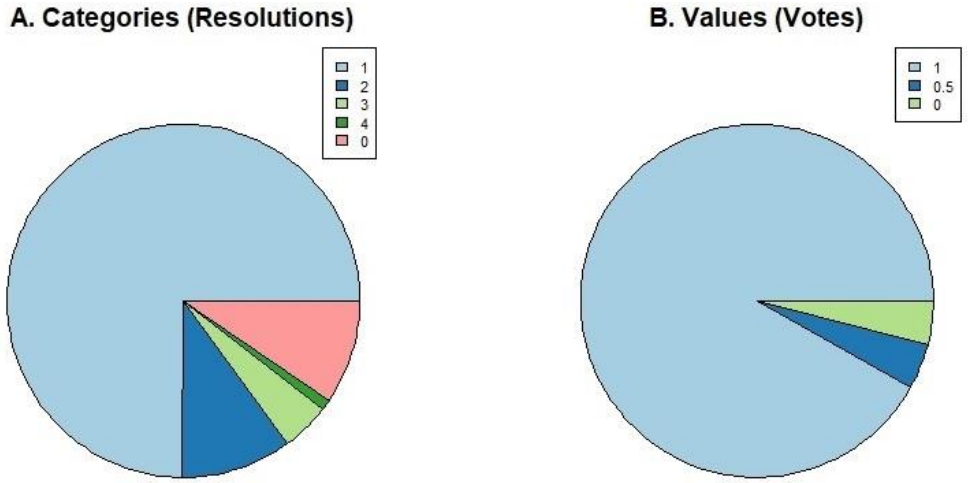

[14] This implies that the coding scheme is not symmetrical: While no-votes in Category 2 are coded as neutral, yes-votes in Category 3 are assigned negative values. This is due to the fact that as Figure 2 shows, resolutions in the second category rather resemble Category 0 over Category 1. In contrast, resolutions in Category 3 are more closely related to the fourth category.

**Table 2.** Coded Categories of UNGA Resolutions

| Category | Yes | Abstain | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 – strengthens arms control | In favor (1) | Neutral (0.5) | Against (0) |
| 2 – tends to strengthen arms control | In favor (1) | In favor (1) | Neutral (0.5) |
| 3 – tends to weaken arms control | Against (0) | In favor (1) | In favor (1) |
| 4 – weakens arms control | Against (0) | Neutral (0.5) | In favor (1) |
| 0 – on other issues | - | - | - |

Most resolutions (74.8%) are assigned to Category 1 (see Figure 3), followed by Category 2 (10.3%). Then 4.4% of resolutions belong to Category 3, and only 0.3% fall into Category 4. The remaining 9.6% are Category 0 resolutions and removed from the analysis. Thus, the vast majority of resolutions at least tend to strengthen arms control, which reflects that "it is to the GA that civil society actors look and member states go when they wish to proclaim and reaffirm arms control and disarmament norms" (Thakur 2017: 179). Yet, 297 resolutions – more than one out of four – do not strengthen arms control without restrictions, which illustrates the value of the manual coding procedure.

**Figure 3.** Coding of Resolutions and Votes

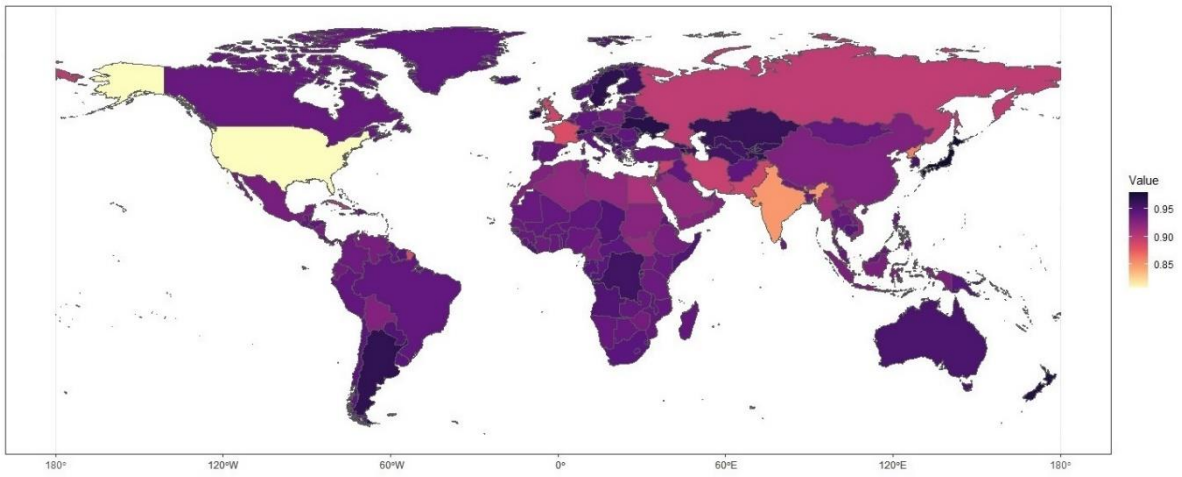



Nevertheless, as most resolutions strengthen restrictions and are adopted with large majorities, 91.8% of votes are in favor of arms control. The remaining 8.2% of votes are almost equally split between neutral and negative votes, with 4.1% of votes falling into each category. This leads to a rather high average support level of 0.939. While this shows that no country is entirely opposed to arms control, this score is also driven by the large share of consensus

decisions, none of which are coded a 3 or 4.[15] This implies that values should be interpreted in relative rather than absolute terms.

To ensure that the measure identifies the variable of interest – that is, support for arms control – and is not skewed by other dimensions of conflict, I run a variety of validation checks.[16] These show, first, that the variable is largely uncorrelated with other measures that capture different conflict dimensions, such as the ideal point estimates by Bailey et al. (2017). As indicated earlier, these aim to measure alignment with the Western liberal order. In contrast, correlating my measure with variables that are more closely related to arms control support yields higher values. This includes, for instance, the aforementioned survey by Efrat (2010) on states' preferences regarding SALW trade control.

**Figure 4.** Average Scores on the Country Level across the Entire Observation Period




Second, scores that are aggregated to the country level over all years (see Figure 4) are in line with our knowledge from secondary literature and conventional wisdom. Japan receives the highest average score (0.980), which reflects that its constitution prohibits the use of force in international relations (Green & Furukawa 2000: 17). Strong proponents of arms control, such as Ireland, Sweden, and Austria (Müller et al. 2013: 311), are also placed at the top of the ranking. With a value of only 0.808, the United States is the country that is by far the least favorable toward arms control. As I will further describe in the following, this is primarily driven by a strong opposition to arms restrictions during the administration of George W. Bush. In general, states with

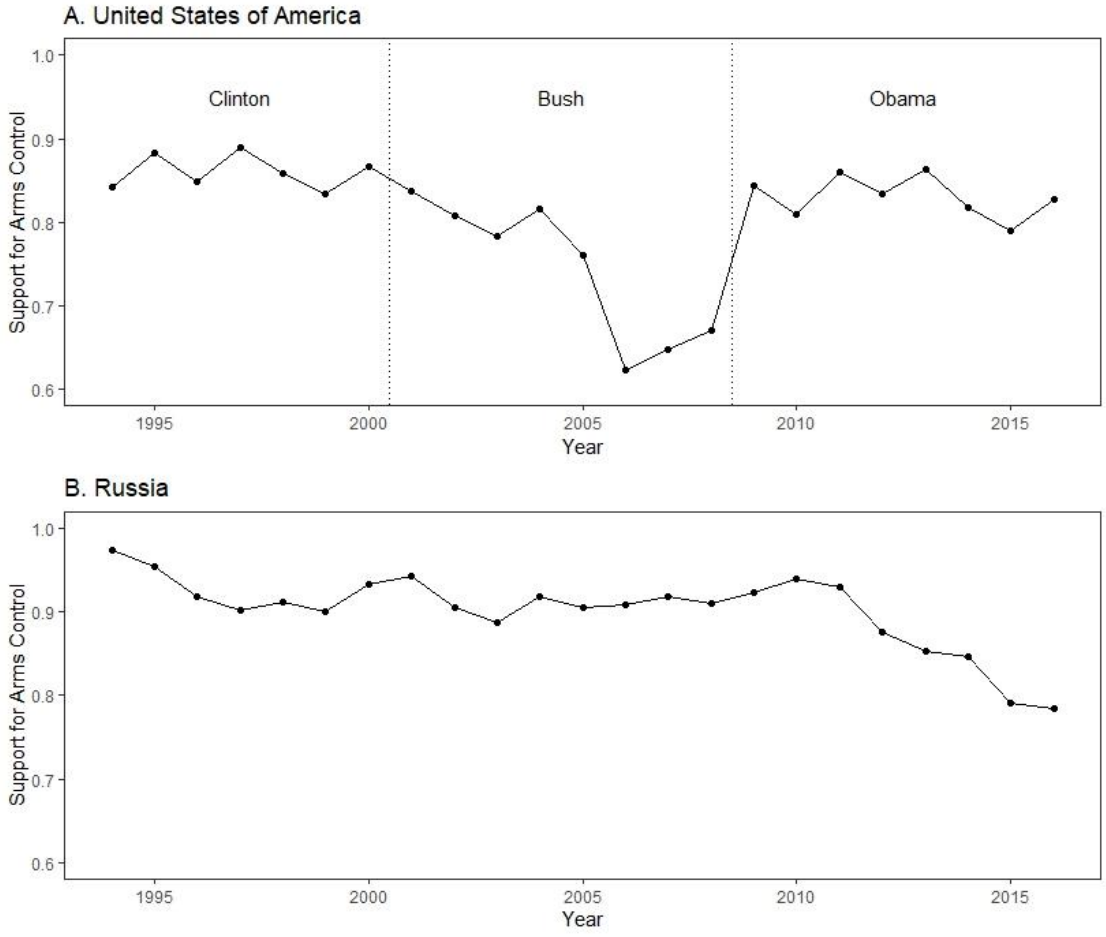
[15] Accordingly, the average support for arms control among roll-call votes only amounts to 0.867.

[16] The validation checks are described in detail in Paper A.

comparably negative positions toward cooperative measures, such as the nuclear states (Fey et al. 2013; Wunderlich et al. 2013), Iran (Jones 1998), Syria (Crail 2011; Trapp 2014), and Egypt (Wunderlich et al. 2013), receive low scores as well.

Focusing on regional differences, states in the Middle East are known for their rather negative stance toward arms control (Steinberg 2005), which is reflected by a very low mean score of 0.916. In contrast, European states are the most supportive, holding an average of 0.947. This illustrates that Western democracies and EU members are rather favorable of international cooperation (Krause & Latham 1998; Müller et al. 2013) – although arms control support among African (0.940), Asian (0.938), and American countries (0.937) is only slightly lower.

**Figure 5.** Development of US and Russian Scores over Time




Third, my measure also captures within-country changes (see Figure 5). The United States was very hostile to arms control during the presidency of George W. Bush but pursued a more cooperative agenda under Bill Clinton and Barack Obama (Fey et al. 2013). Accordingly, the United States reaches an average score of 0.843 during the latter presidencies, but only 0.742 from 2001

to 2008 – which explains its placement at the bottom of the ranking. In a similar vein, the development of Russian scores over time also reflects expectations from previous studies (ibid.; Götz & MacFarlane 2018). Immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia held a quite favorable position toward arms control, which quickly declined after 1994. During the last decade, one can observe another, more extreme decrease in Russia's arms control support, reflecting its more aggressive foreign policy agenda, especially concerning military and nuclear issues (Götz & MacFarlane 2018).

Furthermore, my measure provides a variety of useful insights that go beyond existing knowledge. As Figure 6 illustrates, there has been a slight upward trend in the average support for arms control since the early 1990s. This could reflect different developments, for instance vote shifts toward more favorable positions on repeated resolutions or the introduction of new, less controversial resolutions.

Figure 7 speaks in favor of the latter option. It shows that the number of resolutions coded into the first two categories has grown over time. This is particularly striking for Category 1. While the UNGA adopted 29 resolutions that clearly strengthened arms control in 1994, this number increased to 48 until 2016. At the same time, the average scores for each category did not substantially increase over time. This yields further support for the notion that the higher number of strengthening resolutions primarily drives the increased overall arms control support.

**Figure 6.** Average Support for Arms Control over Time

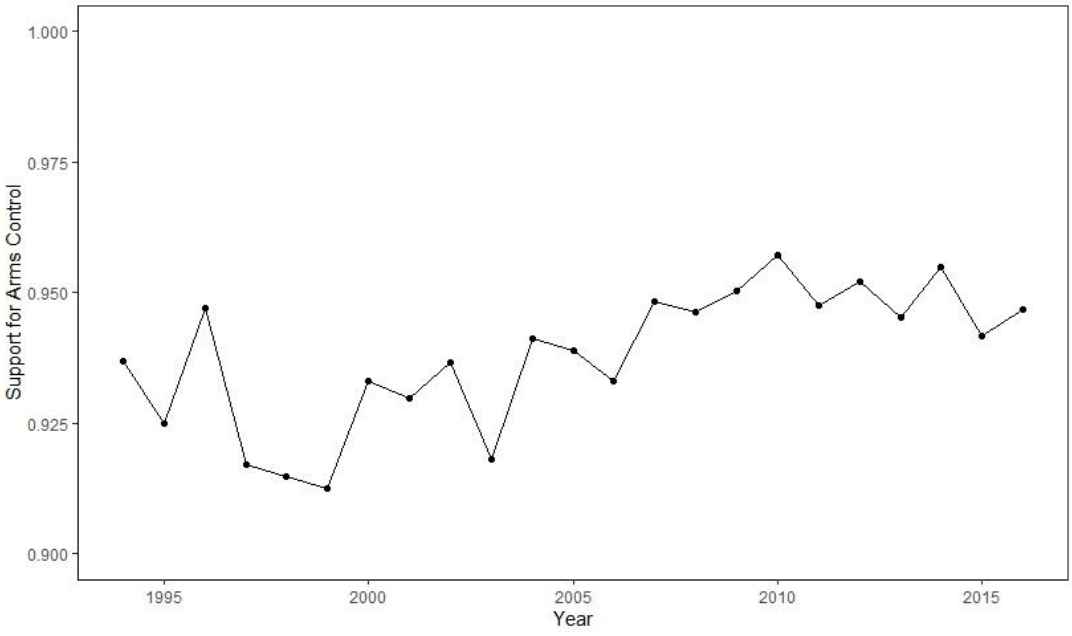
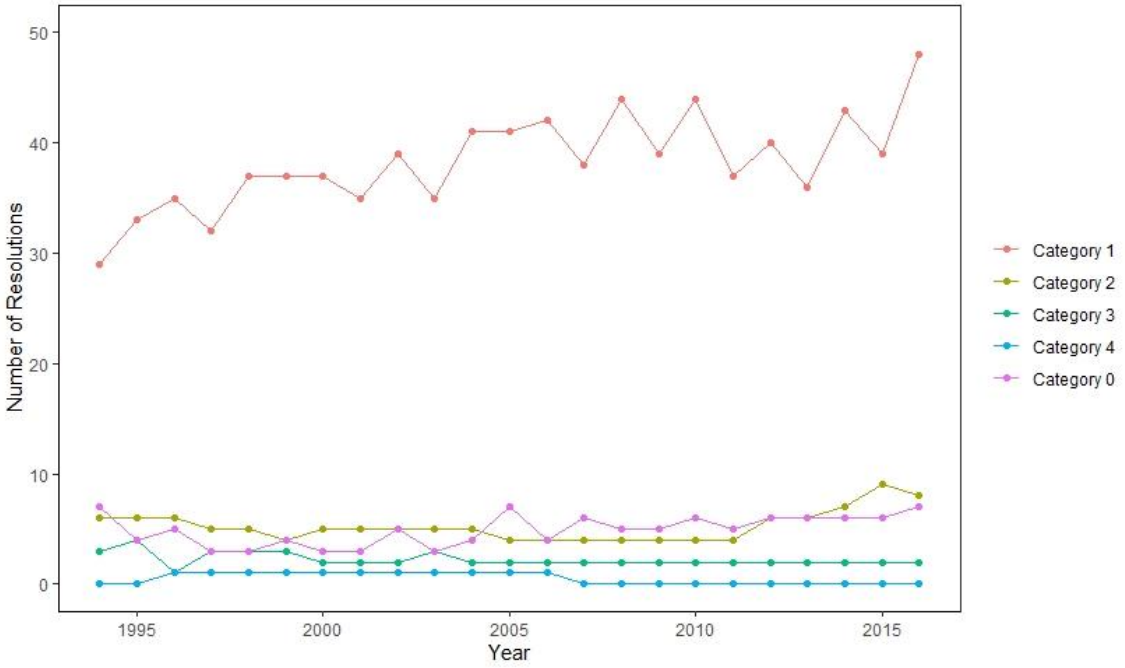


**Figure 7.** Number of Resolutions per Category over Time

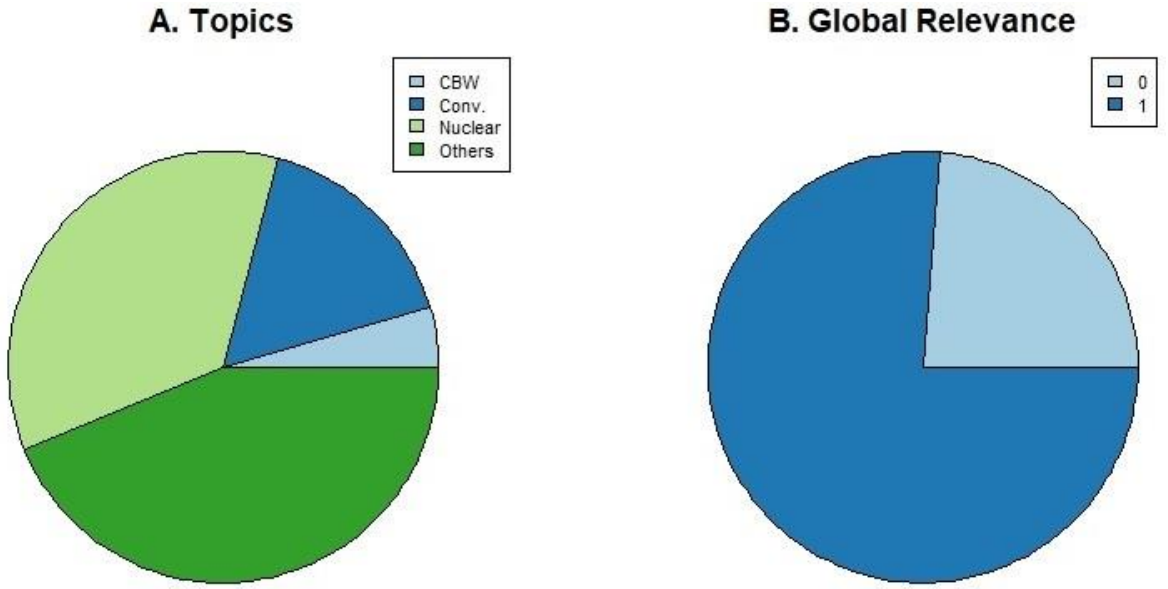



While this indicates that states have not become much more supportive for repeated resolutions, one can still regard this development as good news. First, it illustrates that states have put more effort into the introduction of resolutions that strengthen arms control and thus pushed for more cooperation. Second, these resolutions have not experienced more opposition than previous resolutions in the first category. Hence, the increase in the average arms control support arguably reflects actual positional changes. Nevertheless, empirical analyses should account for agenda changes over time to avoid biases.

For this reason, I code two additional variables on the resolution level apart from the categories just described (see Figure 8). First, each resolution is assigned to one of four different topics: nuclear weapons (35.2%), CBW (4.5%), conventional weapons (16.5%), or others (43.8%).[17] This allows me not only to control for agenda effects in regression models, but also to investigate positions that are specific to one category of weapons – as in the analysis of the relationship between civil wars and support for conventional arms control.

[17] The latter category contains resolutions that either deal with multiple or no specific weapon categories. It covers topics such as space armament, missiles, cyber armament, confidence building, and transparency measures.

**Figure 8.** Coded Topics and Global Relevance



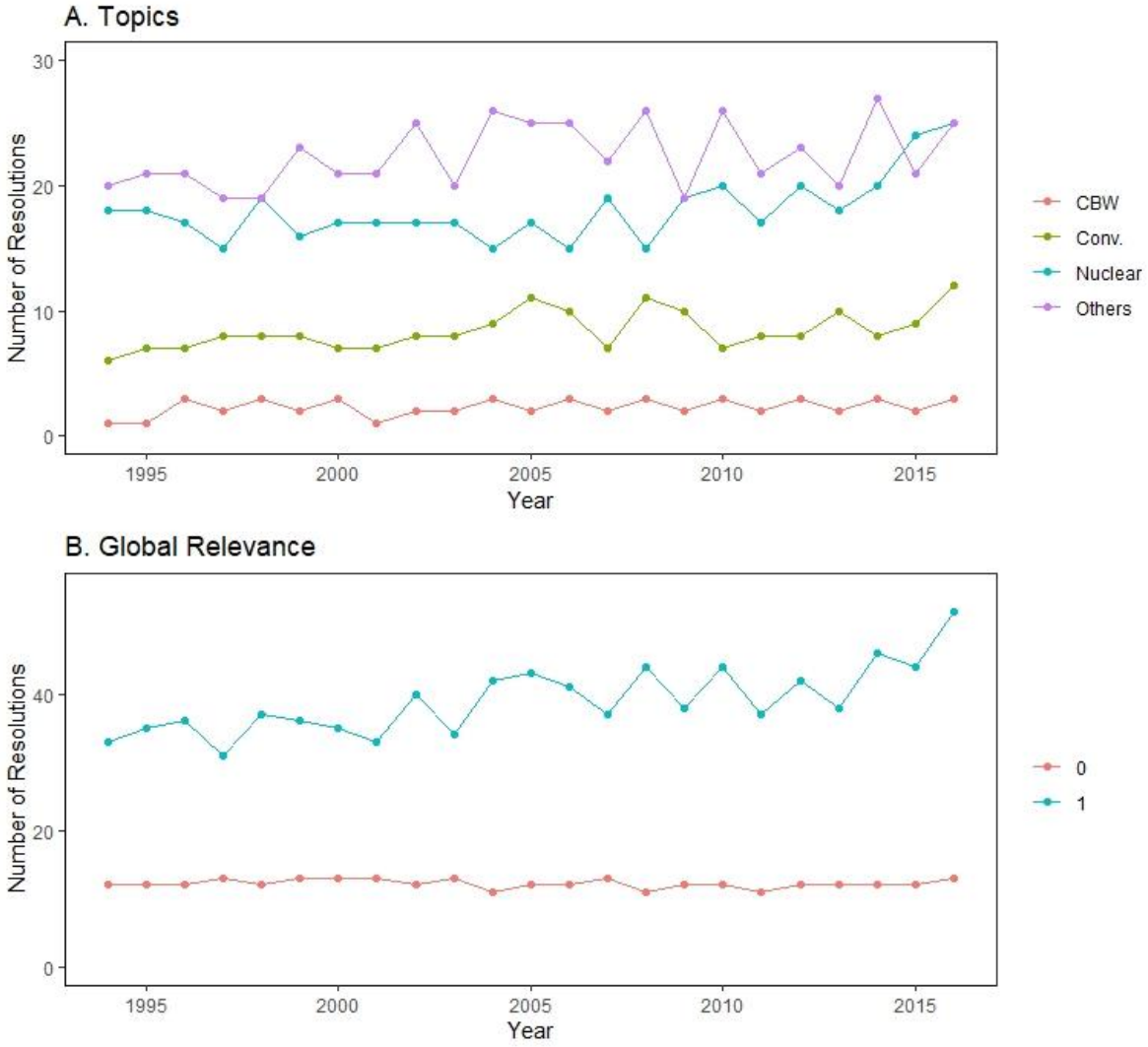

Second, I create a binary variable indicating whether a resolution was globally relevant (76.2%) or concerned with a certain geographical area, be it a specific region or a single country (23.8%). The share of nuclear, conventional, and other resolutions is, more or less, evenly distributed between these two types of resolutions, with 69.3%, 87.6%, and 75.0% being coded as globally relevant. In contrast, every single resolution on CBW is assigned to this category.

Furthermore, Figure 9 illustrates that there has been an increase in resolutions on nuclear as well as conventional arms control in recent years. While there are two or three resolutions on CBW almost every year, the number of resolutions on other issues has been rather volatile, which is not very surprising given that this is a residual category containing resolutions on a variety of issues. The figure further shows that the number of resolutions concerned with arms control in specific geographical areas, such as the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, has mostly been constant over time. In contrast, the number of globally relevant resolutions has increased from 33 in 1994 and 31 in 1997 to 52 in 2016.

Taking a closer look at the support for different types of restrictions shows that nuclear arms control is by far the most contested field with a mean score of 0.907. Resolutions on conventional weapons obtain an average support of 0.984, while those dealing with CBW receive an even higher value of 0.984. Resolutions on other matters are placed in between nuclear and conventional weapons and yield an average score of 0.940. This category includes unanimously adopted resolutions, for instance on the work of the UN Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament, but also on controversial issues such as the

transfer of dual-use technologies. In fact, the only resolutions that are assigned to the fourth category discuss the latter issue.

**Figure 9.** Coded Topics and Global Relevance over Time




Moreover, all resolutions in Categories 3 and 4 are either dealing with nuclear arms control or other issues. While most resolutions on conventional arms clearly strengthen arms control,[18] every single resolution on CBW is assigned to Category 1. In part, this explains the divergences in the average scores, because resolutions that weaken arms control are naturally also adopted by ma-

[18] More precisely, 170 resolutions on conventional weapons are assigned to Category 1 and 23 to Category 2. One resolution, which deals with the impact of illicit small arms transfers on development, is coded as Category 0 and excluded from the analysis.

jorities. Yet, resolutions on nuclear arms control assigned to the first two categories are also more contested than those on CBW and conventional weapons.

The differences in states' positions are arguably driven by diverging views on the legitimacy of different weapon types. While the lawfulness of nuclear weapons is a contested issue, the picture is much clearer with regard to the other weapon categories. While the CBW taboos are almost universal (Ilchmann & Revill 2014; Price 2019), the opposite is the case for conventional weapons: Not a single state demands the prohibition of all of these weapons, which also reduces disagreement, as restrictions are less far-reaching (Schörnig 2017: 973). Moreover, proponents of conventional arms control have mostly framed it in humanitarian terms, instead of a mere matter of security (Wisotzki 2013), which might have further boosted support.

Furthermore, I also compare globally relevant and region-specific resolutions. This shows that the latter type receives substantially higher levels of support with an average of 0.980 – compared to 0.924 for resolutions with global relevance. This is not too surprising, as the majority of states is by design not affected by resolutions that are concerned with a certain region or country. Accordingly, there are fewer incentives to oppose such measures.

In sum, I demonstrated that my measure of state support for arms control, identified through UNGA voting data in combination with manually coded resolutions, captures the variable of interest without distortions through other conflict dimensions. Therefore, it allows for further insights into and empirical analyses of states' positions toward arms control.

## 4.2. Independent Variables

For my main measure of external threats in the first two papers, I use the Peace Data (Diehl, Goertz, & Gallegos 2021; Goertz et al. 2016). This dataset codes interstate rivalries, in parts based on other data sources, including the Military Interstate Disputes (MID) dataset (Palmer et al. 2020), the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) project (Brecher & Wilkenfeld 2000; Brecher, Wilkenfeld, Beardsley, James, & Quinn 2021), and the Handbook of International Rivalries by Thompson and Dreyer (2011). Further, it also relies on a variety of other indicators, including for example the absence of communication and diplomatic relations.

The Peace Data is particularly useful for my analysis. Although the MID and ICB datasets contain more nuanced information on single events, they only code actual militarized action. Yet, a latent security threat in the form of a rivalry might persist even if there was no such incident in a particular year. Thompson and Dreyer (ibid.; see also Thompson 2001) also identify rivalries

between states but argue that more powerful states seldom view weaker ones as rivals. Therefore, their dataset tends to exclude asymmetric rivalries. As these are highly relevant for my analysis, especially with regard to the impact of major power threats, I rely on the Peace Data instead.

Following previous studies (e.g., Kim 2018; Thies 2007), I use binary indicators of whether in a given year a state was exposed to an external threat – or, with regard to Paper B, a threat by a major power. The moderating variable in Paper B – major power status – is also binary, taking the value of 1 for China, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and 0 for all other states.

While I solely focus on interstate rivalries in Paper B, Paper A complements this by an analysis of interstate disputes as identified by the MID data. This is driven by my expectations of a null effect for external threats in general. The use of different data sources here serves the purpose of ensuring that the findings are robust to alternative definitions of external threats.

To measure civil wars, I utilize the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch, Wallensteen, Eriksson, Sollenberg, & Strand 2002; Pettersson et al. 2021). This dataset has been widely used to examine effects of civil wars (e.g., Bove, Elia, & Smith 2017; Gleditsch, Salehyan, & Schultz 2008; Phillips 2015). It defines an intrastate conflict as "a contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both" and "occurs between the government of a state and internal opposition groups" (Gleditsch et al. 2002: 618-619).

The UCDP/PRIO data identifies the thresholds of 25 and 1,000 battle-related deaths per year to differentiate between minor conflicts and full-scale wars. Yet, neither of them is ideal for my analysis. Using the higher threshold might lead to the arbitrary inclusion or exclusion of certain conflict years that fall just above or below 1,000 battle-related deaths. In contrast, the inclusion of all low-level intrastate conflicts that might not have an impact on state support for conventional arms control could conceal the effect.

I therefore follow Phillips (2015) and use a middle-ground approach. More precisely, I include all conflict years above 25 battle-related deaths but only if the threshold of 1,000 battle-related deaths was crossed in at least one year during the respective conflict episode. This ensures that all major civil wars are included in the analysis, while not randomly excluding certain years of a conflict. Similar to the analysis of external threats and following previous studies (e.g., ibid.; Bove et al. 2017; Gleditsch et al. 2008), I use a dummy variable that indicates whether a state was involved in a civil war in a specific year or not.[19]

[19] In this analysis, I exclude the United States. The UCDP/PRIO data codes its conflict against al-Qaeda as a civil war that has crossed the threshold of 1,000 battle-

## 4.3. Empirical Model

Existing studies that have used UNGA voting behavior as their dependent variable have pursued different empirical approaches. Some have assigned numeric values of 0, 0.5, and 1 to the negative, neutral, and positive votes, respectively (e.g., Dreher & Jensen 2013). Others have used an ordinal scale for the three voting options (e.g., Boockmann & Dreher 2011). A third set of research has treated the neutral votes as a "soft" form of opposition and merged them with the opposing votes (e.g., Wang 1999). Moreover, previous studies have varied in their unit of analysis and either used the single vote as their unit of analysis (e.g., Boockmann & Dreher 2011) or aggregated votes to the country-year level (e.g., Dreher & Jensen 2013).

In all three papers, I assign values of 0, 0.5, and 1 to the three voting options. Hence, I run linear regression models because of easier computability and interpretability compared to logit or ordered logit models. Moreover, I run analyses on the vote level. This allows me to introduce resolution-specific control variables, which would not be possible if I aggregated the data to the country-year level.

To avoid biased estimates and poorly fitting models (Clark & Linzer 2015), I need to consider that the data is clustered on three different levels: country, year, and (repeated) resolution.[20] This can be accounted for through fixed effects or random effects (ibid.). In my models, I use random effects on all three levels and run linear mixed effects models. My independent variables mostly vary across, rather than within, countries so that fixed effects would remove a substantial amount of meaningful variation.

The disadvantage of random effects is that there is a higher possibility of omitted variable bias than in fixed effects models (ibid.). To minimize this risk, I introduce a variety of control variables on the country and country-year levels that might confound the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Further, I control for several resolution-specific variables to enhance statistical efficiency and ensure that agenda changes do not bias

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related deaths per year in 2001. This is not only "an untraditional case of internal armed conflict, with most of the violent activity taking place outside of the US" (UCDP 2021), but also a stark outlier. As explained, the United States drastically reduced its arms control support under George W. Bush. Hence, its inclusion might bias the results.

[20] While Bailey et al. (2017) only code resolutions with precisely the same content as repeated, Brazys and Panke (2017) define any resolution with the same title as repeated. I pursue a third approach and designate all resolutions as repeated that have the same or a similar title, are at least partially co-sponsored by the same set of countries, and, taking into account my own coding, are coded into the same category.

the results. While some variables are relevant for all analyses, others are not included in all models. Table 3 summarizes the control variables that the different regression analyses contain.

**Table 3.** List of Control Variables

| Control Variable | Data Source | Paper A | Paper B | Paper C |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level of electoral democracy | Coppedge et al. (2021) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| GDP per capita | UNSD (2020) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Trade openness | Feenstra, Inklaar, and Timmer (2015) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Region | Gleditsch et al. (2002); Pettersson et al. (2021) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| EU member | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Intrastate conflict | Gleditsch et al. (2002); Pettersson et al. (2021) | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Government ideology | Cruz, Keefer, and Scartascini (2021) | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Nuclear state | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| NATO member | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| National material capabilities (CINC) | Singer (1988); Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey (1972) | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Arms producer | SIPRI (2021) | | ✓ | |
| Category | own coding | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Global relevance | own coding | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Salience | Finke (2022a) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Topic | own coding | ✓ | ✓ | |

## 4.4. Content Analysis

Paper C supplements the analysis of voting data with a content analysis of UNGA speeches to investigate the underlying mechanisms that link civil wars to states' positions toward conventional arms control, which is not possible through regression analyses. I use UNGA speeches for this purpose because, as explained earlier, scholars have identified the UNGA as a unique forum for member states to reveal their foreign policy preferences (Kim & Russett 1996: 629) – particularly in the field of arms control (Thakur 2017: 179). Moreover, the vast majority of speeches either summarize states' preferences in general or provide explanations of specific votes. Therefore, UNGA speeches are an ideal data source to complement the analysis of states' voting behavior and

expound the reasons that lead states to support or oppose arms restrictions in the event of a civil war.

To analyze UNGA speeches, I rely on the Agenda Setting in the UN General Assembly (ASUNGA) data (Finke 2022a). This dataset collects raw texts as well as metadata, such as speaker, date, and agenda item, of all speeches and draft resolutions from the UNGA plenary and First Committee between the 49th and 71st sessions. This allows me to restrict the content analysis to speeches that deal with conventional arms control. I first identify all speeches that are either given in the plenary and assigned to an agenda item that belongs to the topic of disarmament or given in the First Committee. I then include only those speeches that mention, first, a draft resolution that I coded as conventional arms control, or second, one of 22 terms related to this topic.[21]

Moreover, I only analyze speeches by states that were involved in a civil war at the time of giving the speech – according to the definition previously introduced. I exclude all other speeches, as the goal of the content analysis is not to detect a net causal effect. Instead, I aim to focus on the underlying reasons that drive the position taking of those states that experience civil wars.

Due to my rather inclusive, dictionary-based approach of identifying speeches on conventional arms control, several of the resulting set of 534 speeches do not substantially deal with states' positions on that subfield. Eighty-two speeches solely cover other topics, for instance nuclear weapons, and six speeches are merely concerned with procedural or administrative matters. My dataset for the content analysis therefore consists of 446 speeches that I manually code.

These speeches deal with a variety of different issues related to conventional arms control. As indicated earlier, around half of the speeches provide a broader overview of states' positions and thus discuss multiple topics. Among the remaining speeches, the largest share discusses limitations on arms trade, SALW, or anti-personnel mines. Yet, states also speak about other issues, such as cluster munitions, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and lethal autonomous weapons. The dataset thus includes statements on various sub-fields of conventional arms control, though with a larger focus on those issues that are most relevant to the states.

[21] This includes the following terms: *conventional*, *small arm*, *light weapon*, *salw*, *landmine*, *land-mine*, *anti-personnel mine*, *ottawa*, *cluster munition*, *arms trade*, *arms transfer*, *transfer of weapons*, *arms traffic*, *drone*, *lethal autonomous*, *unmanned aerial*, *battle tank*, *battle ship*, *manpads*, *combat aircraft*, *ieds*, and *improvised explosive device*.

**Table 4.** Number of Speeches by States Involved in Civil Wars

| Country | Time period of civil war | Speeches |
|---|---|---|
| India | 1994-2016 | 73 |
| Algeria | 1994-2016 | 42 |
| Pakistan | 2007-2016 | 38 |
| Colombia | 1994-2016 | 37 |
| Turkey | 1994-2016 | 34 |
| Sudan | 1994-2016 | 31 |
| Philippines | 1994-2016 | 28 |
| Sri Lanka | 1994-2001, 2005-2009 | 23 |
| Nepal | 1996-2006 | 18 |
| Russia | 1994-1996, 1999-2007 | 18 |
| Iraq | 2004-2016 | 13 |
| Uganda | 1994-2011 | 12 |
| Afghanistan | 1994-2016 | 11 |
| Syria | 2011-2016 | 11 |
| Nigeria | 2011-2016 | 10 |
| Israel | 1994-1996, 2014 | 9 |
| Peru | 1994-1999 | 7 |
| Libya | 2011, 2015-2016 | 6 |
| Yemen | 1994, 2009-2016 | 6 |
| Congo (Dem. Rep.) | 1996-2001, 2011-2014, 2016 | 5 |
| Sierra Leone | 1994-2001 | 4 |
| Ukraine | 2014-2016 | 3 |
| Angola | 1994-1995, 1998-2002 | 2 |
| Cambodia | 1994-1998 | 2 |
| Burundi | 1994-2006 | 1 |
| Liberia | 2000-2003 | 1 |
| Somalia | 1994-1996, 2006-2016 | 1 |
| Azerbaijan | 1994 | 0 |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina | 1994-1995 | 0 |
| Chad | 1994, 1997-2003, 2005-2010 | 0 |
| Congo (Republic) | 1997-1999 | 0 |
| Rwanda | 1994, 1996-2002, 2009-2012 | 0 |
| South Sudan | 2011-2016 | 0 |
| Tajikistan | 1994-1998 | 0 |
| Yugoslavia | 1998-1999 | 0 |

While there are 35 countries with civil wars between 1994 and 2016, eight of them do not speak on conventional arms control at all during that period – at least not while their civil conflicts are active (see Table 4). In contrast to these eight states, the dataset contains 73 speeches by Indian representatives. While this large number is partially driven by the fact that India experiences civil wars throughout the entire observation period, it also stems from an average of 3.17 speeches per year, which is still much higher than the mean value of 1.17. With 3.80 speeches per conflict year, only Pakistan speaks even more frequently on conventional arms control than India.

The number of speeches per country varies considerably, as states mostly choose themselves if they want to speak and what to speak about. This might be contingent on the importance they attach to the topic of conventional arms control. Yet, other factors could also play a role, for example their capabilities to spend resources on international negotiations given that they are involved in costly armed conflicts. Hence, the number of speeches is substantially correlated with states' CINC scores (0.53) (Singer 1988; Singer et al. 1972), GDP per capita (0.35) (UNSD 2020), and state fragility (-0.48) (Marshall & Elzinga-Marshall 2018).[22] This implies that more powerful, richer, and less fragile states give more speeches – they arguably have the capacity to deploy more personnel to represent their positions in the UNGA. The results of the content analysis should thus be interpreted with caution, as some states are overrepresented, while others do not speak at all. Nevertheless, UNGA speeches constitute a valuable data source to investigate the underlying motives for states' position taking on restrictive measures in the event of a civil conflict.

To do so, I employ a manual coding procedure. It consists of four steps, where each of them is equivalent to coding one particular variable (see Table 5 for a summary). The four variables are largely independent from each other; that is, all indicators are coded for every speech, and the coding of one variable does not affect the other ones.

I first code whether a speech contains statements on the support or non-support of conventional arms control. This means for example that a state announces why it has voted in favor of a certain resolution or not. It also contains broader statements such as calls for more or less far-reaching measures in a certain field and announcements that are concerned with certain treaties and agreements. The two options are not mutually exclusive, as states sometimes embrace one and oppose another instrument in the same speech, or announce their support for specific measures but only with constraints. For instance, a state might be in favor of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

[22] The latter number is negative as the State Fragility Index assigns higher values to more fragile states.

but against the Ottawa Treaty or support limitations on arms exports while rejecting restrictions on state-to-state transfers. Hence, every speech is coded as being in favor of arms control, against it, or both.

**Table 5.** Coding of UNGA Speeches

| Variable | Coding |
|---|---|
| Support and non-support | 1: Non-support |
| | 2: Support |
| | 3: Both |
| References to civil war | 0: No |
| | 1: Yes |
| References to costs and benefits | 1: Reference to costs |
| | 2: Reference to benefits |
| | 3: Both |
| Alternative explanations | 0: No |
| | 1: Yes |

The second step is the binary coding of whether states refer to the ongoing civil war to substantiate their position taking or not. This category includes, but is not limited to, explicit mentions of an armed conflict or war to underline why a state supports or rejects restrictions to conventional armament. Yet, many states are hesitant to clearly state that they are experiencing an intrastate conflict. Therefore, I also code statements that merely address certain dynamics or incidents related to a civil war. For instance, states might justify their position through the presence of terrorist groups within their borders. Others mention the extensive use of certain weapons such as landmines in their country. In the case of an internationalized intrastate conflict, states might even speak of an act of foreign aggression instead of an intrastate conflict. Hence, this variable codes not only explicit but also implicit references to a civil war.

Third, I identify whether the state mentions the costs and benefits of conventional arms control expounded in my theoretical framework. This means that the speech criticizes the restriction of the state's own demand for armament, or it praises conventional arms control for the limitation of non-state actors' access to weapons and the containment of the detrimental effects of armed conflicts. As indicated earlier, I code these categories independent of references to the state's own civil war. For example, states might explain that

they oppose a treaty due to its impact on their access to arms, while not elaborating on the origin of their demand for armament. In addition, I code this variable regardless of states' announcements of their support and non-support for arms restrictions, although there is naturally a substantial overlap with the first variable. In certain instances, for example, states might announce that they vote against a resolution while acknowledging the humanitarian concerns related to the respective measure. Similar to the first variable, this category can take three values: reference to costs, to benefits, or both.

Finally, I aim to find out whether the postulated cost-benefit analysis is indeed driving the relationship between civil wars and support for conventional arms control. For this reason, I code alternative explanations of the links between the two variables. This implies that I do not include all references to potential drivers of states' position taking. For instance, a major arms exporter might oppose a non-proliferation regime for economic reasons. Yet, this argument holds regardless of whether this state is involved in an intrastate conflict or not. Therefore, I only code those statements that potentially explain an empirical association between civil wars and states' arms control support but are unrelated to my own theoretical framework.

In sum, the content analysis allows me to investigate the relationship between civil wars and state support for conventional arms control beyond a statistical association in the aggregate. It enables me to not only further analyze the role of the costs and benefits of conventional arms control induced by civil conflicts but also alternative pathways that link intrastate conflicts to states' position taking in this field. It is therefore a useful addition to the analysis of UNGA votes.

## 4.5. Summary

This chapter expounded my data and empirical method, and in particular two new data sources, to examine the impact of different types of threats on state support for arms control. First, I introduced a novel approach to measure my main dependent variable: state support for arms control. It combines UNGA voting records with manual coding of 1,178 resolutions adopted in the post-Cold War period to create the first comprehensive measure of this variable that not only covers all countries but also variation over time.

I demonstrated that this indicator validly captures the variable of interest and therefore allows for valuable insights into states' arms control preferences. It identifies positions toward arms control in its entirety as well as specific subfields. Thus, my measure provides a useful tool for quantitative studies on the determinants of states' positions toward arms control. This encompasses – but is not limited to – regression analyses to investigate the effect of

external threats as well as major power threats on overall arms control support and of civil wars on support for conventional arms control.

To dig deeper into the latter relationship, I additionally conduct a content analysis of 446 UNGA speeches on conventional arms control held by states involved in intrastate conflicts. I illustrate how this data source complements the analysis of UNGA voting. Instead of an empirical association in the aggregate, I investigate the underlying mechanisms that link civil wars to states' position taking in the field of conventional arms restrictions. Hence, this data source sheds new light on the motives that are decisive for states' position taking and enables an in-depth examination of my theoretical arguments. The next chapter expounds the empirical findings of the different regression analyses as well as the content analysis.

# Chapter 5: Empirical Analysis

This chapter presents the main findings from the three papers. In Paper A, I examine the association between external threats – in the form of interstate rivalries and interstate disputes – and support for arms control. Paper B also investigates interstate rivalries, but takes into account the rivaling states' major power status in that regard. While the first two papers solely focus on the analysis of UNGA voting data, Paper C combines this approach with a content analysis of UNGA speeches to analyze the relationship between civil wars and support for conventional arms control.[23]

The findings are in line with my theoretical expectations. While I do not find any significant association between external threats and states' positions toward arms control, major power threats are negatively related to arms control support, but only among less powerful states. In contrast, I find a significant and positive relationship between civil wars and support for conventional arms control. The content analysis further illustrates that this is driven by states' recognition of the benefits of restrictive measures, although they consider the costs of limiting their own access to arms.

## 5.1. External Threats and Support for Arms Control (Paper A)

I postulated that an external threat raises the costs as well as the benefits of arms control. Accordingly, I do not expect any effect of external threats on arms control support in the aggregate. To investigate this relationship empirically, I analyze latent hostile relationships as well as actual militarized action. I first focus on interstate rivalries as identified by the Peace Data before I turn to interstate disputes, measured through the MID dataset. The analysis (see Table 6) shows no significant relationship between interstate rivalries and state support for arms control. In line with my argument, regression results yield a very small coefficient of -0.0009 that is clearly insignificant ($p \approx 0.56$).

[23] Here I primarily focus on the main models. A detailed description of the various robustness checks can be found in the three papers.

**Table 6.** Regression Analysis (Paper A)

| | (1) | (2) |
|---|---|---|
| | Peace Data | MID |
| Interstate rivalry | -0.001 (0.002) | |
| Interstate dispute | | 0.000 (0.001) |
| Democracy | 0.010 (0.004)* | 0.010 (0.004)* |
| GDP per capita (logged) | 0.001 (0.001) | 0.001 (0.001) |
| Trade openness (logged) | 0.002 (0.002) | 0.002 (0.002) |
| CINC (logged) | 0.000 (0.001) | 0.000 (0.001) |
| Intrastate conflict | -0.005 (0.002)** | -0.005 (0.002)** |
| Nuclear state | -0.057 (0.005)*** | -0.058 (0.005)*** |
| EU member | -0.003 (0.003) | -0.003 (0.003) |
| NATO member | -0.012 (0.003)*** | -0.012 (0.003)*** |
| Salience (logged) | -0.003 (0.001)** | -0.003 (0.001)** |
| Global relevance | -0.018 (0.016) | -0.018 (0.016) |
| Gov. ideology dummies | ✓ | ✓ |
| Regional dummies | ✓ | ✓ |
| Topic dummies | ✓ | ✓ |
| Category dummies | ✓ | ✓ |
| Observations | 135,868 | 135,868 |
| Country-clusters | 169 | 169 |
| Resolution-clusters | 114 | 114 |
| Year-clusters | 19 | 19 |

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; †p < 0.1.

To ensure that this null finding is not solely driven by the operationalization of external threats, I conduct a second analysis. I replace the independent variable with a dummy variable that indicates whether a state was involved in an interstate dispute in a given year according to the MID dataset. This analysis produces similar results: With a value of 0.0004, the regression coefficient is even smaller than for interstate rivalries and not distinguishable from 0 ($p \approx$

0.73). The insignificant results are robust across a variety of model specifications, including for instance alternative measures of external threat, a fixed effects model, and the exclusion and inclusion of different control variables.

While this speaks in favor of my theoretical argument, Rainey (2014) points out that an insignificant coefficient is not sufficient to argue for a true null finding. He suggests to set a threshold for a meaningful effect and examine whether 90% confidence intervals include this value. This rules out that insignificant results are driven by the lack of statistical power rather than the absence of an actual effect.

I therefore follow his approach and define a coefficient of -0.005 as meaningful. This effect size implies that a state shifts to a more negative vote in one out of 100 resolutions; that is, it casts a negative instead of a neutral vote or a neutral instead of a positive vote. While this appears to be a rather small coefficient, it corresponds to an average downgrade of five or six positions in the ranking on the country level. This is because all resolutions enjoy large majorities, and many are even adopted by consensus. As explained earlier, I analyze whether the 90% confidence intervals of the two independent variables overlap with an effect size of -0.005. This is neither the case for interstate rivalries (-0.004; 0.002) nor for interstate disputes (-0.002; 0.002). Accordingly, the regression results speak in favor of a true null finding and against a lack of statistical power.

This supports my theoretical argument. An external threat simultaneously increases the costs and benefits of arms control. On the one hand, arms control restricts the higher demand for arms to deter or fight the adversary state. On the other hand, restrictive measures apply not only for the threatened state but also limit the rival's armament. Taken together, these mechanisms cancel out each other, which leads to the null findings. However, the regression results might indicate instead that external threats simply do not affect states' positions toward arms control. For this reason, the next section illustrates how the rivaling states' major power status shapes the relationship between external threats and arms control support, so that one mechanism outweighs the other.

## 5.2. Major Power Threats and Support for Arms Control (Paper B)

I argued in Chapter 3 that the impact of external threats on state support for arms control depends on the status of the two states threatening each other. More precisely, I argued that a threat by a major power should lead to lower levels of arms control support, yet only among non-major powers. Nevertheless, I first assess the main effect of major power threats before I introduce the

threatened state's status as a moderating variable (see Table 7). This yields a highly significant ($p < 0.01$) coefficient of -0.009. This implies a negative vote shift on around two of 100 resolutions, indicating that states involved in a rivalry with a major power are less supportive of arms control than other states.

As a next step, I include an interaction term between major power threats and major power status to assess whether the main effect is, as expected, solely driven by non-major powers or whether it applies to all states regardless of their own power status. The regression model shows an interaction effect of 0.02 that is significant at the 5% level. Among non-major powers, the relationship between major power threats and support for arms control is negative and significant ($p < 0.001$) with an effect size of -0.01. In contrast, the association is insignificant among major powers ($p \approx 0.73$), though the coefficient of 0.01 speaks in favor, if at all, of a positive rather than a negative relationship. Although the interaction term is not quite significant in every single robustness test, all of them yield a significant and negative coefficient for non-major powers but not for major powers.

I therefore argue that the analysis supports the theoretical expectations. Major power threats are negatively related to non-major powers' arms control support but unrelated to major powers' positions toward arms control. This indicates that major powers have the abilities to shape arms control negotiations in their own favor and circumvent severe restrictions on their own armament. For this reason, the added costs of arms control outweigh the benefits for a less powerful state that is threatened by a major power. In contrast, a major power can counterbalance another one's attempts to avoid arms restrictions so that the costs and benefits of cooperative measures increase to similar degrees when two major powers are involved in a rivalry with each other.

To further investigate whether major powers' abilities to tilt agreements in their favor is indeed driving the findings, I conduct an additional analysis with an alternative independent variable. I assess the relationship between non-major power threats – instead of major power threats – on support for arms control. This variable should not affect other non-major powers' positions, because it raises the costs and benefits of arms control for them to similar degrees. In contrast, it should be positively related to arms control support among major powers, who benefit from more severe restrictions on their less powerful rivals' armament. The analysis supports this notion. It yields a significant interaction term, which is driven by a positive and significant coefficient for the group of major powers. In contrast, non-major power threats are not significantly related to arms control support among other non-major powers.

**Table 7.** Regression Analysis (Paper B)

| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Main effect | Interaction effect | Non-MP threat |
| Rivalry with major power (MP) | -0.009 (0.003)** | -0.010 (0.003)*** | |
| Rivalry with non-MP | | | -0.001 (0.002) |
| MP status | 0.017 (0.006)** | 0.004 (0.009) | -0.010 (0.007) |
| Rivalry with MP*MP status | | 0.020 (0.010)* | |
| Rivalry with Non-MP*MP status | | | 0.034 (0.006)*** |
| Democracy | 0.012 (0.004)** | 0.012 (0.004)** | 0.015 (0.004)*** |
| GDP per capita (logged) | -0.000 (0.001) | -0.000 (0.001) | -0.000 (0.001) |
| Trade openness (logged) | 0.002 (0.001) | 0.002 (0.001) | 0.002 (0.001) |
| Intrastate conflict | -0.003 (0.002)* | -0.003 (0.002)* | -0.003 (0.002)* |
| EU member | -0.005 (0.003)† | -0.005 (0.003) | -0.005 (0.003) |
| NATO member | -0.014 (0.003)*** | -0.014 (0.003)*** | -0.014 (0.003)*** |
| Nuclear state | -0.068 (0.005)*** | -0.069 (0.005)*** | -0.010 (0.007) |
| Arms producer | 0.004 (0.003) | 0.004 (0.003) | -0.071 (0.005)*** |
| Salience (logged) | -0.005 (0.001)*** | -0.005 (0.001)*** | -0.005 (0.001)*** |
| Global relevance | -0.021 (0.016) | -0.021 (0.016) | -0.021 (0.016) |
| Gov. ideology dummies | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Regional dummies | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Topic dummies | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Category dummies | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Observations | 159,423 | 159,423 | |
| Country-clusters | 169 | 169 | |
| Resolution-clusters | 119 | 119 | |
| Year-clusters | 22 | 22 | |

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: $^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{\dagger}p < 0.1$.

Furthermore, Paper B contains two models that replace the independent variable with indicators of threats by nuclear states and by arms-producing states, respectively.[24] My theoretical argument rests on the assumption that

[24] These models also replace the moderating variable accordingly. By arms producing states, I refer to those that have been listed at least once as hosts of one or more of

major powers hold an exceptional status in international negotiations that is not solely driven by their possession of the majority of nuclear and conventional arms. If this holds true, running regression analyses with these variables should lead to smaller interaction effects than in the main model. This is indeed the case. The interaction effect is only significant in the nuclear model and, compared to the main analysis, substantially smaller in both models. Hence, these additional analyses are in line with the theoretical expectations.

This yields further support for my argument that the significant negative relationship between major power threats and non-major powers' arms control support is induced by major powers' abilities to shape arms control agreements, so that these reflect their own preferences. For this reason, less powerful states are more severely affected by arms restrictions than their major power rivals, which creates incentives to oppose arms control. As this argument only applies to non-major powers, but not to major powers facing equally powerful rivals, major power status significantly moderates the association between major power threats and support for arms control.

## 5.3. Civil Wars and Support for Conventional Arms Control (Paper C)

While the first two papers are concerned with external threats, I now turn to threats from within the state and examine the impact of civil wars on state support for conventional arms control. I expect a positive association between these two variables because the benefits of cooperation in the context of a civil conflict are not limited to the restriction of rebels' armament for strategic reasons. In addition, conventional arms control holds the potential to curb the negative consequences of armed violence.

As explained earlier, my analysis of the relationship between intrastate conflicts and states' arms control support is twofold. While Paper C also contains a regression analysis of UNGA voting behavior, it adds a content analysis of UNGA speeches to investigate the mechanisms that drive the empirical association between civil wars and states' position taking on cooperative measures. In the following, I will describe the empirical results of both analyses.

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the top 100 public or private arms companies according to the SIPRI Arms Industry Database (SIPRI 2021).

### 5.3.1. Regression Analysis

I first examine the relationship between intrastate conflicts and support for conventional arms control in the aggregate by conducting a regression analysis. As Table 8 illustrates, this shows a positive and significant ($p < 0.01$) coefficient of 0.008. Hence, states involved in a civil war vote more favorable of arms control than other states in approximately three out of the 193 resolutions that deal with conventional arms control. This might not appear to be a large effect size, but as explained earlier, the high share of positive votes makes every neutral and negative vote a strong signal.

**Table 8.** Regression Analysis (Paper C)

| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Conventional | All topics | Non-conventional |
| Civil war | 0.008 (0.003)** | 0.000 (0.002) | -0.002 (0.003) |
| Democracy | 0.039 (0.006)*** | 0.019 (0.004)*** | 0.013 (0.005)** |
| GDP per capita (logged) | -0.000 (0.001) | 0.000 (0.001) | 0.001 (0.001) |
| Trade openness (logged) | 0.004 (0.002)† | 0.003 (0.002) | 0.003 (0.002) |
| CINC (logged) | -0.005 (0.001)*** | -0.001 (0.001) | 0.000 (0.001) |
| EU member | -0.001 (0.003) | -0.017 (0.002)*** | -0.021 (0.003)*** |
| Salience (logged) | 0.002 (0.001)† | -0.004 (0.001)*** | -0.005 (0.001)*** |
| Global relevance | -0.023 (0.023) | | |
| Regional dummies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Category dummies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Observations | 30,702 | 169,678 | 138,976 |
| Country-clusters | 171 | 171 | 171 |
| Year-clusters | 23 | 120 | 101 |
| Resolution-clusters | 19 | 23 | 23 |

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$; †$p < 0.1$.

The regression results thus speak in favor of the idea that the added benefits of conventional arms control outweigh the costs in the event of an intrastate conflict. While cooperative measures restrict states more heavily than rebel groups, they can help to contain the negative consequences of excessive armament on both sides of a civil war, be it on the economy, the environment, or

on conflict duration and lethality. A civil conflict thus creates additional incentives for the concerned state to support conventional arms control, leading to the positive relationship between the two variables.

As postulated in Chapter 3, my argument only applies to *conventional* arms control. For this reason, I conduct two additional analyses that do not limit the dependent variable to votes on this subfield. The first model includes the entire set of votes on arms control, whereas the second one excludes all votes on conventional weapons. If my theoretical argument holds true and the empirical finding is driven by the added benefits of arms restrictions induced by civil wars, these analyses should not reproduce the significant and positive relationship. In line with this, the coefficients for the civil war dummy remain very small (0.0002; -0.0016) and insignificant ($p \approx 0.94$; $p \approx 0.52$) in both models.

Furthermore, while the vast majority of robustness checks described in Paper C confirm the positive association between intrastate conflicts and state support for conventional arms control, they suggest that it does not hold across all regions. States in the Middle East are *less* supportive when involved in a civil conflict. This could be driven by different regional characteristics, such as the unstable security situation or a large degree of foreign interference in civil wars. Either way, it might indicate that in line with my arguments, the benefits of arms restrictions outweigh the costs in the aggregate but that states still consider the drawbacks of limiting their own armament.

Accordingly, the first part of the empirical analysis on civil wars and support for conventional arms control lends support to the notion that states weigh the benefits of cooperation higher than the costs when they experience an intrastate conflict. Yet, the regression analysis can substantiate neither whether these benefits are truly driving the positive association, nor whether states consider the costs of arms control when forming their positions. The content analysis, which I will describe in the next section, therefore serves the purpose of digging deeper into the mechanisms that connect civil wars to states' arms control preferences.

### 5.3.2. Content Analysis

The content analysis includes 446 speeches by states involved in civil wars. The first step is to examine how many of these speeches contain statements of states' support and non-support for conventional arms restrictions. While states speak in favor of arms control in 389 speeches (87.2%), they oppose

cooperative measures in 175 speeches (39.2%).[25] Although these figures suggest that states mostly embrace conventional arms control, they should not be overinterpreted. As explained earlier, states self-select into speaking, which implies that they might focus either on announcing that they strongly support certain measures or on explaining why they do not support others.

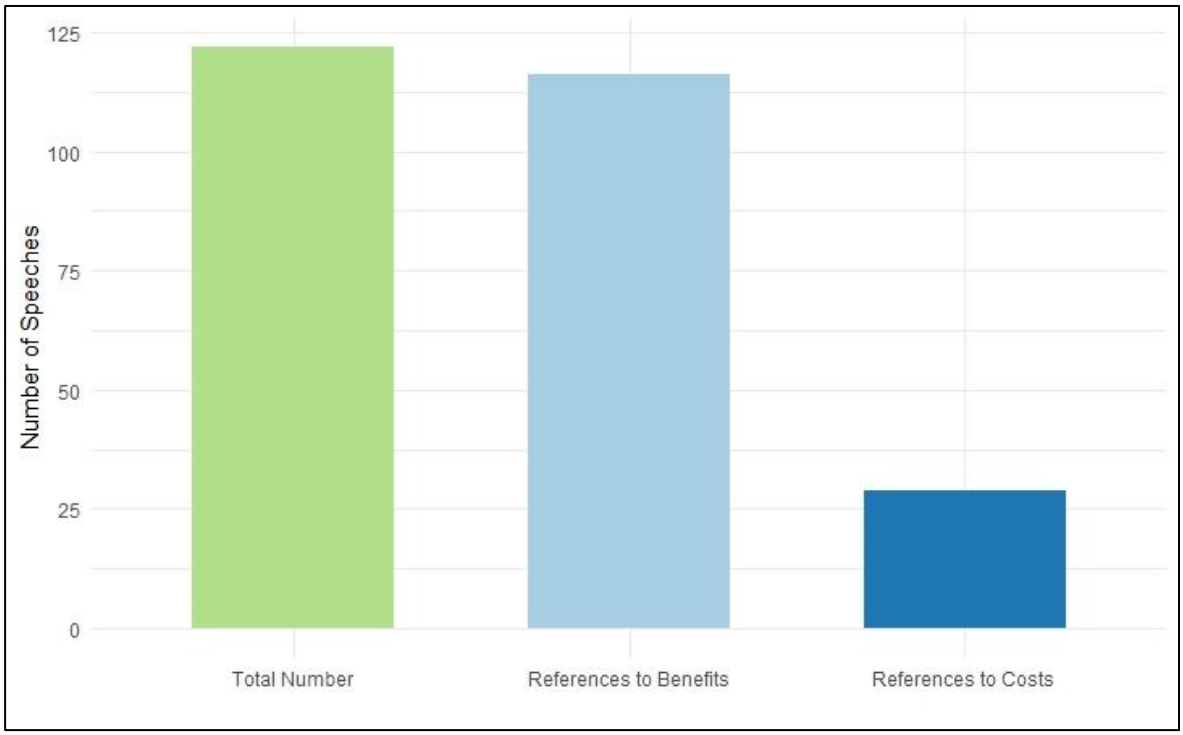
I therefore turn to the analysis of the underlying reasons that explain states' support for and opposition to arms control – starting with references to the ongoing civil wars. The coding of this category shows that states mention their civil conflicts, at least implicitly, in 122 speeches (27.4%) in order to justify their positions. This is a substantial number, especially given that many speeches merely consist of very few sentences that do not go into detail, which at the very least implies that civil wars play a role in states' considerations on conventional arms control.

As a next step, I solely focus on these 122 speeches to investigate the third variable that codes whether states refer to the costs and benefits of arms control. This is because I can clearly attribute these references to the civil wars in this subset, which is not necessarily the case for the remaining speeches. For instance, several states such as India and Pakistan are not only involved in intrastate conflicts but also in interstate rivalries, which might be causing the added costs and benefits.

Among the 122 speeches, 116 (95.1%) mention the virtues of limiting conventional armament (see Figure 10). First, states argue in favor of arms control because it limits non-state actors' armament. For instance, Sudan has named terrorist groups' use of landmines as a reason for its embrace of the Ottawa Treaty (UNGA 1996d: 10). Colombia and Iraq, among others, have announced their support for efforts to contain the illicit arms trade, as these hold the potential to cut transfers to the rebels within their countries (UNGA 2005: 24; 2013b: 7-9). Even Syria has pushed for measures to regulate "the transfer of small arms and light weapons to terrorist groups, non-State parties and illegitimate armed groups and mercenaries" (UNGA 2012: 5).

[25] Speeches that are coded as "both" are included in both numbers.

**Figure 10.** Content of Speeches That Refer to the Countries' Civil Wars




Second, states acknowledge the potential of arms limitations to contain the negative consequences of armed violence. In this regard, an Afghan representative has demanded measures against IEDs because these "kill thousands every year, inflict grievous physical injuries, cause dire psychological harm and spread fear and disruption" (UNGA 2015b: 22). Similarly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has emphasized the need to curb the SALW trade's detrimental effects on its development (UNGA 2011: 18-20), and Uganda has announced its support for the CCM due to the impact of cluster munitions on its civilian population (UNGA 2010b: 9).

Moreover, states oftentimes combine both narratives and demand restrictions to curb the negative consequences of non-state actors' armament. For example, Sri Lanka has argued that rebels' use of landmines has "devastating results" (UNGA 1996c: 10) for its people, while Sudan has pointed toward the destruction of "people and resources" (UNGA 1996a: 18) caused by arms transfers to rebel groups. This illustrates that in line with my theoretical argument, states acknowledge the added benefits of conventional arms control resulting from civil conflicts.

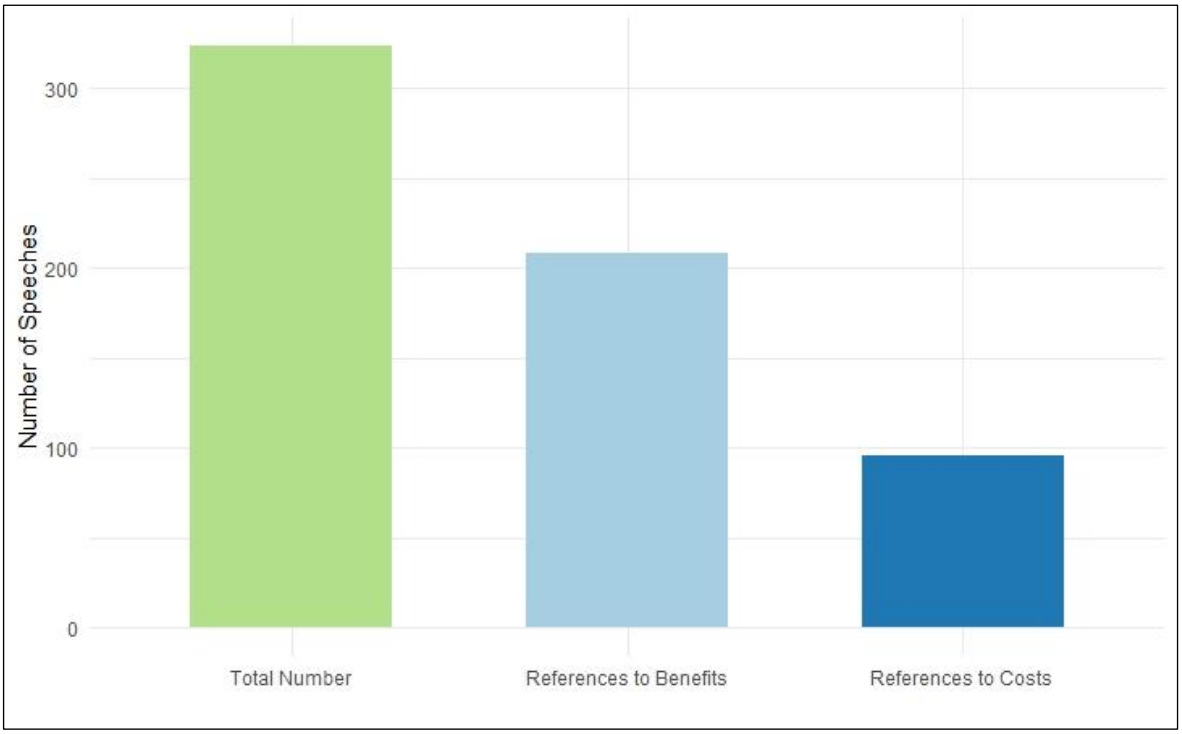
While almost all of the 122 speeches refer to these benefits, a smaller, yet still substantial number of 29 speeches (23.8%) mentions the costs of arms control; that is, it limits the state's own armament. Delegations from Colombia and India have referred to their right to self-defense in order to argue against restrictions on arms transfers between sovereign states (UNGA 2010a; 2013b:

7-8) – although Colombia has still supported the ATT (UNGA 2013b: 7-8). In a similar vein, Sri Lanka has criticized the moratorium on exports of anti-personnel mines, claiming that it had "cut off the supplies to Government forces" (UNGA 1996c: 10).

Hence, states consider the benefits as well as the costs of arms control in the event of a civil war. In fact, several speeches explicitly refer to this tradeoff. For instance, the DRC announced with regard to the Second Congo War: "If we arm ourselves further, social progress, which is the major goal of any responsible Government, will suffer. However, failing to arm ourselves further will mean exposing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our State vulnerable to danger" (UNGA 1998: 4).

Next, I turn to the remaining 324 speeches that do not refer to the active civil wars (see Figure 11). These also discuss the costs and benefits of arms restrictions frequently. While the number of references to the virtues of arms control is somewhat lower (64.2%) than in the other subset, an even higher share of speeches mentions the drawbacks of restricting the states' own access to weapons (29.6%). Across all 446 speeches, regardless of whether they mention the ongoing civil war or not, 72.6% refer to the benefits, and 28.0% refer to the costs of arms control. As explained earlier, not all of these considerations are necessarily linked to intrastate conflicts. Nevertheless, these figures yield additional support for the notion that states' positions are, at least to a certain degree, driven by the postulated cost-benefit analysis.

**Figure 11.** Content of Speeches That Do Not Refer to the Countries' Civil Wars



In line with this, states' voting behavior largely corresponds with the content of their speeches. Calculating the ratio of every state's references to the benefits versus the costs of restrictive measures, and comparing it to their support for conventional arms control yields a positive correlation of 0.49. This can be regarded as quite substantial, considering that the number as well as the topic of speeches vary considerably across states. States that put more emphasis on the virtues rather than the drawbacks of cooperation are thus more likely to vote in favor of conventional arms control.

As a final step, I analyze the coding of the last variable that examines different reasons that potentially explain the link between civil wars to state support for conventional arms control. Evidence of such alternative explanations is scarce, with only 14 speeches (3.1%) mentioning other motives for their position taking that might be related to the states' intrastate conflicts. Four states – India, Sudan, Syria, and Turkey – have argued against restrictive measures because these do not sufficiently apply to non-state actors (e.g., UNGA 1995b: 11; 1996a: 6-9; 2013c: 15-16; UNGA 2015a: 10-12). Hence, an alleged demand for more rather than less arms control causes these states' opposition to arms control. However, this implies the rejection of arms control instruments that primarily apply to states, which in fact aligns well with my theoretical argument.

In addition, the Afghan and Russian delegations have put forward that arms control induces high administrative and economic costs when being involved in an intrastate conflict (e.g., UNGA 1995a: 10-11; 1996b: 12-14). While Afghanistan has nevertheless not opposed any measures, Russia has rejected a mine ban due to the lack of affordable and "adequate substitutes" (UNGA 1996b: 13) to landmines. Russian representatives have argued that the government cannot give up this type of weapons, because it needs to defend its territory against terrorist groups (ibid.). This argument thus also points to the increased costs in the context of a civil war.

Moreover, these 14 speeches only provide alternative explanations for a negative, but not for a positive relationship between civil wars and arms control support. Accordingly, the content analysis supports my theoretical argument. It suggests that states acknowledge the added benefits of arms control in the context of a civil war; that is, it restricts rebel groups' armament and helps to curb the negative effects of armed violence. I argue that this drives the positive association between civil conflicts and support for conventional arms control.

The content analysis further illustrates that despite the regression results, states not only consider the advantages but also the drawbacks of arms restrictions. A number of states are opposed to measures that hamper their own armament and thus limit their opportunities to fight their internal opponents.

Nevertheless, the regression analysis indicates that the benefits outweigh these costs in the aggregate.

## 5.4. Summary

My empirical findings, which I presented in this chapter, support my theoretical arguments. Regression analyses of UNGA voting data show that external threats in the form of interstate rivalries and disputes are not significantly related to state support for arms control. I argue that this is because an external threat leads to an increased demand for armament as well as the need to limit the adversary state's access to arms. The null findings are therefore induced by two opposing mechanisms that cancel each other out in the aggregate. In contrast, the association between major power threats and arms control support is negative and significant, though only among non-major powers. This arguably reflects major powers' capability to tilt arms control agreements in their own favor, so that these are more costly than beneficial for less powerful states that face a major power rival.

With regard to internal threats, I find a positive relationship between civil wars and support for conventional arms control. I argue that the added benefits of conventional arms restrictions outweigh the costs in the event of a civil war because they are not limited to strategic considerations: Constraining the availability of conventional weapons can lead to shorter and less deadly conflicts and reduce the detrimental consequences on the economy, the environment, and beyond. The content analysis of UNGA speeches supports this view. It illustrates that states that are involved in civil wars consider not only the drawbacks of imposing restrictions on their own armament but also acknowledge these virtues of conventional arms control.

In sum, this demonstrates that security threats create incentives to embrace and also to oppose arms control, as they simultaneously increase the costs and the benefits of cooperation. However, the empirical analysis comes with a number of limitations, which I will discuss in the following chapter.

# Chapter 6: Discussion

While the empirical analysis largely confirms my theoretical expectations, several limitations should be taken into account in order to answer the research question. These concern, first, the central concepts of this dissertation: arms control, external as well as internal threats, and major powers. In particular, I scrutinize the idea of arms control as an umbrella term that encompasses all kinds of measures that regulate armament. Moreover, I discuss my focus on interstate rivalries and civil wars as external and internal threats and my definition of major power status that clearly separates seven states from the others. Second, I take a critical look at my theoretical framework, and the underlying assumptions of arms control as an effective tool and of states as rational, unitary, independent actors. Finally, I describe several caveats concerning my data sources and empirical methods. This includes the use of observational data, particularly UNGA voting and speeches, and of regression techniques that investigate the relationship between security threats and arms control support in the aggregate. In the following, I expound these limitations and discuss to what extent they might affect the central arguments of this dissertation.

## 6.1. Central Concepts

As a first step, it is necessary to discuss four of the central concepts of this dissertation. This includes arms control, external and internal threats, and major powers. I define arms control in a very broad sense that includes any types of agreements that restrict armament. This means, first, that my definition of arms control encompasses disarmament measures, despite the fact that there was a sharp distinction between these terms during the Cold War. Arms control laid "an emphasis on regulation on control, as opposed to the reduction, elimination or abolition of weapons" (Krause 2011: 30).

Yet, as parts of this division have eroded (ibid.), the two terms are often used interchangeably today – particularly in the UN context (Goldblat 2002: 3). Several arms control instruments, such as the Ottawa Treaty or the CCM, also aim at disarmament (Krause 2011: 30), so that a clear distinction is not possible anymore. Moreover, I argue that my theoretical arguments apply to any kind of arms limitations, regardless of whether they merely regulate armament or aim at the explicit reduction of arms. Both types of agreements restrict the threatened state as well as its adversary and thus entail costs and benefits in the event of a security threat. In line with this, Gray (1992) repeatedly refers to disarmament measures to discuss the arms control paradox. I

therefore argue that distinguishing between arms control and disarmament would be neither useful nor practical.

The broad definition of arms control employed here also implies that I include a variety of different measures, dealing not only with nuclear weapons, CBW, or conventional weapons, but for instance also with cyber or space armament. One might argue that it is not a meaningful endeavor to lump all of these types of restrictions together in order to study support for arms control in its entirety – and how it is affected by different kinds of security threats. For this reason, Paper A includes a robustness check that distinguishes between nuclear and non-nuclear votes, and Paper C solely focuses on conventional arms control. Yet, these are arguably still rather broad categories. The ATT is a very different measure than the Ottawa Treaty or the CCM. States oftentimes support one agreement but oppose another one. In other words, treating state support for arms control as one variable certainly simplifies states' positions toward arms control.

However, a certain degree of simplification is inevitable if one aims to systematically study states' foreign policy positions (see, e.g., Voeten 2000: 213-214). On top of that, I argue that a distinction between different types of arms control would only be meaningful if one expected different causal effects depending on the measure under consideration. This is the case with regard to civil wars, but not external threats and major power threats: Gray (1992) argues that the arms control paradox should apply to any kind of arms control and uses examples of nuclear as well as conventional arms control. Hence, I focus on conventional arms control in Paper C but do not distinguish between different types of restrictions in the first two papers.

Turning to my independent variables, I focus on two types of threats: interstate rivalries and intrastate conflicts. While I argued previously that these are the most relevant security threats with regard to arms control, this implies that I study latent hostile relationships in Papers A and B but actual armed conflict in Paper C. In other words, I examine different types of external and internal threats, which raises the question of the degree to which these can be compared to each other.

As indicated earlier, theorists of international relations have focused on threat perceptions rather than objective threat (e.g., Jervis 1978). I argue that another state can be perceived as a threat even if no militarized action takes place, as most states possess an army and a significant number of lethal weapons regardless of whether they are engaged in armed conflict or not. For this reason, existing studies of external threats and arms control have engaged with interstate rivalries in their lines of argumentation (e.g., Gray 1992; Sagan 1996). In contrast, opposition groups that arm themselves usually use these weapons to fight the government. Hence, the different characteristics of states

and non-state actors lead to the focus on interstate rivalries and civil wars in this dissertation. I argue that these different types of objective threats should induce similar threat perceptions.

Finally, it is necessary to briefly discuss my conceptualization of major powers. This includes two aspects. First, one might argue that treating major power status as a binary variable rather than using a continuous definition of power simplifies this concept and leads to a loss of information. I argue that this is not the case. As expounded previously, I presume that major powers hold an exceptional status in international negotiations that sharply distinguishes them from other states. Accordingly, my argument solely holds for rivalries between major powers and non-major powers and not for more or less powerful states in general.

This leads to the question of which countries should be regarded as major powers. Instead of the seven states that I define as major powers, some scholars have restricted this list to the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P5) (e.g., Meijer, Béraud-Sudreau, Holtom, & Uttley 2018). Others have for instance added Italy (e.g., Sterio 2013), but most studies agree that it failed to reestablish its status after the fall of Mussolini in 1943 (Danilovic 2002: 39). India only recently started to get recognized as a "rising power" (Fey et al. 2013: 181) or a "major power in the making" (Basrur 2011: 181), and is therefore not included in the list. In contrast, Germany and Japan have to be regarded as major powers, primarily due to their large economic and "soft" persuasive power (Maull 1990; Volgy, Corbetta, Grant, & Baird 2011). Therefore, most scholars (e.g., Lemke 2004; Lieber & Alexander 2005; Volgy et al. 2011), including the widely used Correlates of War Project (2017), have "achieved a remarkable consensus around the states" (Corbetta & Dixon 2004: 7) that I also define as major powers. For these reasons, the list should certainly incorporate the P5 as well as Germany and Japan, but no other states.

In sum, it is essential to discuss that I define arms control in a broad sense, while limiting the concepts of external and internal threats to interstate rivalries and civil wars and conceptualizing major power status as a binary variable that includes seven states. Yet, my definitions undermine neither my theoretical arguments nor my empirical analysis. On the contrary, I argue that they serve the purpose of this dissertation and allow for the meaningful study of the relationship between these variables.

## 6.2. Theoretical Framework

In addition to the key concepts, my theoretical framework concerning the impact of external and internal threats on state support for arms control also requires further consideration. More precisely, my central arguments rest on

several explicit or implicit assumptions concerning arms control and states' preference formation that are necessary to discuss. First, for arms control to be costly or beneficial, states have to consider it consequential for armament. Scholars as well as policymakers have repeatedly labeled arms control as ineffective (see, e.g., Krause 2018; Schörnig 2017). Accordingly, states might not shift their positions toward arms control in the event of a security threat because arms control does not constrain any actors' access to arms and therefore entails neither costs nor benefits for a threatened state.

However, states invest time and resources in the negotiation, adoption, and implementation not only of UNGA resolutions but also of international arms control treaties and agreements. While some states actively promote and support arms control measures, others oppose them. The large variety in states' arms control support, I argue, indicates that states see cooperation as a tool that at least holds the potential to constrain armament effectively.

The fact that states reject arms control to avoid restrictions on their armament raises the question of how much arms control agreements affect non-members. The arms control paradox as well as the security dilemma rest on the assumption that there is no higher authority ensuring that states adhere to international agreements. Hence, states fear their adversaries' non-compliance, making cooperation unfeasible to alleviate a security threat.

Yet, I argue that this idea is primarily based on the experience of bilateral negotiations during the Cold War rather than multilateral agreements whose adoption, though contingent on the commitment of more states, does not necessarily require the approval of single states. The reputational costs of cheating on cooperative measures, or opposing them altogether, are high and even if states do, other states can for instance suspend the transfer of arms and technologies. As explained earlier, I therefore argue that arms control measures, once implemented, also affect the armament of states that are reluctant to support them.

This does not imply that arms control, at least in its current form, is flawless and applies equally to all actors. Papers B and C critically discuss the potential of restrictive measures to affect the arms acquisition of major powers and rebel groups, respectively. Nevertheless, I argue that arms control affects supporters as well as non-supporters and states therefore consider its costs and benefits when exposed to a security threat.

Second, while I challenge realism in many respects, it still provides a useful heuristic and I follow its ideas in several important ways. In particular, the primary focus of my analysis is on states that cooperate and compete with each other. Although I discuss the interaction between states and rebel groups in Paper C, I treat states, or at least governments, as unitary and independent

actors that form one coherent position toward arms control. Moreover, I regard them as rational; that is, they engage in cost-benefit analyses to achieve the best possible outcome concerning their survival and wealth optimization.

These assumptions are arguably doubtful and, among others, challenged by liberalist and constructivist scholars. For example, liberalism argues that individuals rather than states are the relevant actors and therefore lays a focus on internal decision-making processes (Keohane 2002: 45). Constructivists emphasize the diffusion of ideas and norms, for instance through international institutions, and thus question states' independent and rational position taking (Checkel 1997). In principle, both schools cast doubt on all three assumptions (ibid.; Keohane 2002).

In line with this, previous studies indicate that states are neither independent nor unitary nor rational. For example, international organizations pursue their own agendas and have an impact on their member states' preferences (e.g., Müller et al. 2013). Within a government, different branches vary in their opinions and the negotiation process within a state apparatus can be influential on position taking (e.g., Sands 1997). On top of that, even autocratic state leaders are not necessarily driven by the mere desire to maximize power and wealth but other factors, such as ideology, can also shape their policy preferences (e.g., Thorsen 2020). Hence, my theoretical model simplifies the process of position taking.

Yet, it is probabilistic rather than deterministic. This implies that not every government always behaves rationally. Nor do I claim that states in any case form one uniform opinion in an independent process that nobody questions. I merely propose that on average, security threats lead a critical number of relevant members of a government to shift their preferences in one or another direction, causing an overall positional change. This does not rule out that other actors react differently, that some governments do not adapt their arms control support accordingly, or that cultural factors and socialization matter – as the regional differences described in Paper C illustrate.

In other words, my theoretical framework certainly does not show a complete picture of states' position taking. The nature of governments concerning their rationality, unity, and independence might vary substantially, but I do not distinguish between different types of states – apart from their major power status. It would certainly be interesting to dig deeper into the factors that shape to which degree these assumptions can be applied and consequently, whether my theoretical argument holds or not. Potential moderating variables could include, for instance, regime type, government ideology, the size and functioning of the state apparatus, and membership in international organizations. While this is beyond the scope of this dissertation, future re-

search might draw an even more sophisticated picture by incorporating liberalist and constructivist ideas and thereby help to further unravel the relationship between security threats and state support for arms control. The arguments employed here should therefore be regarded as a first step moving away from existing, overly simplistic theories toward a more nuanced picture.

Thus, I argue first that although arms control has been subject to critique due to its alleged ineffectiveness, it can constrain armament, so that states consider its costs and benefits. Second, I argue that the realist assumptions of rational, unitary, and independent states certainly simplify their process of position taking, but still provide a useful basis for my theoretical framework, while not ruling out other explanatory factors. Therefore, my theoretical model generally allows me to derive meaningful conclusions regarding the relationship between security threats and arms control support.

## 6.3. Empirical Approach

Despite the aforementioned limitations of the concepts and arguments presented in this dissertation, my empirical analysis largely supports my theoretical expectations. Yet, it is necessary to mention several shortcomings of my data and methodological approach that potentially affect its explanatory power. These will be expounded in the following.

First, the analysis relies on purely observational rather than experimental data. With interstate rivalries and intrastate conflicts as my main independent variables, a randomized controlled trial is hardly applicable. Moreover, there exists, at least to my knowledge, no "as if" random assignment of these variables that I could exploit, for instance in instrumental variable or regression discontinuity designs (Dunning 2008).

This implies that one should be cautious in the interpretation of the results, as correlations might not necessarily be causal (Elwert 2013). They might be driven by confounding bias, which means that one or multiple unobserved variables affect the dependent as well as the independent variables (ibid.: 250). While I try to tackle this problem by introducing a variety of control variables, this in turn induces the risk of post-treatment bias. That is, an empirical association could be induced or suppressed by the inclusion of control variables that do not confound but mediate the relationship of interest (ibid.).

To address these issues, the three papers contain a variety of different model specifications, which for instance include or exclude specific control variables and introduce fixed instead of random effects. These additional models largely confirm the robustness of the empirical results. While I cannot entirely rule out biases, I argue that this supports the notion that the empirical

associations reflect causal effects – or, with regard to Paper A, the lack thereof. Yet, one should consider this limitation in the interpretation of the empirical results.

In addition, correlations might also be induced by simultaneity bias (or reverse causality), that is, a causal effect of the dependent variable on the independent variable, rather than the other way round (Reed 2015). I argue that this is less likely. While a state's level of arms control support can potentially affect the dynamics of a conflict or rivalry, it appears unlikely to be causing these in the first place. Nevertheless, all papers contain models with lagged independent variables, which reduce – though not rule out – the risk of simultaneity bias (ibid.). These reproduce the findings and thus further strengthen the confidence in the empirical results.

Second, the empirical analysis uses UNGA data in the form of voting behavior and speeches to identify states' positions toward arms control. Scholars have criticized the use of UNGA voting, arguing that it dismisses the agenda setting and negotiation stages and suffers from selection bias (e.g., Laatikainen 2003: 430-431). In line with Häge and Hug (2016), I have tried to minimize biases by including consensus decisions and not only focusing on roll-call votes in my analysis. Yet, although the possibility of abstaining can give an indication of the importance of an issue for the voting state, my measure certainly captures passive support rather than active promotion of arms control. This is a caveat that needs to be considered when interpreting the empirical results.

Furthermore, the UNGA has been labeled a "talking shop" that does not have any substantial impact on international policymaking (e.g., Panke 2014). Though resolutions are not entirely inconsequential for international law (Öberg 2005), they are non-binding and states do not have to live up to their votes (Panke 2014). Hence, scholars have questioned that these reflect their true preferences and are for instance subject to vote buying (e.g., Carter & Stone 2014). The same holds true for UNGA speeches, which have been identified as "cheap talk" (Czaika 2008). This casts doubt on the validity of the empirical results. It questions not only that my measurement strategy truly captures state support for arms control but also that the content analysis identifies states' actual views and considerations.

Accordingly, I pointed out that the figures presented in the content analysis should not be overinterpreted. The analysis of UNGA speeches neither provides conclusive evidence that the cost-benefit analysis that I propose is the main driving force of states' voting behavior, nor that there are no other influential factors that states decide to omit in their speeches. However, recent research on UNGA speeches shows not only that governments' ideology affects the content of their speeches (Finke 2022a) but also that states speak more

often about global development if it is a salient topic on their foreign policy agenda (Finke 2022b). In other words, the content of UNGA speeches appears to reflect states' policy positions in other policy areas.

As explained earlier, their speeches on conventional arms control frequently refer to the virtues and drawbacks of cooperative measures, particularly in connection to discussions of their ongoing civil wars. This applies to speeches explaining specific votes as well as more general statements that states use to present their policy agenda in this field in a broader manner. I argue that it is therefore unlikely that the costs and benefits of arms control play no role in states' position taking at all, given how often states decide to lay the focus on these considerations in their statements.

With regard to the analysis of UNGA voting, Mattes et al. (2015) point out that evidence of vote buying is mixed (e.g., Carter & Stone 2014; Dreher, Nunnenkamp, & Thiele 2008; Wang 1999). Moreover, as indicated, the fact that UNGA resolutions are not legally binding might actually reduce strategic voting (Mattes et al. 2015). Nevertheless, I ran a variety of validation checks concerning my dependent variable that I briefly described in Chapter 5 and that are presented in detail in Paper A. These suggest that my measure indeed captures state support for arms control.

Still, the high mean value of 0.939 and the large number of, oftentimes repeated, consensus decisions indicate that states' votes to a certain degree reflect "cheap" signals rather than actual commitment. As explained, states' levels of support should therefore be interpreted in relative rather than absolute terms. I argue that, in general, this should not apply to threatened states more or less than other states and thus not systemically bias the empirical results. This is illustrated by the fact that different types of threats shift voting behavior in diverging directions. Hence, I argue that not only UNGA speeches but also votes are valuable data sources to examine states' sincere preferences toward arms control, and their use does not critically affect the credibility of the empirical findings.

Third, even if UNGA voting reflects states' positions toward arms control, the regression analyses of all three papers only examine the impact of external threats, major power threats, and civil wars in the aggregate. While the content analysis indicates that the costs and benefits of arms restrictions matter, it is restricted to the study of civil wars and conventional arms control – as manually coding speeches on all types of arms control would be impractical. Thus, I cannot rule out alternative explanations of the relationships between security threats and arms control support.

This is particularly the case because I use measures of objective rather than perceived threat. Therefore, interstate rivalries – except for those with major powers – might not be regarded as existential threats and have no impact on

states' positions toward arms control at all. This could also explain why I find a negative relationship between major power threats and arms control support, as these arguably pose a more severe threat.

Yet, various arguments speak against this idea. First of all, Gray (1992) claims that the arms control paradox should hold for all states, regardless of their power status, and for acute and severe conflict situations as well as "international rivalry 'as usual'" (ibid.: 19). As described earlier, extant quantitative research also indicates a positive relationship between external threats and armament (e.g., Blomberg & Tocoian 2016; Collier & Hoeffler 2007; Singh & Way 2004). It appears questionable that such external threats are severe enough to affect the acquisition of arms but not to shape support for arms control.[26]

The variety of robustness checks contained in the papers yield additional support for my theoretical arguments. This includes, inter alia, the use of different threat measures with varying levels of severity in Paper A that reproduce the insignificant results. In addition, if the negative relationship between major power threats and arms control support was indeed driven by the high severity level, one should expect a larger rather than a smaller effect of nuclear threats – given that the risk of a nuclear attack is arguably the largest threat imaginable.

Moreover, this argument cannot explain why I find a *positive* relationship between civil wars and support for conventional arms control. This also applies to the positive association between non-major power threats and major powers' arms control support. Although the latter finding should not be overinterpreted, given the small number of major powers, these results lend further support for my theoretical argument. Yet, I cannot entirely rule out other, overlooked explanations for my findings.

One should therefore consider these limitations in the interpretation of my empirical analysis. Nevertheless, the findings speak in favor of my theoretical arguments. I argue that they are neither substantially undermined by the use of observational UNGA data nor by the reliance on regression analyses to study the relationship between security threats and state support for arms control.

[26] One might also argue that as explained earlier, states do not consider arms control a relevant tool to constrain armament and therefore do not adapt their positions in response to an external threat. However, the significant relationships found in Papers B and C speak against this idea.

## 6.4. Summary

This chapter expounded various limitations concerning the key concepts, theoretical framework, and empirical findings presented in this dissertation. I first discussed my conceptualizations of arms control, external threats, internal threats, and major powers. I argued in favor of the inclusive definition of the former term, as a more exclusive focus on certain types of regulations should not alter my theoretical arguments and empirical analysis in a meaningful way – with the exception of the third paper. In contrast, I used more narrow definitions of the different types of security threats. I refer primarily to interstate rivalries and civil wars, which I argue should both induce perceived threats and therefore allow for meaningful comparisons. Concerning the distinction between major powers and non-major powers, I argued that the P5, Germany, and Japan hold an exceptional status in international negotiations. Therefore, I not only regard major power status as a binary variable, but also consider only these seven states as major powers.

With regard to my theoretical framework, I discussed that my causal model incorporates several explicit or implicit assumptions. This includes the idea that arms control can effectively restrict armament, which I argue is a valid claim given the variation in states' arms control preferences. In addition, I regard states as rational, unitary, and independent actors. Yet, I illustrated that my arguments are probabilistic and not deterministic. This implies that they should hold true even though the underlying assumptions simplify states' position taking on arms control.

The empirical findings, while supporting my arguments, suffer from three shortcomings. These include, first, the use of observational data, second, the reliance on UNGA voting and speeches, and third, the analysis of the relationship between security threats and arms control support in an aggregated manner. I argued that none of these caveats credibly undermines the analysis, although they should be considered in the interpretation of the results.

In sum, I therefore argue that despite a number of limitations, this dissertation provides new and valuable insights into the relationship between security threats and state support for arms control. In the next chapter, I will summarize these, derive a number of important implications, and suggest directions for future studies.

# Chapter 7: Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to answer the question of how security threats affect state support for arms control. To do so, each of the three papers investigates one sub-question, relying on a newly constructed measure of arms control support. This indicator combines manual coding of 1,178 resolutions adopted in the UNGA after the Cold War with states' votes on these resolutions to identify to which degree these states embrace or oppose arms restrictions. The papers' key arguments and findings – and thus the answers to the sub-questions – are summarized in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Key Arguments and Findings

| Sub-question | How do external threats affect state support for arms control? | How do external threats by major powers affect state support for arms control? | How do internal threats affect state support for arms control? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Paper | A | B | C |
| Dependent variable | Support for arms control | Support for arms control | Support for conventional arms control |
| Independent variables | 1. Interstate rivalry<br>2. Interstate dispute | Interstate rivalry with major power * major power status | Civil war |
| Costs and benefits of arms control | Costs ≈ benefits | Non-major powers:<br>Costs > benefits<br>Major powers:<br>Costs ≈ benefits | Benefits > costs |
| Main argument | External threats increase costs and benefits of arms control to similar degrees, because it constrains both sides of an interstate rivalry/dispute | Major powers can avoid restrictions on their own armament, making arms control less beneficial for non-major powers threatened by major powers | Benefits are not limited to strategic considerations, but arms control holds potential to contain negative consequences of civil wars |
| Findings | No significant relationship | Significant negative relationship, but only among non-major powers | Significant positive relationship;<br>Content analysis: states consider benefits and costs of arms control |

Regarding the relationship between external threats and state support for arms control in general, I find neither interstate rivalries nor disputes to be significantly related to states' positions toward arms control. In contrast, the empirical analysis yields a negative relationship between major power threats and arms control support. This result only holds if the threatened state itself is not a major power. Turning from external to internal threats, I find a positive association between civil wars and state support for conventional arms control. Accordingly, the empirical results of all three papers support my theoretical expectations.

With regard to the main research question, my empirical analysis therefore suggests that the relationship between security threats and state support for arms control is neither strictly negative nor positive. Arms control entails not only added costs but also benefits for states exposed to security threats. While it limits states' abilities to acquire weapons in order to deter or fight adversary states or rebel groups, it also restricts these adversaries' access to arms. In the context of a civil war, arms control further holds the potential to contain the detrimental consequences of armed violence. Accordingly, the impact of security threats on support for arms control is context-specific. It depends on the type and origin of the threat as well as characteristics of the affected state as to whether the costs of cooperation outweigh the benefits or vice versa.

This dissertation holds a number of important implications for the academic study of arms control as well as international policymaking in this field. More precisely, my findings challenge structural realist ideas in two crucial ways. First, they illustrate that one should not equate armament and opposition to arms control. While previous studies have suggested that external threats as well as civil wars increase armament, I do not find these variables to decrease support for arms restrictions. Accordingly, high levels of armament do not necessarily translate into negative positions toward arms control.

In other words, measures of military spending, arms imports, or nuclear proliferation are useful to identify states' own acquisitions of arms. Yet, they tell us little about the prospects of international cooperation, which illustrates the added value of my new measure for the empirical study of arms control. This indicator enables quantitative research on the determinants of states' embracement of arms restrictions, including but not limited to, different types of security threats.

Second, states do not oppose arms control under any circumstances when they are exposed to a security threat, but consider that arms limitations can be beneficial under certain circumstances. This particularly applies to threats by non-state actors. Paper C shows that states involved in civil conflicts embrace conventional arms control and acknowledge its benefits. This implies

that one should not neglect the domestic arena and internal threats in the study of arms control and international politics. Moreover, it suggests that meaningful arms restrictions are not impossible, and security threats do not necessarily induce a spiral of competition and rejection of cooperative measures.

However, the results of Paper B are less encouraging. They indicate that major powers are able to avoid restrictions on their armament or at least that less powerful states perceive it this way. This is problematic because it leads non-major powers to oppose arms control in the event of a major power threat. On top of that, it implies that the vast majority of weapons – which are owned by the major powers – remains largely uncontrolled. Nevertheless, my findings largely contradict the arms control paradox. Gray (1992) postulates that security threats *always* lead states to reject arms restrictions, whereas my analysis indicates that the relationship depends on the anticipated costs and benefits of cooperation. Proponents of arms control can consider this positive news.

What does this tell us about ongoing and maybe even future conflicts? The Russo-Ukrainian war has caused open hostilities between Russia and the Western world that seriously challenge international agreements, and the conflict can certainly not be solved by imposing restrictions on Ukrainian armament. Yet, this crisis is quite exceptional and in general, external, but especially internal threats can lead states to demand more arms control. Moreover, current armament levels do not necessarily imply that states will oppose any kind of cooperation in the future. In other words, one should not completely discard arms control as a potential strategy to halt the excessive accumulation of arms, for instance on the Korea Peninsula or in the civil wars of Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and elsewhere.

Yet, major powers' willingness to engage in arms control is crucial for its success. Hence, future research should especially investigate if and how major powers can be committed to restrictive measures. This includes, but is not limited to, in-depth analyses of specific cases and of moderating factors that dig deeper into the question of when these states consider the benefits of arms control to outweigh the costs. This could shed further light on the causal mechanisms that connect security threats and arms control support.

Moreover, future studies could turn to indicators that take into account the agenda setting and negotiation stages. As explained in the previous chapter, one of the caveats of my measure is that it only captures passive support and neglects active promotion of arms control. In the context of the UNGA, further analyses of speeches and also of resolutions' co-sponsorships are valuable data sources to dig deeper into decision-making processes. These could be triangulated with qualitative methods such as interviews with key actors to

gain additional insights into what determines the success and failure of international arms control.

Finally, I solely focus on one specific type of explanatory factors; that is, security threats. To obtain a more comprehensive picture of the determinants of state support for arms control, follow-up studies should investigate other variables. Previous qualitative and case-based research has pointed to different factors that are worth investigating, such as regime type and economic development. The measure introduced here could also help to unravel the relationship between different types of armament and states' positions toward arms control.

Although a number of questions remain open for further investigation, this dissertation contributes to the empirical study of arms control and international politics in two important ways. First, I have introduced a novel measure of state support for arms control that is useful not only for this study but also for future research. Second, I have shed new light on the relationship between security threats and states' arms control support and provided extensive evidence for an effect that is highly conditional and dependent on who threatens whom. This illustrates that the world is more complex than suggested by grand theories and we should focus on middle-range theorizing instead, because context matters.

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# Short Summary

Global armament has been on the rise over the past decade, causing insecurity and hindering development. Stricter international rules and regulations could halt or even reverse this trend, but the successful conclusion of arms control agreements is contingent on states' commitments to cooperate with each other. This leads to the question of what determines whether states embrace or oppose arms control. Scholars of international relations have pointed toward external threats by other states as the main explanatory factor in this regard, arguing that these lead states to oppose arms control. However, we so far lack a systematic assessment of the relationship between security threats and states' positions on arms control. Moreover, existing research has largely neglected that internal threats are far more common today than those by other states. This dissertation therefore addresses the following question: How do security threats affect state support for arms control?

Contrary to previous research, I argue that the effect of security threats on states' arms control preferences is context-specific. On the one hand, a security threat increases the costs of arms control, because it limits the threatened states' abilities to acquire weapons to deter or fight the adversary state or rebel group. On the other hand, arms control also entails added benefits for states in the event of a security threat because it limits both sides of a conflict or rivalry. I assess the relationship between security threats and arms control support in three separate quantitative studies of external threats, major power threats, and civil wars, respectively. For my main dependent variable, I combine UNGA voting data with manual coding of resolutions adopted between 1994 and 2016 to create a novel measure of state support for arms control.

The empirical analyses support my argument. While I do not find any significant association between external threats and states' positions toward arms control in general, threats by major powers are negatively related to arms control support, yet only among non-major powers. In contrast, I find a positive relationship between civil wars and state support for conventional arms control. A content analysis of UNGA speeches that complements the latter study suggests that states indeed acknowledge the benefits of arms control, though they simultaneously consider the costs of restricting their own armament.

The contribution of this dissertation to the existing literature is therefore twofold. First, I show that the relationship between security threats and state support for arms control is neither limited to external threats nor strictly negative. Instead, it depends on the origin of the threat as well as characteristics of the threatened state whether the benefits of arms control outweigh the costs

or vice versa. Second, I introduce the first comprehensive measure of state support for arms control that covers all countries and captures variation over time. This indicator is not only useful for the purpose of this dissertation but also valuable for future research.

# Dansk Resumé

Den globale oprustning har været stigende i det seneste årti, hvilket har skabt usikkerhed og hindret udviklingen. Strengere internationale regler og bestemmelser kunne standse eller endog vende denne tendens, men en vellykket indgåelse af våbenkontrolaftaler afhænger af staternes vilje til at samarbejde med hinanden. Dette fører til spørgsmålet om, hvad der er afgørende for, om stater tilslutter sig eller modsætter sig våbenkontrol. Forskere i international politik har peget på eksterne trusler fra andre stater som den vigtigste forklarende faktor i denne henseende og hævder, at disse trusler får stater til at modsætte sig våbenkontrol. Indtil videre mangler vi imidlertid en systematisk vurdering af forholdet mellem sikkerhedstrusler og staternes holdning til våbenkontrol. Desuden har den eksisterende forskning stort set ikke taget hensyn til, at interne trusler i dag er langt mere almindelige end trusler fra andre stater. Denne afhandling behandler derfor følgende spørgsmål: Hvordan påvirker sikkerhedstrusler staters støtte til våbenkontrol?

I modsætning til tidligere forskning argumenterer jeg for, at sikkerhedstrusler har en kontekstspecifik effekt på staternes våbenkontrolpræferencer. På den ene side øger en sikkerhedstrussel omkostningerne ved våbenkontrol, da den begrænser de truede staters mulighed for at anskaffe våben til at afskrække eller bekæmpe den fjendtlige stat eller oprørsgruppe. På den anden side indebærer våbenkontrol også ekstra fordele for stater i tilfælde af sikkerhedstrusler, fordi den begrænser begge sider af en konflikt eller rivalisering. Jeg vurderer forholdet mellem sikkerhedstrusler og støtte til våbenkontrol i tre separate kvantitative undersøgelser af henholdsvis eksterne trusler, trusler fra stormagter og borgerkrige. For min primære afhængige variabel kombinerer jeg data fra FN's Generalforsamling om afstemninger med manuel kodning af resolutioner vedtaget mellem 1994 og 2016 for at skabe et nyt mål for statslig støtte til våbenkontrol.

De empiriske analyser støtter mit argument. Mens jeg ikke finder nogen signifikant sammenhæng mellem eksterne trusler og staters holdninger til våbenkontrol generelt, er trusler fra stormagter negativt relateret til støtte til våbenkontrol, dog kun blandt ikke-stormagter. Derimod finder jeg en positiv sammenhæng mellem borgerkrige og staters støtte til konventionel våbenkontrol. En indholdsanalyse af indlæg fra FN's Generalforsamling, som supplerer sidstnævnte undersøgelse, tyder på, at staterne faktisk anerkender fordelene ved våbenkontrol, selv om de samtidig overvejer omkostningerne ved at begrænse deres egen oprustning.

Denne afhandling bidrager således på to måder til den eksisterende litteratur. For det første viser jeg, at forholdet mellem sikkerhedstrusler og staters

støtte til våbenkontrol hverken er begrænset til eksterne trusler eller strengt negativ. I stedet afhænger det af truslens oprindelse samt af den truede stats karakteristika, om fordelene ved våbenkontrol opvejer omkostningerne eller omvendt. For det andet introducerer jeg den første omfattende måling af staters støtte til våbenkontrol, som omfatter alle lande og indfanger variationer over tid. Denne indikator er ikke kun nyttig i forbindelse med denne afhandling, men også værdifuld for fremtidig forskning.