Pre-Analysis Plan: Diplomacy Lab Project on Nuclear Weapons Framing and Youth Opinions

Dr. Amanda Murdie

University of Georgia

On Behalf of the Coauthors in INTL 7007

March 8, 2024

1. Study Information

The last nuclear arms control agreement was negotiated in 2009 and entered into force in 2010. Since that time, the political and security environment has shown signs of deterioration. The international community is currently wrestling with how to respond to a world facing increasing strategic rivalries. Often a false choice is presented between security through deterrence versus security through arms control, with arms control being painted as a tool of little utility to today's security challenges. However, the international community has seen periods where arms control worked to lower tensions and increase stability in otherwise hostile national relationships. This project seeks to learn what entry points to arms control and risk reduction resonate with young people. Understanding that "young people" is not a monolithic term, analytical effort should be put into understanding and characterizing the diverse target audience.

2. Study Design

We will be sending out a survey to test if the way nuclear arms control issues are framed affects public opinion, specifically the opinion of today's youth, on arms control and nuclear weapons use. We will build this survey through Qualtrics and will send out this survey to American adults through Prolific. We will also give the survey to students in POLS 1101 at UGA.

Each subject will be given the same pre and post-questions. The pre-questions will determine demographics, political affiliation, and level of interest in social issues and current events. The post-questions will examine how likely participants are to research the topic of arms control, using a sliding scale, and participant's view of the efficacy of arms control.

After the pre-questions, participants will be divided into 6 groups. One group will be the control group and receive no additional information. The other 5 groups will be given additional information about the changing nature of nuclear technology, nuclear weapons as a social issues, the strategic disadvantages of arms control agreements, the positive outcomes of arms control agreements, or the impact of a potential nuclear attack. After receiving one of these treatments or the control, all participant will be asked the same post-questions.

We will analyze bivariate and multivariate regressions based on the survey responses.

a. Survey

i. Survey Recruitment

We will use Prolific to gather survey data within the US. We have requested that the survey sample be nationally representative. At UGA, our questions will be part of the UGA SPIA Omnibus survey to POLS 1101 students in spring 2024.

ii. Survey Instrument

Current survey link: **https://ugeorgia.yul1.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/previewId/1c98a812-d002-49a7-9fcf-05d732296c60/SV_dcYOjLF1H6lcb78?Q_CHL=preview&Q_SurveyVersionID=current**

b. Sample

Prolific will gather a nationally representative sample of 1200 to 1500. Our UGA sample should have 200-300 students.

c. Data Collection and Timeline

Our project is currently under IRB review. Assuming that takes very little time, we expect to have the survey in the field in mid-March 2024. Analysis will occur in 2024.

3. Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between individual demographic attributes and opinions and behavior related to nuclear weapons. If an individual has particular characteristics, they will be more likely to choose a specific opinion and behavior related to nuclear weapons.

Analysis: Multivariate and cross-tabular analyses, *Individual attributes* (age, ethnicity, education, gender, political affiliation, news, issues of interest, rank and identification of areas of concern, feelings of individual effectiveness) and *Willingness to research further* and *Agreement with nuclear statements* (arms control, deterrence, warfare, influence nuclear policy, arms control, deterrence).

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between the frame received in the experiment and opinions and behavior related to nuclear weapons. If an individual receives a certain frame, they will be more likely to choose a specific opinion and behavior related to nuclear weapons.

Analysis: Multivariate and cross-tabular analyses, *Treatments and Control* (Fear/Death/Destruction, New Nature of Nuclear Weapons, Agency/Activist, Strategic Disadvantage, Arms Control Success) and *Willingness to research further* and *Agreement with nuclear statements* (arms control, deterrence, warfare, influence nuclear policy, arms control, deterrence).

Hypothesis 3: Individual attributes condition the effect of the frame on opinions and behaviors related to nuclear weapons. Individual attributes will moderate the effect

of certain frames on the likelihood of choosing a specific opinion and behavior related to nuclear weapons.

Analysis: Multivariate and cross-tabular analyses, *Treatments and Control* (Fear/Death/Destruction, New Nature of Nuclear Weapons, Agency/Activist, Strategic Disadvantage, Arms Control Success) *Treatments and Control* (Fear/Death/Destruction, New Nature of Nuclear Weapons, Agency/Activist, Strategic Disadvantage, Arms Control Success), and *Willingness to research further* and *Agreement with nuclear statements* (arms control, deterrence, warfare, influence nuclear policy, arms control, deterrence).

4. Analysis

a. Statistical packages

All work will be carried out in Stata and R.

b. Operationalization of variables

Categorical and dichotomous indicators will be created from the Qualtrics survey.

5. Ethics

This study is under IRB review now. There are no risks to organizations responding to the survey.