

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2024 · 10 marks

The changing global order and ongoing regional conflicts, with the global powers taking sides, have jeopardised the progress made towards disarmament in the past. Comment.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

INTRO ROUTES

R1 disarmament was a product of structure → parity + dialogue + shared institutions → those supports withdrawn → statement holds
R2 past gains came when rivals could still bargain → present order removes the bargaining floor → jeopardy is real

BODY FLOW

détente converts parity into treaties (SALT, ABM, hotline, START) → non-aligned push carries PTBT 1963 → that machinery gone → both arsenals modernising → New START lapse (Feb 2026), no cap in fifty-plus years → CTBT / FMCT / 2017 ban treaty blocked or boycotted → Ukraine destroys parity, dialogue, institutions → side-taking in regional wars: West Asia arms supplies + Iran-Saudi → South Asia standoff → doubtful US umbrella → Japan / South Korea / Gulf may revisit non-nuclear status (**Perkovich & Acton**) → side-taking spreads weapons

COUNTER-VIEW

failure predates these wars → **Simpson**: under-delivery since the 1990s, blocked by the nuclear powers themselves → **Mearsheimer**: a thin order still carries arms control

CONCLUSION ROUTES

R1 machinery of bargaining collapsed; restraint has not → India's No First Use → verifiable, non-discriminatory framework
R2 the statement describes a real reversal, not a permanent fate → rebuild the missing supports: verification, non-discrimination, dialogue

Past disarmament rested on conditions the present order no longer supplies: rough parity between two superpowers, working dialogue, shared institutions.

Detente turned parity into agreement: SALT, the ABM Treaty, the hotline, later START; non-aligned pressure carried the Partial Test Ban Treaty (1963). That machinery has gone. Both arsenals are modernising. New START lapsed in 2026, leaving them uncapped for the 1st time in over 50 years and the CTBT, FMCT and 2017 ban treaty stay blocked or boycotted.

Ukraine destroyed the parity, dialogue and institutions that made detente workable. Arms supplies & Iran-Saudi rivalry feed West Asia's race; South Asia's standoff continues.

If the US umbrella weakens, Perkovich and Acton expect Japan, South Korea & the Gulf states to revisit their non-nuclear status: taking sides now spreads weapons.

The failure predates these wars. John Simpson find the agenda under-delivering since the 1990s, blocked by the nuclear powers themselves. John Mearsheimer expects a thin order where they bargain over arms control.

The machinery of bargaining has collapsed; restraint has not, as India's NO First Use shows. A verifiable non-discriminatory framework is the route back.