20 Questions on Arms Control
1. Why do we need to spend so much money on arms?

2. How does arms control fit in?

3. What discussions are currently under way?

4. Why do arms control talks take so long?

5. Why does the West attach so much importance to 'verification' in all these negotiations?

6. Can we hope to see real results?

7. Why all this talk about new chemical weapons when the Government say they want to ban them?

8. Why has progress been so slow on a chemical ban when the Russians say they can accept our proposals?

9. Aren't nuclear weapons the most dangerous? Why bother with other weapons?

10. Isn't a 'nuclear-free' Europe a worthwhile goal?
11. Isn't it inconsistent to say that Europe needs nuclear weapons to keep the peace while trying to stop other countries acquiring them?

12. Why do the Government not prove their commitment to arms control by including UK nuclear weapons in negotiations?

13. Couldn't the UK set an example by giving up nuclear weapons?

14. The US and Soviet Union are talking of making 50% cuts in their strategic weapons. What place would there be for Trident then?

15. What about the Russian claim that the American Strategic Defence Initiative (the 'Star Wars' programme) is a major obstacle to reductions in strategic weapons?

16. The UK has argued that verification is an obstacle to renewing negotiations on a Comprehensive Ban on Nuclear Testing: does it support the new US/Soviet talks?

17. Why hasn't conventional arms control been more successful – MBFR has achieved virtually nothing in 14 years?

18. So what's the way forward?

19. Some people say that so-called battlefield nuclear weapons are the most dangerous of all. What is wrong with the idea of 'a nuclear-free corridor' between Eastern and Western Europe?

20. What is the UK doing for arms control?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why do we need to spend so much money on arms?</td>
<td>After 40 years of peace in Europe, we in the West take our freedom almost for granted. But the sheer scale of Soviet and Warsaw Pact military forces poses a considerable potential threat to Western security. The Soviet Union has used military force to impose its will on Hungary and Czechoslovakia. It is still doing the same in Afghanistan. The UK and its NATO allies stand together to defend themselves. There are two sides to this—we keep up our joint defences to deter any attack; but we also try to build better relations between East and West.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does arms control fit in?</td>
<td>The world has far more weapons than it needs. We all owe it to ourselves to try to achieve security at lower levels of arms. Western Governments insist on proper defences, but they are not interested in an arms race. Opposing an arms race makes good economic sense. Defence is expensive—no one wants to see more resources devoted to it than are really needed. And fair, properly verifiable agreements can have direct political and security benefits: they develop trust and help create more stable East/West relations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What discussions are currently under way?</td>
<td>The main talks are: the US/Soviet Nuclear and Space talks in Geneva covering strategic arms (mainly nuclear missiles and heavy bombers), and space and defence issues (relating to defences against ballistic missiles); the 40-nation Conference on Disarmament which is currently most engaged on chemical weapons; the Vienna Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) talks to reduce NATO and Warsaw Pact conventional force levels in Central Europe; the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). In 1975 the 35 participants made joint commitments on political, humanitarian, confidence-building and economic issues, with the aim of improving security and cooperation in Europe. The latest Review Conference is now under way in Vienna; preparatory discussions in Vienna for new conventional negotiations (see Q 18).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do arms control talks take so long?</td>
<td>It is vital to get these agreements right. East and West start from very different standpoints. Key security issues are involved and the details are enormously complicated. Political problems intervene, like the invasion of Afghanistan. None the less, since 1959, twenty-one agreements have been signed which constrain or ban a variety of weapons and military activities. Experience shows it would be in no one's interest to rush into unsatisfactory arms control agreements: much better to work the issues out properly, so that all sides are content with their proposals and confident they will be observed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why does the West attach so much importance to ‘verification’ in all these negotiations?</td>
<td>We want to be sure agreements will be properly and honestly carried out. Each side has to feel confident that the other is not stealing an advantage: the consequences of cheating by one side could be disastrous for the other. This is why we insist that arms control agreements must be properly monitored, or 'verified', by both sides. Even the suspicion of cheating will damage the mutual confidence which is vital if existing agreements are to work—and will diminish the prospects for new agreements. As the Prime Minister has said, 'Verification is the heart of the matter, not just an optional extra'. In the words of a Russian proverb, quoted by President Reagan at the INF treaty signing: 'Trust, but verify'.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can we hope to see real results?</td>
<td>Yes. President Reagan and Mr Gorbachev have now signed an INF agreement—based on NATO's 'zero option'—to eliminate US and Soviet land-based intermediate range nuclear missiles. The 1986 Stockholm Agreement has also come into force, requiring States to notify each other in advance about large-scale military activities in Europe and to invite observers to them. NATO has marked out other ambitious but realistic targets: to cut the superpowers' strategic arsenals by half; to agree a complete and verifiable global ban on chemical weapons; to eliminate imbalances in conventional forces. If agreements in all these difficult areas can be reached the whole pattern of East/West relations will be vastly improved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why all this talk about new chemical weapons when the Government say they want to ban them?</td>
<td>The UK abandoned its chemical warfare capability in the 1950s. In 1969 the United States imposed a unilateral moratorium on production which lasted for 18 years, during which they maintained only a limited and ageing retaliatory stockpile. But this did not stop the Soviet Union from building up substantial holdings of nerve gas and other chemical agents over the same period, and there is a worryingly large Soviet stockpile in Europe. In 1987 the Soviet Union announced that it had stopped production—but this claim has not been substantiated. The current US programme to produce new chemical weapons is not intended to build up stocks to anything approaching Soviet levels. We want to achieve a complete ban on these weapons, and have been working hard for this at the chemical weapons negotiations in Geneva.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why has progress been so slow on a chemical ban when the Russians say they can accept our proposals?</td>
<td>The Russians have indeed moved towards Western positions, but there is not yet complete agreement. We are aiming at one of the most ambitious and complex treaties ever. The 1925 Geneva Protocol banned the use of chemical weapons but the new treaty would go much further, forbidding their use, manufacture and stockpiling, and eliminating existing stocks. The UK has been particularly active in these negotiations, concentrating on three important questions: how to prevent misuse of the civil chemical industry, what sort of organisation is needed to supervise a ban, and what arrangements are required for verification of last resort—inspections on challenge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aren't nuclear weapons the most dangerous? Why bother with other weapons?</td>
<td>Of course nuclear weapons are extremely powerful—that is why their existence has helped prevent war in Europe for 40 years. But the point is that the Warsaw Pact has a considerable advantage in conventional forces in Europe. According to UK estimates the Warsaw Pact outnumbered NATO by 3:1 in tanks, over 3:1 in artillery, almost 2:1 in aircraft and by 1 million soldiers. The Soviet Union also has substantial stocks of lethal chemical weapons, far beyond US levels. If nuclear weapons were drastically reduced without progress in the other areas, this would leave the Russians with a clear military advantage. This is why we in the West insist that all areas of arms control—nuclear, chemical and conventional—have to be tackled together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isn't a 'nuclear-free' Europe a worthwhile goal?</td>
<td>History provides no evidence that conventional weapons prevent war. Quite the opposite. Both World Wars were started, in Europe, by a state numerically weaker than the states opposing it. Germany was outnumbered 3:1 when it attacked the Soviet Union in 1941. But since 1945 nuclear weapons have deterred any attack on Western Europe, nuclear or conventional. Would it really be better to make Europe 'safe' again for conventional war? A war which would unleash the full destructive power of modern conventional weapons and could still lead to the use of nuclear weapons deployed outside Europe.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. The circumstances of Europe are unique. The superpowers and their allies face each other directly in Europe in a way that simply does not happen elsewhere. Nuclear weapons are an intrinsic part of the balance of power which has kept the peace. But just as we want to see the nuclear weapons of both East and West significantly reduced, we think it would be highly destabilising if more countries started acquiring them. This view is widely accepted - more than 130 countries have signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, pledging themselves not to seek to acquire nuclear weapons. The UK strongly supports the Treaty and the practical measures it contains to stop nuclear proliferation.

12. The US and the Soviet Union between them have about 95% of the world's nuclear weapons. The clear priority is to get these huge stockpiles reduced. Even when the UK's nuclear deterrent is modernised with Trident, it will remain less than 3% of the Russians' nuclear potential (see Q 13) - at the minimum level required for effective deterrence. But the British Government have never said 'never' to including UK nuclear weapons in the negotiations. If Soviet and American strategic arsenals are very substantially reduced, and if no new significant changes have occurred in Soviet defences against them, we will be ready to consider how the UK can best contribute to arms control talks in that new situation.

13. In all the complexities of arms control, one thing is clear: it makes no sense to give up something for nothing. NATO would never have achieved the worldwide elimination of INF if it had abandoned its own INF modernisation programme without striking a deal on Soviet missiles. The Russians themselves have said that no one should expect unilateral disarmament from them. Even if they matched nuclear reductions with the UK weapon for weapon, the result would be the UK with no nuclear weapons and the Russians with 97% of theirs! And a unilateral gesture of this kind would undermine the whole Western negotiating approach: what incentive would the Russians have to negotiate seriously if they thought that all they had to do was wait for the West to give up its weapons for nothing? One-sided disarmament has never worked in the past. Negotiations have separate from their bilateral talks. President Reagan has confirmed that Trident modernisation will go ahead as planned. For our part, we would want to see both our conditions met (see Q 12) before reviewing any role for the UK deterrent in arms control.

14. Trident, when introduced, will represent a smaller percentage of the Soviet strategic arsenal than Polaris did in 1970 - even after 50% cuts in the superpowers' strategic arsenals. Both the United States and the Soviet Union acknowledge that 'Third Country Systems' such as Trident are projects. The first stage of the new talks will indeed focus on verification. The two sides hope to agree workable verification measures for two still unratified US/Soviet Treaties limiting the scale of weapons tests and peaceful nuclear explosions.

15. The 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty placed restrictions on the development and deployment of strategic defences against ballistic missiles. Although the Soviet Union claims the SDI undermines the ABM Treaty, the SDI is a research programme only - and research is permitted by the Treaty. In fact, as Mr Gorbachev has said, the Soviet Union is itself carrying out research into the advanced technologies associated with ballistic missile defences. It is surely wrong that permitted activities should stand in the way of an agreement which would, for the first time, make real cuts in US and Soviet strategic weapons.

16. The UK welcomes the new US/Soviet talks. We feel this kind of step-by-step approach is likely to be more productive than to aim directly for a comprehensive ban. Verification remains a serious technical concern. The complexity of arms control, one thing is clear: it makes no sense to give up something for nothing. NATO would never have achieved the worldwide elimination of INF if it had abandoned its own INF modernisation programme without striking a deal on Soviet missiles. The Russians themselves have said that no one should expect unilateral disarmament from them. Even if they matched nuclear reductions with the result would be the UK with no nuclear weapons and the Russians with 97% of theirs! And a unilateral gesture of this kind would undermine the whole Western negotiating approach: what incentive would the Russians have to negotiate seriously if they thought that all they had to do was wait for the West to give up its weapons for nothing? One-sided disarmament has never worked in the past. Negotiations have separate from their bilateral talks. President Reagan has confirmed that Trident modernisation will go ahead as planned. For our part, we would want to see both our conditions met (see Q 12) before reviewing any role for the UK deterrent in arms control.

17. There have been two main problems in MBFR. First, the East has never been willing to agree figures for its current force levels in Central Europe; it has always claimed to have fewer forces than the West believes to be the case. Second, the East has not accepted the reciprocal verification measures we think are needed. The basic issue is how to ensure confidence in an agreement. One way or the other, this will have to be sorted out. The conventional imbalance between NATO and the Warsaw Pact is actually worse than it was when the West first proposed the MBFR negotiations. It is all the more important to tackle the imbalance, now that we have an INF agreement removing large numbers of nuclear weapons from Europe (see Q 9).

18. We will continue to work for progress in MBFR, and there are other possibilities. In December 1986 NATO's Brussels Declaration made two new proposals: negotiations on 'conventional stability' between all members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Unlike MBFR, these would cover the whole of Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals. The objective would be to eliminate disparities and establish a stable and secure balance of forces at lower levels; further negotiations on confidence and security-building measures among the 35 CSCE States. Following the success of the 1986 Stockholm Agreement NATO hopes the CSCE will go on to work out more specific measures of this kind.

19. 'Nuclear-free corridors' are not the answer. Smaller-scale nuclear weapons are so mobile that they could be moved very easily back into any corridor. And, of course, the area within the corridor could be attacked by nuclear weapons outside it. Proposals such as these do not make practical sense. But, worse than that, they divert attention away from the real issue, namely, how to bring about major cuts in conventional and nuclear forces on both sides.

20. The UK is active in the close consultations between the United States and their NATO Allies. For example, the Prime Minister played an important part in establishing the Alliance's arms control priorities (Q 6) when she met President Reagan at Camp David in November 1986. As an INF basing country, the UK will be directly involved in the inspection arrangements for the INF Agreement. The UK is also a key contributor in other areas, such as chemical and conventional talks. We are directly involved in four out of the five sets of talks listed in Q 3. Moreover, arms control talks do not take place in a political vacuum. The British Government have worked very hard in recent years to improve the general climate of East/West relations. The Prime Minister's contacts with Soviet leaders show how this policy has brought results.

11. Isn't it inconsistent to say that Europe needs nuclear weapons to keep the peace while trying to stop other countries acquiring them?

12. Why do the Government not prove their commitment to arms control by including UK nuclear weapons in negotiations?

13. Couldn't the UK set an example by giving up nuclear weapons?

14. The US and Soviet Union are talking of making 50% cuts in their strategic weapons. What place would there be for Trident then?

15. What about the Russian claim that the American Strategic Defence Initiative (the 'Star Wars' programme) is a major obstacle to reductions in strategic weapons?

16. The UK has argued that verification is an obstacle to renewing negotiations on a Comprehensive Ban on Nuclear Testing; does it support the new US/Soviet talks?

17. Why hasn't conventional arms control been more successful - MBFR has achieved virtually nothing in 14 years?

18. So what's the way forward?

19. Some people say that so-called battlefield nuclear weapons are the most dangerous of all. What is wrong with the idea of a 'nuclear-free corridor' between Eastern and Western Europe?

20. What is the UK doing for arms control?
“Arms control and disarmament are an integral part of our security policy. We remain committed to reaching equitable agreements aimed at enhancing stability at lower levels of forces and armaments. They must strengthen security in Europe and must not weaken the link between the European and North American members of the Alliance. Effective verification is an essential condition for all such agreements. Real progress on arms control can only be made if a stable overall balance is assured at all times.”

NATO communiqué