

POLITICS & POLICY

Senate Battle on Arms Control Is Still Far From Over

By CARLA ANNE ROBBINS

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON—If you thought the battle over arms control ended with the Cold War, or at least with the recent approval of the chemical-weapons convention, think again.

Another half-dozen agreements are awaiting Senate ratification, or will soon be. Several could set off bitter and highly partisan fights.

Unlike the chemical-weapons battle, which divided the GOP, updating the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty and a separate ban on all nuclear testing could bring fierce and united Republican opposition. "The Republicans had no preordained position on chemical weapons [yet] 26 still voted against it," says Peter Rodman of the Nixon Center, a Washington think tank. "Missile defense is in the Contract with America; it's part of the Republican canon."

Senate Republican staffers expect Majority Leader Trent Lott to personally take on at least one of these fights to mollify conservatives angered by his last-minute endorsement of the chemical pact. "The leader of the Senate was somewhat conflicted" in the chemical vote, says conservative GOP Sen. Jon Kyl delicately.

There are also serious questions about how hard the White House plans to push any of these treaties, particularly after its near-death experience on chemical weapons. "They could announce next week that we ought to do one of these things and I'd say good luck," says Indiana Sen. Richard Lugar, the most outspoken GOP supporter of arms control. "Even with the best treaties this is very, very tough work."

The coming battles include:

• **ABM-TMD.** The bloodiest fight probably will be over revising the 1972 ABM

Boris Yeltsin that all six missile defense systems currently being developed to protect soldiers on the battlefield (so-called theater missile defenses, or TMD) are permitted by the 1972 ABM treaty—though final technical details are still to be worked out. Treaty critics immediately complained, however, that the administration's declaration of having "no plans" to test faster systems would cripple efforts to develop more sophisticated defenses. "They've dumbed down our defenses," charges Arizona's Sen. Kyl.

However, the most emotional issue was the two presidents' agreement not to develop laser-armed satellites for theater-missile defense. Such satellites could also be the building blocks of any Star Wars program—an article of near-religious faith to Republicans if not defense planners—but prohibited under the ABM treaty. House Speaker Newt Gingrich blasted the Helsinki agreement, saying "If allowed to stand, this agreement will place the lives of our brave fighting men and women—and ultimately millions of Americans—in jeopardy."

• **CTBT.** All five declared nuclear powers, including the U.S., already have agreed to stop testing nuclear devices. And U.S. officials say a wider international ban will constrain nuclear wannabes as well as slow development of new nuclear weapons. But the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was opposed in the 1996 Republican Party platform and could face a very tough political fight.

In part, it raises some of the philosophical issues posed by the chemical-weapons convention: serious questions about verification plus innate resistance to any internationally imposed restrictions. There also are serious disagreements among military leaders—current and former—about whether nuclear weapons need test-

Treaty Row

Arms-control treaties which will need ratification:

- Pacific and African nuclear-free zone protocols
- Conventional Forces in Europe flank agreement
- Conventional Forces in Europe II
- Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
- ABM-Theater Missile Defense demarcation agreements
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization expansion
- Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty II revision
- Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty III

Last month's vote on the chemical weapons ban:

	YES	NO
Republicans	29	26
Democrats	45	0

House aides say Mr. Clinton, who describes the treaty as "the longest-sought, hardest-fought prize in arms-control history," wants it ratified quickly.

• **CFE.** This first revision of the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty—which is supposed to be ratified by May 15—will allow Russia to keep more armored vehicles, tanks and artillery, and therefore more troops, along its northern and southern borders. Moscow refused to comply with the 1990 treaty, arguing it didn't reflect post-Soviet strategic reality: shrinking borders and, most importantly, growing instability in the southern region of Chechnya.

After last spring's renegotiation, Republicans strongly criticized the adminis-

tration for pandering to Moscow, particularly at the expense of Russia's Baltic neighbors. With the administration now struggling to craft a new North Atlantic Treaty Organization-Russia charter, and proposing even deeper cuts in European forces in a new round of CFE negotiations, those objections will grow louder. At the same time, GOP enthusiasm for NATO expansion—another canon of the Republican Party—all but guarantees the agreement will be ratified by a large margin.

• **Start II and Start III.** After much political wrangling, the Senate ratified Start II last year. But the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty has languished in the Russian Duma where legislators have linked it to NATO expansion and the ABM dispute, while also attacking it as too expensive and too unequal.

President Clinton tried to pry it loose at Helsinki, first agreeing to delay deadlines for the costly process of destroying missile silos. More importantly, the U.S. agreed to begin discussing even deeper cuts in a new Start III agreement to restore Russian-U.S. parity. Because of the technical peculiarities of Start II, which bans all land-based multiple-warhead missiles, Russia would end up with a far smaller arsenal than the Americans. To regain parity, it would then either have to build new single-warhead missiles or quickly negotiate deeper cuts.

If the Russian Duma acts, the two countries could eventually reduce their arsenals by 80% from Cold War highs. If not, there will be a chilling effect on arms control far beyond the Start agreements, says Alaska Republican Sen. Ted Stevens, a key voice on defense. He notes the Duma hasn't ratified the chemical convention and adds: "I don't think we're going to start rushing to get another piece of work for them before they address those."