

**TO: Nuclear Threat Initiative**  
**FROM: Hart Research Associates**  
**DATE: January 22, 2020**  
**RE: Findings from Survey on Nuclear Weapons Issues**

In November 2019, Hart Research Associates conducted an online survey of highly civically-engaged voters in 13 states. The survey queried voters' opinions about nuclear weapons and related threats.

This memorandum highlights the key findings from this research.

- **More than eight in 10 informed and engaged voters say it is essential or very important for a presidential candidate to have clear plans and policies to address the threat of nuclear weapons.** Voters were asked how important they think it is for candidates for president to have plans and policies related to various threats. Eighty-four percent (84%) say it is essential or very important to have policies for "threats related to nuclear weapons." In fact, it is one of only two types of threats that a majority of voters (55%) say is *essential* for a presidential candidate to have policies related to (terrorism being the other type of threat, at 56%).

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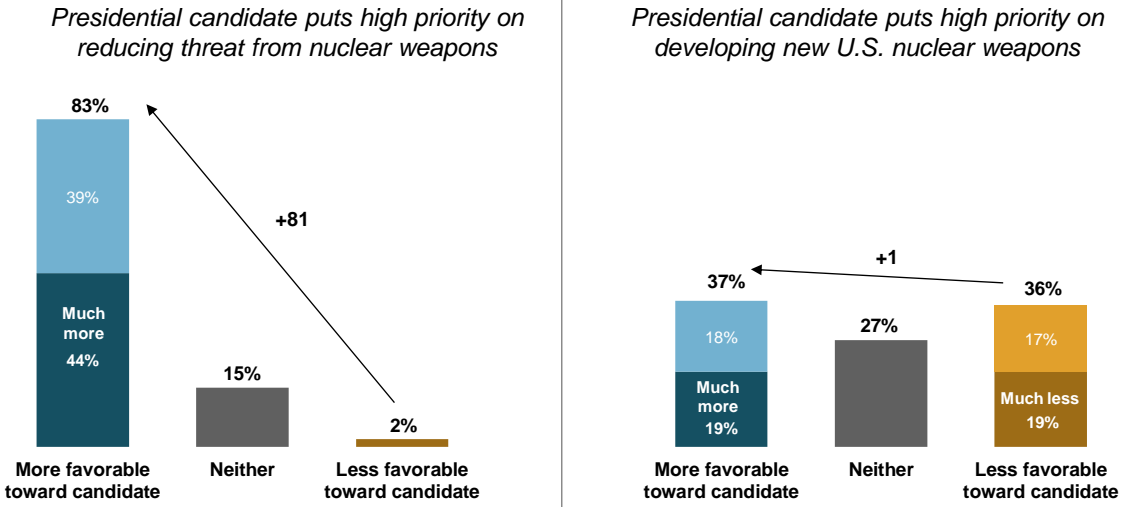
**Proportion of Engaged Voters who Say it is Essential or Very Important for a Candidate to have Policies Related to Threats from...**

Terrorism	87%
Nuclear weapons	84%
Tensions with North Korea	82%
Tensions with Russia	81%
Tensions with China	81%
Climate change	71%
Disease epidemics and pandemics	79%

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- **The large majority of voters respond favorably to a candidate who puts a high priority on reducing the nuclear threat; this is not the case for a candidate whose priority is developing new nuclear weapons.** More than eight in 10 voters (83%) say they would feel more favorable toward a candidate who put a high priority on reducing the threat from nuclear weapons. At the same time, just 37% would feel more favorable toward a candidate who put a high priority on developing new U.S. nuclear weapons.

**Greater Favorability toward a Candidate who will Reduce the Threat of Nuclear Weapons than One who Wants New Weapons**



- **The demand for candidates to address the threat of nuclear weapons cuts across party lines.** In our highly polarized political environment it can be difficult to find areas of agreement between Republicans and Democrats, but this survey identifies nuclear weapons threats to be one such area. Majorities of civically engaged Democrats (57%), independents (54%), and Republicans (53%) say it is essential that a presidential candidate have plans on this issue. Moreover, 87% of Democrats, 71% of independents, and 81% of Republicans say they would feel more favorable toward a candidate who puts a high priority on reducing the threat of nuclear weapons.
- **Voters are interested in knowing candidates’ specific plans on a variety of key aspects of the nuclear threat—starting with preventing terrorists from obtaining nuclear weapons and preventing the use of nuclear weapons.** We asked about 12 topics related to nuclear weapons (everything from reducing or eliminating nuclear weapons to preventing countries like Iran from getting these weapons) and upwards of 75% of voters say they are interested in each one. When asked which three policies they believe are the *most* important:

  - ♦ Forty-one percent (41%) say preventing terrorists from obtaining nuclear weapons (the top choice among Democrats, Republicans, and older voters).
  - ♦ Thirty-one percent (31%) say preventing use of nuclear weapons (the top choice among independents and younger voters).

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- ♦ Twenty-nine percent (29%) say preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.
  - ♦ Twenty-nine percent (29%) say convincing North Korea to give up their nuclear weapons.
  - ♦ Twenty-seven percent (27%) say making progress to eliminate all nuclear weapons (another top choice for younger voters).
- **Voters widely support a number of specific policies that would address the threat of nuclear weapons.** Large majorities of voters have favorable reactions to each of the following policies, providing candidates substantial leeway in terms of how they could structure a nuclear threat reduction agenda that the public would endorse.

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### Proportion of Engaged Voters who Have a Favorable Reaction to Each Policy

Reaffirm President Reagan's principle that a nuclear war can never be won and should never be fought	83%
Enter into mutual agreements with other countries to not use cyber-attacks on nuclear weapons systems	81%
Restore the essential communications between the United States and Russia that existed during the Cold War to prevent accidental or mistaken use of nuclear weapons	81%
Extend the primary nuclear arms control treaty with Russia (called New START) that limits the number of nuclear weapons and launchers and allows inspection of Russian nuclear weapons and military facilities. Then negotiate new agreements to further reduce the number of nuclear weapons	80%
Increase the amount of time leaders have to make a decision about launching a nuclear weapon in response to a reported nuclear attack to prevent a mistake	74%
Remove U.S. nuclear weapons from Turkey to prevent them from being stolen by terrorists	73%
Commit the United States to not build new nuclear weapons and avoid a new nuclear arms race	62%

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*Survey Methodology:* This survey was conducted online from November 11 to 19, 2019. A total of 800 registered voters were interviewed and were screened to ensure that they closely follow news about international affairs and that they get personally involved with issues that are important to them. All respondents are residents of one of the following states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Nevada, South Carolina, Texas, or Virginia. The survey's confidence interval is  $\pm 3.5\%$  for the full sample, with higher tolerances for subgroups.