Forum: Disarmament and International Security Committee

Issue: The question of non-proliferating Weapons of Mass Destruction

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Introduction

Weapons of Mass Destruction commonly known as WMDs are a varied amount of legally ambiguous weapons possessed by numerous member states. With the development of technology and simplified access to the natural resources required for pursuing a WMD program, various members of the United Nations have submitted their program. The rapid increase in WMD militarization poses a great threat to national security alongside civilian security due to the profound amount of demolition the use of WMDs can cause in a region.

Besides the security concerns, the process of composing and carrying out a WMD program whether used actively as a weapon or not leads to severe natural concerns. Manufacturing and the restoration of the WMDs demand contamination of a widespread disposal matter even if the weapons are not being actively deployed. When deployed in a conflict zone, the WMDs can initiate environmental fallouts and disturb the ecological balance severely.

Definition of Key Terms

Weapons of Mass Destruction(WMDs): A nuclear, biological, or chemical weapon with the potential to cause drastic loss of lives and devastation (e.g. Atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki)

Non-proliferation: The prevention of the rapid spreading of something from one actor to another

Verification: The process of confirming the alignment of a program with established agreements by inspections

Deterrence: The action of intimidating another party through means of utilizing owned ammunition to prevent the outbreak of a conflict (e.g. The Cuban Missile Crisis)

Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD): A military strategy doctrine that refers to the two-sided annihilation of two states in a case of deployment of WMDs by the defender state as a counterbalance to the previous deployment of the WMDs by the attacker state on the defensive side (e.g. The Cold War)

Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM): A long-range missile that can bear a nuclear, biological, or chemical warhead between two different continents as for its location of firing and target (e.g. The North Korean missiles that are claimed to have a range extended all the way to the North America continent)

Dual-use technology: A type of technology that can be applied to ameliorate civilian lives or to develop destructive weapons like WMDs (Encryption technologies, Biotechnology, Nanotechnology)

Dual-use materials: Natural resources that can be applied to ameliorate civilian lives or to develop destructive weapons like WMDs (e.g. Enriched uranium, Plutonium, Chemical precursors)

Background Information

1. Use of Chemical WMDs in WW1 and Aftermath

The use of WMDs can be traced back to ancient times when the use of poisonous gasses could be attributed to biological or chemical mass destruction weapons. Until the Industrial Revolution and approaching of the nuclear technology modern WMDs were not present. With the Industrial Revolution, access to dual-use technologies and materials

Two soldiers affected by chlorine and mustard gases during WW1

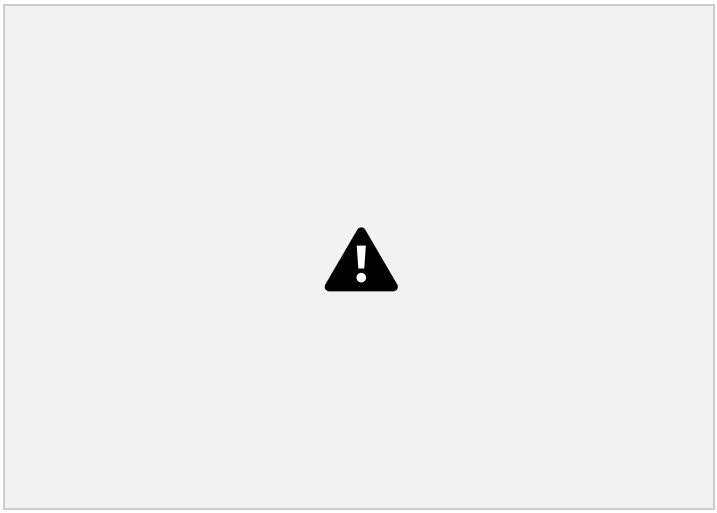
became facilitated for numerous states all around the world thus kick-starting exponentially increasing research for modern WMDs.

The earliest example when the proliferation of WMDs became a major concern is during and after World War One when 90 thousand people lost their lives due to chemical warfare driven by mustard, chlorine, and various other poisonous gasses contaminated by chemical procedures. Chemical weapons were first introduced to the battlefield by the Second German Reich in Ypres, a city in Belgium, in April 1915. During this attack, Germans used chlorine gases on Canadian and British forces which is a strong irritant and fatal irritant on the lungs. Even though numerous Allied states like France and Great Britain utilized similar gases as a response, The Reich remained the most prolific user. Besides the fatal effects it had on human health and civilian security, this newly introduced chemical warfare was not practical and was easily anticipated by Allied forces. Even though it didn't serve as a decisive tool of warfare, the potential it had for mass destruction raised great concerns among the participants of WW1 even after the defeat of the Central Powers. Hence, in Article 171 of the Treaty of Versailles, the Allied States forbade Germany from the production, possession, and importation or exportation of chemical weapons and related materials. Nevertheless, only restricting Germany was not enough for the non-proliferation of chemical weapons, and therefore in 1925, the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners had taken a step towards the issue. Even though it didn't restrict the development or the storage of WMDs, the protocol restricted the use of chemical weapons worldwide. Whilst numerous member states signed and ratified the convention, powerhouses like

The Signing of the Treaty of Versailles by Allied Forces and Germany

the US and Japan did not ratify the treaty.

2. The Question of Chemical and Biological WMDs Until and At WW2



With the establishment of the League of Nations, world states started a general de-militarization act which had the non-proliferation of the chemical and biological WMDs as a goal. As fascist governments that promoted militarization gained popularity in European states, the League of Nations held the 1932 World Disarmament Conference to discuss ways to de-escalate the tension among the emerging forces like the Soviet Union, Capitalist United States, and Fascist Italy under Mussolini. However, this conference failed to reach an agreement. Moreover, in the following years, the use of chemical weapons by Italy in the Second Italo-Ethiopian War which caused approximately 15 thousand deaths only related to chemical WMDs, proved the ineffectiveness of that time's regulations. Seeing the League of Nations' inability to hamper the Italian aggression, Germany started to breach the Treaty of Versailles which limited its military power. This breach was accompanied by German research on nerve agents (chemicals that disrupt the nerves of humans) under Hitler's regime. With the start of WW2 the Axis powers used a wide amount of biological and chemical warfare tools. Usage evolved into a greater humanitarian crisis mainly by the German and Japanese forces which used their chemical warfare units like German Zyklon B gas and Japanese unit 731 on innocent civilians. Even though there was an Allied preparation as a response to the chemical warfare, Allied forces never employed large-scale chemical warfare against the Axis.

3. The Introduction of Nuclear Warfare and Aftermath

Towards the end of WW2, the United States which had been sustaining wide research on nuclear warfare fired two atomic bombs on Japan which had been refusing to surrender. These atomic bombings marked the end of the war and the first and only use of nuclear warfare in human history. The bombing caused severe humanitarian losses ranging from 129,000 to 226,000 people who were mostly civilians.

The ruins of Nagasaki after the bombing

After WW2 there have been multiple agreements on regulating WMDs such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and the Biological Weapons Convention. Despite all these agreements, the drastic proliferation of the WMDs continued, leading to the Cuban Missile Crisis during the Cold War era. The mutual placement of nuclear missiles in neighboring countries of these two superpowers of that time raised a great political concern. The crisis was eventually solved by an agreement between the two sides to remove the missiles from Cuba and Turkey. This crisis is the most important example of the deterrence effect of nuclear warfare.

During the dissolution process of the USSR, there had been a high amount of international concern regarding the fate of the atomic bombs held by the country. The Russian Federation assuming the title of successor state of the USSR gained the nuclear warfare all to itself while granting independence to the other Soviet states.

4. The Significance of WMDs In the Recent Decades

In modern times, the WMDs have become a much more crucial problem with numerous members of the UN obtaining the weapons despite the regulations against it. Moreover, the lack of transparency regarding the situation of the WMDs leads to numerous crises like the Iraq war between 2001 and 2013. The war between a coalition led by the United States and Iraq started as a campaign by the US calling for "ending the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein which aids the terrorist organizations" and "disposal of the WMDs owned by Iraq". During the crisis, US President George Bush strongly claimed that Iraq possessed WMDs which created great international security concerns. However in 2004 during the US invasion, a task force of the US called the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) gathered a report on the WMDs. According to the report, it concluded that Iraq did not possess any chemical, biological, or nuclear WMDs. The failure to find the claimed WMDs led to heavy criticism of the US invasion.

A photo of two US soldiers during a city fight in Najaf, Iraq

As of 2024, it is estimated that 9 member states actively possess WMDs with 6 other member states being a host country for the WMDs controlled by the 9 WMD states. These WMD states are the United States of America, the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, The United Kingdom, The Republic of France, The Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of India, The State of Israel, and The Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Whilst numerous member states have access to these weapons, according to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) only the P5 members who had the WMDs before the signing of the treaty are eligible to possess them to keep up with the deterrence principle. Even though these members are also expected to disband their WMDs gradually, the obtaining of more WMDs by other WMD countries is seen as illegal by the NPT.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

The United States of America

The United States has the 2nd highest amount of WMDs among the member states. With being a P5 member their holdings on WMDs are justified by NPT. The US has bilateral agreements with the Russian Federation called Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (START). This agreement was initially signed between the Soviet Union and the US yet with the Russian Federation assuming the successor state title, the warheads of the Union were passed down to them. Hence, the agreement continues to be a factor for the US and Russian Federation to disband the WMDs mutually. The success of START can be understood by the statistical drop in WMD numbers worldwide since 1985. In 1985, the reported number of total WMDs was around 63 thousand. As of 2024, the number of total WMDs has dropped all the way down to 12 thousand proving the success of START.

Besides the Russian Federation, the US has bilateral negotiations with Iran. Even though there is no proof of nuclear or any kind of WMD program in Iran, numerous member states including P5 members France, UK, and US are concerned by the nuclear research of Iran. Since the 2000s, the US and Western states have been negotiating with Iran for transparency regarding the research yet numerous crises proceeded to erupt between the two states. In response, Western states have implemented a load of sanctions on Iran which were promised to be lifted in case of initiatives of cooperation by Iran.

The Republic of India

India is one of the member states that didn't sign NPT, hence not recognizing the eligibility of the P5 members to possess WMDs legally. The deterrence doctrine mainly drives India's WMD ammunition depending on key neighboring countries like China and Pakistan's WMD ammunition. Due to their main reason for acquiring WMDs being national security matters, India claims no first use act when it comes to deploying WMDs. In contrast to India, Pakistan's main reason for acquiring WMDs is

national security measures specifically regarding the Indian WMD ammunition. Even though both countries issue no-first-use policies, the lack of transparency in WMD storage and deployment flogs this member states into disputes regarding WMDs.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea

DPRK even though initially recognizing the NPT, withdrew from the treaty in 2003 citing national security concerns and failure of the treaty to uphold its goals. Although the primary policy of DPRK was to acquire WMDs for national security, in recent decades, North Korea has been acquiring ICBMs that can target the North American continent. This wide range raises concerns as P5 member United States can be targeted by Korean missiles. The concerns revolve around a possible Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) which can lead to a wider conflict since DPRK has military cooperations with China and Russia, countries that hold high tensions with the US regarding WMD transparency.

People's Republic of China

China, being one of the legal WMD countries according to NPT, owns a large quantity of WMD arsenal. China's general policy depends on the deterrence principle yet it is accompanied by modernizing ideas that expand the ammunition and range of their weapons as the technology advances. This ever-lasting development draws the attention of another Pacific Ocean bordering P5 member US. Over the last few decades, the US has repeatedly asked for transparency from China for the security of international trade in the Pacific Ocean. Yet the Chinese government provided only the explanation of "having a minimum amount required for national security". These transparency issues were further escalated by the 2023 Chinese Balloon Incident. The claims of espionage are continuous between two member states with governments even arresting civilians of their state with espionage offenses.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

IAEA is one of the main organizations of the UN specializing in the safeguarding, verification, and dissemination of nuclear resources. The organization's primary mission is to limit the negative impact of nuclear research on the member states on natural and civilian security. Whilst the IAEA is not involved in the political affairs of the states, IAEA has been publishing regular inspections on Iranian nuclear research as the UNSC calls for it. Even with the verification of the IAEA, the suspicion among the West for additional activities that are not monitored by the IAEA remained profound.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
28 July 1914	**The start of WW1**
22 April 1915	**The first use of chemical warfare in the 2nd Battle of Ypres by Germans**
28 June 1919	**The signing of the Treaty of Versailles**
17 June 1925	**The signing of the Geneva Protocol**
2 February 1932	**Geneva Conference on Reduction and Limitation of Armaments**
3 October 1935	**2nd Italo-Ethiopian War**
1 September 1939	**The Start of WW2**
6 August 1945	**The US atomic bombing of Hiroshima**

9 August 1945	**The US atomic bombing of Nagasaki**
16 October 1962	**The Cuban Missile Crisis**
1 July 1968	**The Signing of The Treaty of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**
10 April 1972	**The Signing of The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)**
26 December 1991	**Dissolution of the USSR**
13 January 1993	**The signing of The Chemical Weapon Convention (CWC)**
20 March 2003	**Iraq War**
14 July 2015	**Iran Nuclear Deal**
9 June 2023	**Russian Federation announces the deployment of nuclear bombs to Belarus as a host country**

Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

- UNSC Resolution 687 (1991)

This resolution was passed after the Gulf War to cleanse Iraq of biological, chemical, and nuclear WMDs. To oversee the disarmament process, the resolution mandated the creation of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM).

- UNSC Resolution 1441 (2002)

This resolution was created after Iraq failed to comply with the IAEA as Resolution 687 called for a joint disarmament program with the cooperation of IAEA and Iraq.

- UNSC Resolution 1737 (2006)

This resolution calls for sanctions on Iran as the Islamic State has violated numerous previous resolutions that suspend uranium enrichment activities. The main goal of the resolution was to deter Iran from acquiring dual-use materials.

- UNSC Resolution 1929 (2010)

This resolution called for additional sanctions on Iran after the Islamic State failed to comply with previous resolutions of the UNSC even after the sanctions of the UNSC Resolution 1737.

- UNSC Resolution 2310 (2016)

This resolution focuses on preventing terrorist organizations from acquiring biological, chemical, or nuclear WMDs. The resolution calls for enhanced transparency and cooperation among the member states.

- NPT (1968)

NPT calls upon the member states to prevent the spreading of nuclear WMDs among the nations and instead reverse the use of dual-use technology and resources for peaceful purposes.

- BWC (1972)

BWC calls upon states to prohibit the development, production, and use of biological WMDs. The convention does not enforce the disbandment of the preexisting biological weapons yet it encourages the disarmament.

- CWC (1993)

CWC calls upon the states to eliminate the whole category of chemical WMDs by prohibiting the development, production, and stockpiling of any chemical WMDs. In

contrast to the BWC and NPT, this convention aims not to only prevent the proliferation but to disband any preexisting chemical WMD too.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Iran Nuclear Deal

The Islamic State of Iran started its nuclear research with the help of the Atoms for Peace program led by the US in the 50s. With the White Revolution of Iran between 63 and 79, the relations between the US and Iran were severely strained. As a result, the US withdrew its assistance. Starting from these years, Iran pursued its own program. In the early 2000s, the Western states raised concerns regarding the nuclear research of Iran. Despite being a part of the NPT which meant that they were not allowed by the law to obtain nuclear WMDs, the Islamic State was accused of integrating their initial civilian program into a weapon program. In November 2003, IAEA published its first report on the Iranian nuclear program citing that Iran was incooperative and had several inconsistencies in their provided report. These led to two UNSC resolutions sanctioning the Islamic State in 2006 and 2010. Despite the sanctions, the Western states persuaded another negotiation in 2016 where The Iran nuclear agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed. This plan limited the uranium enrichment stockpiling of Iran limiting the access of the state to dual-use resources. In return, the US and Western states lifted off numerous sanctions on Iran. However, these sanctions were reimplemented in 2018 with the US withdrawing unilaterally from the plan citing that Iran was not complying with the deal through secret nuclear research bases.

Six-Party Talks

North Korea's nuclear research became a concern among the member states in the early 90s when the DPRK refused IAEA inspection of their nuclear facilities. The escalating tension eased within the following year due to a framework agreed upon between the US and DPRK. The framework promised US-assisted energy sources provided to the DPRK in exchange for freezing the nuclear reactors. In the

following decade, the framework broke down due to mistrust on both sides, and the tension escalated. The tension saw its peak with DPRK withdrawing from NPT which was the most promising legal foundation keeping it from producing WMDs legally. Following the withdrawal, DPRK announced its official nuclear weapon development program. As a response, China initiated the Six-Party Talks with the participation of DPRK, China, the Russian Federation, the US, South Korea, and Japan. The negotiations advanced slowly yet in 2008, the talks finalized an agreement on closing North Korea's nuclear facility in Yongbyon and restricting the plutonium production in return for energy assistance. Despite the progress, in the following year, the talks crashed down and DPRK withdrew from the talks. From then DPRK resumed its nuclear armament despite the UN sanctioning and diplomatic efforts.

Possible Solutions

While exploring possible compromises between member states to disband or stop the expansion of WMD ammunition, delegates should consider the deterrence doctrine. Member states that are not recognized by the NPT as WMD states stand against the deal because of a key neighbor that they share hostile ties with. These states cite national security concerns as their legal base to obtain WMDs. Launching dual-disbandment programs for countries with clashing interests, delegates may compose a midcourse. While exploring two-sided agreements, delegates should keep in mind that some of the non-WMD member states cite P5 members as a threat to their national security thus making it more complex to search for a midcourse.

Another point that delegates should pay attention to is the desire of terrorist organizations to obtain WMDs. In contrast to the member states-related national security concerns, these kinds of organizations raise a greater amount of concern regarding national security. Since these organizations do not abide by any constitution that can restrict their military actions, it is the primary mission of the delegates to preserve WMDs away from the grip of terrorist organizations.

Lastly, the environmental concerns regarding the WMDs should be addressed in resolutions. The stockpiling of the WMDs contains a great potential to deflect into an environmental fallout. Any facility that researches the dual-use technology of the WMDs should be verified by the IAEA or any other credible source to prevent any natural catastrophes. Despite being a great step towards non-proliferation, the disbandment of facilities that research dual-use technologies raises questions regarding the safety of decontamination.

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