

Forum: Special Conference on Peace, Law and Justice (SPC)

Issue: Measures to strengthen international cooperation in the field of protection against an atomic attack

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Introduction

Many of us have lived our lives without the dreaded fear of nuclear annihilation. The Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union ended over 30 years ago. Our parents and grandparents lived through the darkest fears of nuclear war, but our generation has not thought much about the dangers of nuclear weapons, until now. Now it is time to be concerned. Now we need to do something to lessen the danger. The Measures to strengthen international cooperation in the field of protection against an atomic attack have been a critical issue for the world since the development of atomic weapons at the end of World War II. At the present time, many previous bilateral nuclear arms control agreements have lapsed or have been weakened by an ever growing list of states that have developed atomic weapons. As the number of nations who possess atomic weapons grows, and previous disarmament treaties expire, there is a growing risk of nuclear war that threatens all of humanity. During this forum, let us strive to agree to resolutions that will strengthen existing international nuclear non-proliferation policy frameworks, forge long lasting treaties, create reliable defense strategies, and make continuous progress towards disarmament and decommission of atomic arms.

Definition of Key Terms

Atomic Arms / Nuclear Weapons

a bomb whose violent explosive power is due to the sudden release of energy resulting from the splitting of nuclei of a heavy chemical element (such as plutonium or uranium) by neutrons in a very rapid chain reaction, also known as an *atom bomb*.¹

Decommission or Dismantling Nuclear Weapons

According to a 2019 article in the MIT campus newsletter², nuclear weapons inspectors usually cannot actually verify that a nuclear warhead has been dismantled. When countries sign arms reduction treaties, they do not allow inspectors full access to their atomic technology. Previous U.S. Russia arms

¹ "Merriam-Webster Dictionary." *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2020, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/atomic%20bomb.

² Dizikes, Peter. "How to Dismantle a Nuclear Bomb." *MIT News | Massachusetts Institute of Technology*, 10 Sept. 2019, news.mit.edu/2019/verify-dismantle-nuclear-bombs-0927

reduction treaties require only the destruction of the delivery systems for nuclear warheads, such as jets or missiles, but not the actual explosive warheads. To comply with the START treaty, the U.S. removed the wings from B-52 bombers, where Russia could visually confirm the parts dismemberment from satellite images.

Defense Strategies

Defense: Anything that opposes attack, violence, danger or injury; any thing that secures the person, the rights or the possessions of men; fortification; guard; protection; security.³

Strategies: 1) the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war, 2) the science and art of military command exercised to meet the enemy in combat under advantageous conditions.⁴

Nuclear Disarmament

The gradual reduction and eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons in the world.⁵

Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Providing for the stoppage of proliferation (as of nuclear arms).⁶

Policy Frameworks

Policy: a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a governmental body.⁷

Framework: a basic conceptual structure (as of ideas).⁸

Treaty

an agreement or arrangement made by negotiation: a contract in writing between two or more political authorities (such as states or sovereigns) formally signed by representatives duly authorized and usually ratified by the lawmaking authority of the state.⁹

³- "Websters Dictionary 1828 - Webster's Dictionary 1828 - Defense." *Websters Dictionary 1828*, webstersdictionary1828.com/Home?word=defense. Accessed 14 Dec. 2023.

⁴ -. "Definition of STRATEGY." *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/strategy.

⁵ - Nuclear Disarmament definition - Collins online dictionary.

⁶ - "Definition of NONPROLIFERATION." *Www.merriam-Webster.com*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nonproliferation#:~:text=non. Accessed 14 Dec. 2023.

⁷ - Merriam-Webster. "Definition of POLICY." *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/policy.

⁸ "Definition of FRAMEWORK." *Www.merriam-Webster.com*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/framework.

⁹ "Definition of TREATY." *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/treaty.

Nuclear Winter

the chilling of climate that is hypothesized to be a consequence of nuclear war and to result from the prolonged blockage of sunlight by high-altitude dust clouds produced by nuclear explosions.¹⁰

Background Information

The only use of atomic arms in war was when the United States detonated two atomic bombs over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945. These two bombings killed between 129,000 and 226,000 people, mostly Japanese civilians. Ever since the power of these powerful weapons was unleashed, many international and bi-lateral agreements have been forged to minimize the risks of atomic attack. Important international agreements such as the NPT of 1968 and the TPNW of 2021 have helped maintain nuclear peace. The atomic arms race between the USA and the USSR started when the Soviet Union conducted its first atomic bomb test on August 29, 1949. Over the last 78 years, the number of atomic weapons, the number of nations that possess them and the risk of their use in war has variously increased and decreased, but today the threat is steadily increasing. Unfortunately, at the present time, many agreements have lapsed or have been weakened by violations of international agreements by an ever growing list of states that have developed atomic weapons. As the number of nations who possess atomic weapons grows, and previous disarmament treaties expire, there is a growing risk of nuclear war that threatens all of humanity. All nation states must act to strengthen and enforce existing international nuclear non-proliferation policy frameworks and to forge long lasting treaties, create reliable defense strategies and continue a continuous pace of disarmament and decommission of atomic arms. Recent conflict between the world's largest nuclear armed states, the USA and Russia, over the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has greatly increased the risk of surprise nuclear attack. Rising political tensions between the US and China and North Korea have also increased the risks. Direct communications between military leaders in China and the US and between Russia and the US have mostly stopped in the last few years as numerous economic sanctions and counter sanctions have caused a complete disruption in diplomacy between these three key nuclear armed nations¹¹. This poor communications increases the risk of misunderstandings which could ultimately lead to nuclear standoffs. More recently the Israeli Palestinian war in Gaza has ratched up risks in the Middle East. Despite these challenges, and in the midst of ongoing and intensifying regional and global political and territorial conflicts, the nations of the world must find better ways to keep these

¹⁰ "Merriam-Webster Dictionary." *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2020, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nuclear%20winter.

¹¹ "U.S.-Chinese Military Hotline Hasn't Been Restored a Month after Biden-Xi Summit." *NBC News*, 12 Dec. 2023, www.nbcnews.com/investigations/us-chinese-military-hotline-hasnt-restored-month-biden-xi-summit-rcn-a129137.

horrific atomic weapons from ever being used again in armed conflict.

Recent progress has been made by the UN in this area. Following the 2021 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), two “Meetings of States Parties” were held in 2022 and as recently as December 2023.

The Doomsday Clock is a metaphor that measures the risk of a human-made global catastrophe, and this risk measurement is based on an annual survey of the members of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. The Doomsday Clock has been kept since 1947, and it is a metaphor for the combined threats to human civilization from scientific and technological developments. Global destruction is represented by midnight on the clock, with the Bulletin's opinion on how close the world is to catastrophe by the number of seconds to midnight. The main factors influencing the Doomsday Clock are the risks of atomic war and climate change. The first time on the clock in 1947 was seven minutes before midnight. The lowest risk was in 1991 (17 minutes before midnight). The highest risk is now, in 2023 (90 seconds before midnight).

Sub-topic 1: Fostering international cooperation to create policy frameworks and treaties.

Diplomacy is extremely important in this area. At the present time, some of the nuclear armed states are not involved in direct or open dialogue. Russia and China have frequent and productive diplomatic dialogue, but neither is talking seriously with the USA about security concerns or nuclear arms reductions. In fact Russia and the USA have not renewed any of the key bilateral atomic arms reduction agreements that were previously signed throughout the last 40 years. New UN-led efforts to rekindle cooperation between nations which will create new policy frameworks and treaties in the protection against atomic attack have been very active since the 2021 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) (A/RES/76/128). This vital treaty and the following “Meetings of States Parties” have continued to strengthen and revitalize international cooperation to prevent atomic attacks. However more can be done to encourage all member states to participate in these efforts to continue expand and enhance the implementation of the TPNW treaty.

Sub-topic 2: Creating defense strategies.

These weapons are so destructive that they have been thought to be a deterrence in themselves. In other words, once a country has atomic arms and the means to deploy them, it is much less likely that another country would attack. For many years, the US and Russia maintained a policy called Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), this policy was at the heart of the early cold war and is still maintained and is still at the heart of the defense strategy of a number of nuclear armed nations. The global Nuclear Winter scenario and threat of nuclear retaliation in the event of a first strike is so terrible that all of humanity is at risk. According to an April 2023 article in the Harvard International Review¹², “MAD has

¹² “Salvation or Annihilation; Is MAD Mad?” *Harvard International Review*, 3 Apr. 2023, hir.harvard.edu/salvation-or-annihilation-is-mad-mad/.

become military doctrinal orthodoxy since the development of reliable means of nuclear retaliation in the 1960s. The theory holds that a nuclear armed state will not use nuclear weapons in a first strike against another nuclear state provided that the targeted state has the capability to make a retaliatory strike, rendering the first strike self-destructive". This defense strategy seems extreme on first inspection; MAD is mad because the heart of the strategy creates an enormous and growing risk. The dilemma is that leaders of countries who feel insecure often desire to ensure their defense by seeking to obtain their own nuclear arms arsenal. An example of a nation that has recently developed its own nuclear arms industry is North Korea (DPRK). In the last 20 years North Korea has armed itself with many nuclear weapons and an assortment of missiles to deliver them anywhere in Asia and even in the US. The global community responded with a vast array of punishing sanctions against North Korea, but these sanctions have not been effective at all.

Sub-topic 3: Disarmament and decommission of atomic arms.

For any nuclear armed nation to disarm or reduce their weapons stockpile, they need to exist in a secure enough geopolitical world where a nuclear deterrent is not important enough to justify the costs of an atomic arsenal. A nation needs to be able to rely on some other security framework which can protect them effectively. Even very economically stressed countries who perceive a high threat of attack or invasion may attempt to develop or maintain their nuclear arms.

The bilateral nuclear weapons agreements between the US and the Soviet Union in the 1980's were initiated in a large part because Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan were both convinced by respected scientists including Carl Sagan and Russian scientists that any nuclear war would result in disastrous "Nuclear Winter". This would cause a global failure of agriculture and mass starvation of global populations. It was climate study science that convinced these leaders to drastically reduce the number of atomic weapons. The first key bilateral agreement came in 1987, when "*Gorbachev and Reagan signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, agreeing to eliminate by 1991 their countries' arsenals of ground-launched, mid range nuclear missiles (ranging from about 300 to 3,400 miles). It was the first agreement to reduce nuclear arms—as opposed to setting ceilings—and it introduced comprehensive verification measures.*"¹³

Later in July 1991, just a month before the fall of the Soviet Union, U.S. President George H.W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev of the USSR signed the START treaty. The START agreement was successful because both sides possessed more than ten thousand deployed atomic weapons in 1990, and the START agreement meant both the US and USSR would cut their nuclear arsenals to less than

¹³ Council on Foreign Relations. "U.S.-Russia Nuclear Arms Control." *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2017, www.cfr.org/timeline/us-russia-nuclear-arms-control.

six thousand warheads by 2009.¹⁴

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United States of America

The USA was the first nation to develop, test and use atomic bombs in war against Japan in 1945. Now possesses an estimated 5,244 atomic warheads of various sizes and power. 1,770 of these nuclear warheads are actively deployed. The US has tested the largest number of known atomic explosions, at ~ 1,030 tests.

Russian Federation and former USSR

Tested the first atomic bomb in August 1949. Now possesses the largest number of nuclear warheads at ~ 5,889 warheads. ~1,674 warheads are actively deployed today. Russia has tested the second largest number of known atomic explosions at ~ 1,030 tests.

United Kingdom

First test of UK atomic bomb on 3 Oct 1952. Now possess ~225 nuclear warheads of which 120 are actively deployed.

France

First atomic bomb test was on 13 Feb 1960. Now possess ~290 warheads of which ~ 280 are actively deployed.

People's Republic of China

First atomic bomb test was on 16 Oct 1964. Currently possess ~500 nuclear warheads, and it is thought none are actively deployed. Expanding nuclear arsenal and long distance missiles.

India

First atomic bomb tested in 1974, and again in 1998, now has enough nuclear fissile material to build ~150 atomic bombs.

Pakistan

In May 1998, tested and developed nuclear weapons in response to India's atomic bomb announcements. Thought to have up to ~120 warheads now.

North Korea

A "rogue nuclear state" who has withdrawn from all international agreements and pursued a large and dangerous atomic weapons development and deployment over the last 20 years

Japan

The only nation to be attacked by atomic weapons

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International nuclear safety and inspection agency with a role to conduct inspect both nuclear

¹⁴ Council on Foreign Relations. "U.S.-Russia Nuclear Arms Control." *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2017, www.cfr.org/timeline/us-russia-nuclear-arms-control.

energy plants and suspected atomic weapons manufacturing and fuel enrichment sites.

ICJ (International Court of Justice)

Plays an important role in the implementation of the NPT.

Timeline of Events

Date (start - end)	Name	Description
Aug 6-9, 1945	The US attacks Japan with 2 atomic bombs.	Still the only use of nuclear bombs in war, started the atomic arms race and demonstrated their terrible destructive power. Created a desire for the USSR to also gain its own atomic bombs. President Truman stated this was the best way to end WWII. This is a highly debated historic and moral topic.
Aug 29, 1949	USSR tests its first atomic bomb	The start of the cold war competition between the 2 largest atomic armed states and mistrust that builds throughout the last 74 years.
Nov 24, 1961	Declaration on the prohibition of the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons, adopted at the 1063rd plenary meeting (A_RES_1653(XVI)-EN)	First UN international agreement on non-proliferation of nuclear arms, with an objective to minimize the number of future nations who acquire atomic arms and lower the risk of nuclear war.
1968	NPT (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons)	Treaty to minimize the spread of additional nuclear weapons. NPT was extended indefinitely in May 1995. By August 2016 191 nations had agreed to the NPT.
Jan 22, 2021	The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), 13 July 2021 (A/RES/76/128) adopted by the Conference at the United Nations on 7 July 2017 and entered into force on 22 January 2021	Most recent attempt by UN member states to continue the process of prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons

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Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Declaration on the prohibition of the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons, adopted at the 1063rd plenary meeting, 24 Nov. 1961 (**A_RES_1653(XVI)-EN**)
- Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, 3 Dec 2012 (**A/RES/67/56**)
- Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, 5 Dec 2013 (**A/RES/68/46**)
- Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, 2 Dec 2014 (**A/RES/69/41**)
- Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, 7 Dec 2015 (**A/RES/70/33**)
- Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, 23 Dec 2016 (**A/RES/71/258**)
- Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and Declaration to convene a UN conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. July 7, 2017 (**A/RES/71/258**) (**A/CONF.229/2017/8**)
- General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to render the necessary assistance and to provide such services as may be necessary to fulfill the tasks entrusted to him under the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. 4 December 2017 (**A/RES/72/31**)
- The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), 13 July 2021 (**A/RES/76/128**) adopted by the Conference at the United Nations on 7 July 2017 and entered into force on 22 January 2021
- Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons Report of the Secretary-General, 12 July 2022 (**A/77/152**)
- Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons Report of the Secretary-General, 10 July 2023 (**A/78/138**)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The NPT (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons) is an international treaty with the goal to prevent the proliferation of atomic arms and technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of atomic energy, and to further the goal of nuclear weapons disarmament. The NPT treaty was negotiated from 1965 to 1968 by an Eighteen Nation Committee on Disarmament, a UN backed organization based in Geneva, Switzerland. The NPT entered into force in 1970. The NPT Parties agreed in May 1995 to extend the treaty indefinitely. The NPT has now been ratified by more nations than any other atomic weapons agreement. As of August 2016, 191 countries have signed the NPT. North Korea is an unusual case because they signed the NPT in 1985 but later withdrew in 2003, after testing its first atomic bomb and violating the NPT treaty. Three UN member states, India, Pakistan, and Israel have never signed the NPT and they are all states who have atomic arms programs.

The NPT treaty defines nuclear weapons states as those nations that have built and tested a

nuclear explosive device before 1 January 1967; these are the USA, Russia, UK, France, and China. Three other nations are known or believed to possess nuclear weapons including India, Pakistan, and North Korea, who have all openly tested and declared that they possess nuclear weapons. Israel has never officially admitted possessing atomic weapons.

Renewed interest in the humanitarian impact of atomic arms was first described in the report (NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)) of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to NPT. In its conclusions and recommendations, the Conference “expressed its deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and reaffirmed the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law.”

In 2012, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 67/56 “Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations”. This resolution, started a multi-year process, and later in 2013, the General Assembly organized a working group to develop proposals to initiate “multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons” which were summarized in the UN report (A/68/514).

Later, in 2013 and 2014, a series of three international conferences were organized to discuss the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, convened in Norway, Mexico and Austria. These three conferences sought to “present a facts-based understanding of the short and longer-term effects of a nuclear weapon detonation”. The conferences included a majority of UN Member States, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and representatives of NGO groups. The meetings were coordinated by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

Following the 2021 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), the first “Meeting of States Parties” was held in Vienna, Austria, on 21 June 2022. This meeting adopted a Declaration entitled “Our commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons” as well as the Vienna Action Plan for more implementations of the Treaty. The meeting also established deadlines for the “removal from operational status and destruction of nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, and their removal from national territories, as required by article 4 of the Treaty”. The report of the first Meeting (TPNW/MSP/2022/6) records the decisions taken at the meeting. The second “Meeting of States Parties” has been scheduled at United Nations Headquarters, New York from 27 November to 1 December 2023, This demonstrates that the UN is very actively involved in the issue being discussed at THIMUN in January 2024.

Possible Solutions

Sub-topic 1: Fostering international cooperation to create policy frameworks and treaties.

In order to re-engage in diplomatic efforts between the US and Russia, other nations that have

good diplomatic relations should act as intermediaries to reestablish negotiations on nuclear arms reductions. Intermediary nations such as the UAE or India could play a decisive role in restarting these talks.

Sub-topic 2: Creating defense strategies.

When it comes to the “carrot vs the stick”, the carrot seems to be a better solution. To stop atomic arms proliferation, without creating new atomic armed states, it is critical for international organizations like the UN to create more incentives for countries to shun the temptation to obtain nuclear arms. The 2015 Iranian nuclear deal was made to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons is a great example of positive incentives. When former US President Donald Trump withdrew from this agreement in 2017 and installed more sanctions, Iran immediately restarted its nuclear arms program. This history demonstrates that positive international incentives are actually a viable part of defense strategy today.

Sub-topic 3: Disarmament and decommission of atomic arms.

Consider resolutions which will encourage UN member states to continuously build peaceful solutions to conflicts that arise. This may be a slow process, but there will be future opportunities to disarm or decommission nuclear weapons if world leaders begin to trust each other and openly communicate concerns before they develop into full scale military conflict.

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