

Forum: General Assembly 1 (GA1)

Issue: *Pursuing nuclear disarmament in alignment with the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*

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Introduction

Nuclear weapons are the most destructive and inhumane weapons created and known to mankind at this time. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was signed in September 2017 and is effective as of January 2021. This prohibition treaty is the first proper legally binding agreement to attempt to eliminate the overall use, stockpiling, and production of nuclear weaponry. There are currently 84 signatories, all of whom are required to stop all testing and production of nuclear weaponry, and to treat and take remedial measures on areas that have been affected or contaminated by such nuclear production or testing.

As nuclear disarmament is crucial in attaining transnational peace and international cooperation, many conferences have been held, multiple solutions have been suggested, and negotiations have been gradually inching towards potential total nuclear disarmament. Although nuclear weapons have maintained peace between powers to a certain degree by forcing countries to reconsider and reweigh the impending long-term and short-term costs of a full nuclear war, the very existence of such weaponry and the very idea that millions of lives may be cost to settle a binational feud is chilling. Dangers of such weapons stem from the fear that control centers for nuclear weapons can be hacked or taken control of by terrorist or non-governmental groups.

Definition of Key Terms

Disarmament

Disarmament refers to the withdrawal or removal of military forces or weapons from a designated area.

Nuclear Weapon

A nuclear weapon is an explosive device derived from nuclear/ atomic energy. Nuclear weapons have the capability to destroy entire cities with its blast radius. In addition, it produces ionizing radiation which sickens or kills the remainder of the population.

Stockpiling

In the context of this issue, stockpiling refers to a country's excessive storage of nuclear weapons and its components.

Radiation Contamination

Radiation contamination occurs when radioactive materials are released into the environment. Radiation exposure can cause a variety of health issues such as cancer, poorer immune system, and a shortened life expectancy.

Proliferation

Refers to a nation's unchecked ability to stockpile and develop their nuclear arsenal. Proliferation can also be used to refer to the possible acquisition of nuclear weapons by terrorist or non-governmental organizations.

Background Information

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

In 2017, the General Assembly came together to begin the negotiations for a method to aid nations in the disarmament process of nuclear weapons from their states. The result was the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

Initiation

Calls for a worldwide nuclear-weapon ban treaty began in 2010, when 5 nuclear-armed member nations, namely the United States of America, China, Russia, Great Britain and France all neglected the initial calls for a nuclear weapons convention. Advocates for the disarmament of nuclear-weapon nations then called for the formation of a treaty as a 'path forward' in an attempt to encourage the five adamant nations to cooperate with the rest of the world. In 2013 and 2014, three international conferences were held in three different countries: Austria, Norway and

Mexico, and these helped to solidify and unify the idea that nuclear weapons needed to be banned as soon as possible.

Initial Draft and Negotiations

The first round of negotiations were held in New York, at the United Nations headquarters, with the participation of 132 member nations. However there were some hurdles that needed to be addressed and overcome. For instance, it was very clear that many NATO members, such as Germany, Belgium and Turkey, needed to end their nuclear weapon sharing alliances and agreements with the United States of America, however the only NATO member actually participating in the treaty negotiations was the Netherlands. In July 2017, the final vote was cast for the final draft of the treaty, and the result was 122 countries voted in favour of the treaty, the Netherlands was the solitary vote against the treaty, and Singapore was the only abstention.

Usages and Impacts

The only times in history when nuclear weaponry has been used in conflict or war are the catastrophic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in 1945, yet there have been about 2,055 nuclear testings conducted to date, with over 14,000 nuclear weapons still remaining in the possession of nuclear armed nations today. The lasting effects of nuclear warfare are crippling and fatal, as demonstrated by Hiroshima and Nagasaki: a single nuclear bomb can wipe out an entire city and kill millions of citizens. If a full blown nuclear war were to occur between two powerful member nations, such as the United States of America and the Russian Federation, the blasts would not be limited to military personnel or the population of the respective countries, but it would however spill over and reach hundreds of millions of people across the globe. Even after the final waves of the blast dissipate, the aftereffects still are a fatal issue.

Key Issues

A Divided Stance

The main issue with this treaty and nuclear disarmament is the difference of opinion between member nations.

The Supporters

All 54 member nations in the African continent alongside all 33 member nations in the Caribbean and Latin America are in full support in a treaty which fully bans nuclear weaponry. The

10 member nations of the ASEAN group took part in the negotiations of the treaty, however Singapore abstained from the final vote. This group included previously nuclear-armed countries, such as South Africa and Kazakhstan, who, according to the National Public Radio organization, both willingly gave up their nuclear weapons previously.

The Resistant

Many member nations such as Australia, Japan, and the majority of NATO members, believe that the US retaining its nuclear power enhances their security. If the US was required to come alongside NATO in their defence in the case of a national emergency or a transnational feud it would further bolster international security. NATO members also feel that, according to the NATO review, the treaty itself is ineffective in its attempt to try and compensate for the disarmament of nuclear-weapon member nations.

The Aftereffects of Nuclear Warfare

The resounding aftermath of nuclear warfare is severe and damaging. Once detonated, the nuclear arsenal leaves a path of pure destruction in their wake, and tens of millions dead. Furthermore, years after the initial blast, exposure to the radiation can cause genetic damage and cellular mutations leading to disease such as cancer. This is not to mention the subsequent environmental damage due to ionization radiation contamination. This results in a lack of safe resources for harvesting agricultural goods, and the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear Warfare Organization have estimated that this may lead to a severe global famine for up to 2 billion people. Populations seeking rehabilitation or rehoming will further exacerbate the refugee crisis, and the Physicians for Social Responsibility believe that the current global resources are of no match to any global famine in that magnitude.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United States of America (US)

It is no secret that the United States of America does not support the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. In fact, according to AP and CBS news, the United States has openly urged member nations to withdraw from the treaty. It's position could not be more clear: the US does not want to get rid of their nuclear weapons in adherence to this current treaty; however, this does not mean that other resolutions cannot be made to satisfy both the United States and the rest of the world. So far, the US stands unified with its NATO alliances, as well as the other four 'original' nuclear powers, France, Great

Britain, Russia and China, against the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Although the US seems somewhat open to a worldwide ban, they do not seem to agree with the plan of action proposed by the treaty.

United Kingdom (UK)

The United Kingdom is also not in favour of the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Although, like the US, the UK firmly believes that the eradication of nuclear weaponry is crucial to walking towards world peace, and according to Ambassador Matthew Rycroft, the UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations, the United Kingdom wishes for a more step-by-step, gradual method, to help ease nuclear-weapon nations into existence without the weaponry. The UK also believes in transparency and international trust and cooperation, and strongly feels that the treaty at hand does nothing to address that or the other key issues regarding nuclear weaponry, such as but not limited to undermining the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty and improving the international security environment. According to the Official Website of the Government of the United Kingdom, the UK did not take any part during the negotiations of this treaty and have firmly held their stance on not being at all willing to ratify or sign the treaty at hand.

France

France has decided not to sign or ratify the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. It does, however, fully intend to uphold its commitments to nuclear disarmament, just as the United Kingdom and the United States have done. France does not agree with the conditions of the treaty, as, according to the French Diplomat, it strongly feels that the focus of the treaty is to put pressure on European nations to commence disarmament, with not nearly as much pressure on other states, and thus refuses to sign it. They also believe that the treaty is not suitable nor is it applicable to the current global security atmosphere. France has, however, been one of the first countries ever to dismantle their nuclear weapons production plants, and the first nation to transparently remove the testing site for nuclear materials in the Pacific.

Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Date	Description of event
July 16th, 1942	<p>The Trinity Test</p> <p>On this day, the first atomic bomb was detonated in a project called the Trinity Test near Alamogordo, New Mexico. This was part of the Manhattan Project conducted by the United States during WWII, under the direction of J. Robert Oppenheimer, also known as the “father of the atomic bomb”.</p>
August 1945	<p>Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki</p> <p>Hoping for a quick Japanese surrender during WWII, the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, known as “Little Boy” and “Fat Man”. These two atomic bombs killed around a hundred thousand people on direct impact, and killed many more as a result of radiation exposure in the coming decades.</p>
1949 - 1990s	<p>Nuclear Arms Race</p> <p>The Nuclear Arms Race began in 1949 when the Soviet Union exploded an atomic bomb. The Arms Race was a competition for supremacy in nuclear weapons between the Soviet Union and the United States, as well as their respective allies during the Cold War.</p>
August 5th, 1963	<p>1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water</p> <p>Also known as the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), this treaty prohibited all test detonations of nuclear weapons except for those underground. 126 parties signed and ratified this treaty, with 10 others who signed but did not ratify.</p>
1970s	<p>Second Nuclear Age</p> <p>The Second Nuclear Age is synonymous with the proliferation of nuclear weapons among countries considered lesser and and for other reasons than the Cold War. Countries such as India, South Africa, and Israel have now begun testing and building nuclear weapons.</p>

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

July 1st, 1968

The NPT is an international treaty aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and other related technology, as well as promoting peaceful use of nuclear technology. It also aims to achieve nuclear disarmament, as well as disarmament in general.

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

September 20th,
2017

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was signed, and will come into effect on January 22, 2021. This treaty prohibits the testing, development, production, transfer, use, purchase, and stockpiling of nuclear weapons to all signatories.

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (cont)

January 22nd, 2021

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will come into effect.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- **Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Seabed and Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof (Seabed Treaty), February 11th, 1971**

Opened for signature on February 11th, 1971 and entered into force on May 18th, 1972, this treaty prohibits the placing, installing, or establishment of facilities relating to the storing, testing of nuclear weapons in the seabed or subsoil within a 12-mile territorial zone.

- **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was signed on the first of July, 1968, and was negotiated by the Eighteen Nation Committee on Disarmament, a UN sponsored organization. This treaty is often seen as a central bargain, and one section reads “the NPT non-nuclear-weapon states agree never to acquire nuclear weapons and the NPT nuclear-weapon states in exchange agree to share the benefits of peaceful nuclear technology and to pursue nuclear disarmament aimed at the ultimate elimination of their nuclear arsenals...”

essentially striking a compromise between states that own nuclear weapons and those that don't. This treaty has been signed by 190 parties, exceptions including South Sudan, India, Israel, North Korea, and Pakistan.

- **Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)**

The CTBT is a multilateral treaty that bans all nuclear tests for both military and civilian in all environments signed on September 10th, 1996. Although ratified by 168 states, it cannot be entered into force without the countries of China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, and the United States taking further action. The push for the establishment of this treaty came from the size and amount of nuclear tests conducted in water and other environments and the resulting nuclear fallout.

- **United Nations Security Council Resolution 1874, 12 June 2009, (S/RES/1874)**

This resolution, passed by the UN Security Council, was adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council on June 12th, 2009. It imposed economic and commercial sanctions after a North Korean nuclear test conducted in May 2009.

- **Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I)**

START I was a bilateral treaty between the United States and the USSR regarding the limitation and reduction of offensive arms, signed on July 31st, in 1991. It barred both the USSR and the United States deploying more than 6,000 nuclear warheads, along with inter-continental ballistic missiles and bombs.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is easily the largest global effort to combat the spread of nuclear technology and to promote peaceful cooperation in the areas of nuclear energy. Although seemingly successful at the beginning, with NPT members meeting in 1995 and agreeing to extend the treaty further, it eventually failed due to the lack of punishment for those who violated the treaty, as well as the many nuclear weapons states (NWS) that refused to sign the treaty. Countries such as South Sudan, Pakistan, and Israel, those with ambiguous nuclear weapons policies have refused to sign the treaty, and North Korea withdrew in 2003. The lack of punishments makes it

easy to sidestep the policies, and not have any sanctions or any consequences brought against a country if it violates the policies.

Many other previous attempts to resolve the issues of nuclear proliferation have failed due to the lack of international cooperation and unwillingness to participate by governments. For example, the CTBT, or the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, has not been able to bring into force due to a small number of countries not willing to ratify it. Other examples, such as START II, has been unable to be put into action as a result of the Russian government withdrawing from the treaty due to the United States government not ratifying the treaty.

However, even in the face of these difficulties, some agencies have proved to be useful, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, also known as the IAEA. The IAEA has three main missions: promoting uses of nuclear energy in peaceful ways, making sure that nuclear energy is not being used for military purposes, and promoting high standards for the use of nuclear material and nuclear safety. Some ways they make sure of state records is by visits to state facilities, inspection of facilities, and check surveillance equipment. Not only does this make sure that there is an impartial and unbiased information source, it also verifies that governments are abiding by their promises to nuclear safety.

Possible Solutions

Promotion of International Cooperation

One possible solution to nuclear disarmament is the promotion of international cooperation across nations. One main reason for the not passing of many of these treaties that would promote the disarmament of nuclear weapons is the difference in opinions and defense strategies. Many nations that are the hold-outs on other treaties may be concerned about the disarmament of nuclear weapons, and it is a good idea to make sure that all countries' needs and concerns are being satisfied, calling for increased international cooperation. For example, many countries who did not vote on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, such as the United States, Canada, and China, can form a collaborative goal of disarmament that fits their needs and concerns.

In addition, the direct address of people of nations where nuclear disarmament is discouraged may be also helpful. Through means such as advertisements, pamphlets, and social media, citizens of countries can be more educated on the effects of nuclear weapons and their possible impacts on their lives they may be otherwise unaware.

Eradication of All Existing Weaponry

The eradication of all existing weaponry is also a possible solution to nuclear disarmament, as in this way, the threat of nuclear stockpiling and active nuclear weapons will be assuaged. With no country in the world having nuclear weapons available for use, it also eliminates the possible threat of countries using them against each other, especially when other countries do not have them. This further promotes international cooperation across various countries to maintain transparency about nuclear stockpiles and the subsequent eradication of them. In addition to this, the limiting of the transporting of nuclear material could also be more strictly regulated by all countries, in order to prevent the use of this material to be developed into nuclear weapons.

Monitoring of Nuclear Development Sites

Finally, the monitoring of nuclear development sites would also prove to be useful to nuclear disarmament. By monitoring various governmental and private nuclear manufacturing sites around the world, this will ensure that no nations around the world are using these sites to develop or create nuclear weapons, in violation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. By creating unbiased international organizations that check these government sites, it reduces the chances of hiding nuclear weapons, ultimately mitigating the risk of conflicts among countries.

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Appendix or Appendices

- I. https://www.icanw.org/catastrophic_harm
- II. <https://www.britannica.com/technology/nuclear-weapon>
- III. <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/>