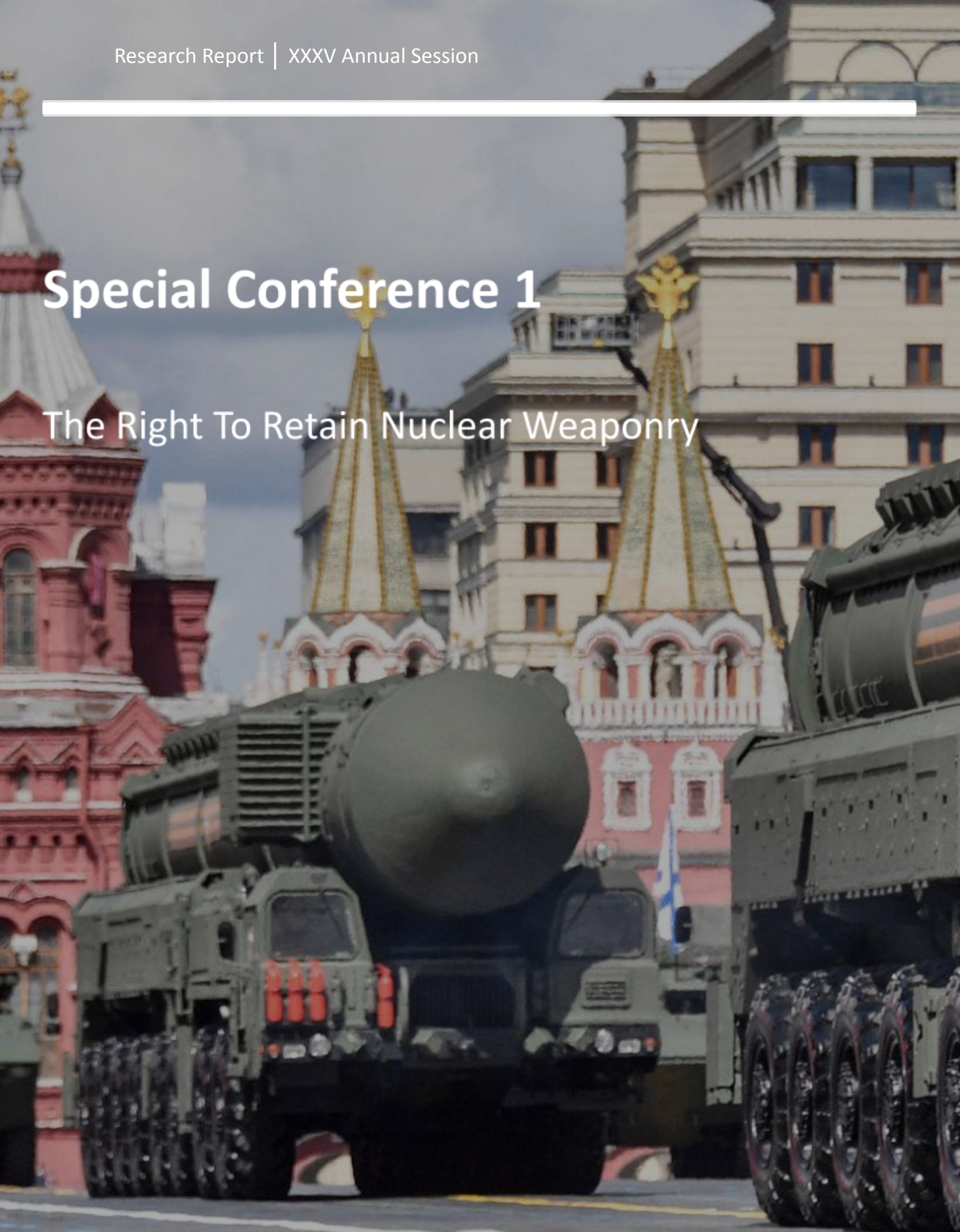
Special Conference 1

The Right To Retain Nuclear Weaponry



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Forum	Special Conference 1
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Introduction

Since the end of the Second World War, the threat of nuclear war and the use of nuclear weapons has increased drastically. While the Cold War era symbolised the peak of nuclear anxiety, current developments such as, the Ukraine-Russia and Israel-Iran conflicts signal a renewed and potentially more complex threat environment. As time has passed more states have acquired a nuclear arsenal, and in very recent times the so-called advancement of Iran's nuclear arsenal has made headlines with an escalation involving both Israel and the United States of America. There have been many attempts to reduce the threat of a nation possessing nuclear weapons, some obtaining success, and some not. With the newly presented escalation, there has been an even bigger stress on the discussion about whether states should have the right to retain and keep their nuclear weapons.

Definition of Key Terms

Nuclear Weaponry

A bomb whose violent explosive power is due to the sudden release 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.

Nuclear Disarmament

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

Nuclear-Weapon States (NWS)

A state that owns nuclear weaponry, and under the NPT are defined as a state that has built and tested a nuclear explosive device before January 1st 196, (UK, USA, Russian Federation, China, France)

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

An international treaty to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and their technology, along with the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The treaty represents the only binding commitment to global disarmament of nuclear-weapon states (NWS).

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

An international organization established in 1957, promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and hindering its use for military purposes, including nuclear weaponry.

Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban (CTBT)

A treaty that bans all nuclear test explosions, whether for military or civilian purposes. Opened for signatures in 1996 to stop the development of new nuclear weapons.

Nuclear Doctrine

A formal declaration of a state's position on deploying, innovating, testing nuclear weaponry.

Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

A treaty that includes a set of prohibitions on participating in any nuclear weapons activities. For example, not to develop, test, produce, acquire, possess, stockpile, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons.

Nuclear Umbrella

A guarantee by Nuclear-Weapon State (NWS) to defend a non-nuclear armed allied state, for example NATO is also a nuclear umbrella.

General Overview

The first and only use of a nuclear weapon was when the United States of America detonated two atomic bombs over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With that action the world fell into a domino spiral where the threat of nuclear weapons arose and nations were concerned about this newly found technology. Since then more countries have decided to acquire a nuclear arsenal and retain their power by growing it, creating an everlasting fear on everyone else. There have also been agreements made to combat this ever growing threat, such as the NPT and CTBT, but major powers such as the Russian Federation still keep their arsenal, retaining the power that comes with it.

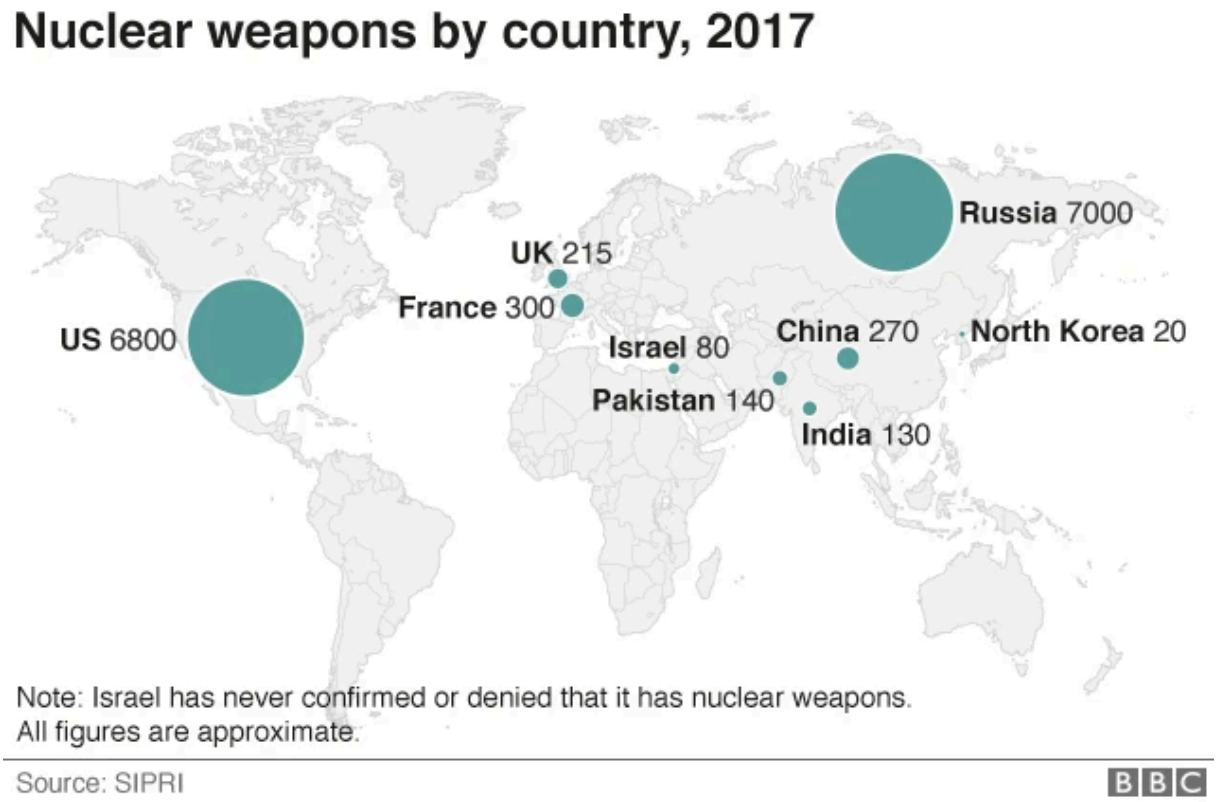
Unfortunately in the present time, agreements are starting to crumble and the fear present during the Cold War is emerging once more, the most recent episode including Iran threatening to pull out of the NPT, resulting in a great unbalance of power among the whole world. Moreover in the interconnected world that we live in, one wrong move could break the careful balance we are in right now. Another metaphor used to show how close humanity is to extinction is the Doomsday Clock, where the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists assesses the world's current situation. The furthest humanity has been to midnight (the end of humanity) was in 1991, 17 minutes. Currently the clock is set to 89 seconds to midnight, as of January 28th 2025. With escalating tensions we can only expect this to get closer to midnight, and the retention of nuclear weapons certainly does not help it move farther away.

The continuous desire for nuclear power

As already mentioned after the detonation of both atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki a new desire emerged from countries wanting power, the possession of a nuclear weapon. But how did the intention to create such a weapon even start from? In 1942 the Manhattan Project was initiated to craft a new bomb to for once and all end all wars, which turned out to be quite the opposite creating more threat to global security than anything else. Already during the creation of the bomb during the Second World War, countries such as the Soviet Union (USSR), and Nazi Germany had tried to obtain a nuclear weapon as well. Luckily they failed and only one nation had that power, for now. As the war ended and the political world was shifting, nuclear weapons began to surface in many countries' interests, as a primary example the Soviet Union. Already during the war they had expressed great interest, but especially after they focussed on achieving great power with

the possession of a nuclear weapon. In December 1946 they created their first ever chain reaction, and later in 1949 tested their very first nuclear explosive called the 'First-Lightning'.

The Soviets were not the only nation to obtain nuclear power before the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1952 the United Kingdom, 1960 France, and 1964 China. Later in 1970 all five of these nations signed the NPT preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, and promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Since then another 4 states have obtained a nuclear arsenal none of which are signatories of the NPT right now. The countries that did so are India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea, out of which only North-Korea signed the NPT, and later pulled out. This shows how there has always been a constant rise in the desire for power, and especially nuclear power.



"Reality Check: Where Are the World's Nuclear Weapons?" *BBC News*, 2 Feb. 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-42873633.

This map shows the amount of nuclear war-heads each nuclear armed state has. The main two powers standing out are the United States of America and Russia, both boasting the highest amount of nuclear war-heads. This is especially because of the fear factor that possessing a nuclear war head brings, and how it gives countries a more threatening presence on the global stage.

Because that's what it does, having a nuclear arsenal this big tells the world how powerful you are, and might even scare nations into building their own nuclear arsenal which would completely unbalance international security.

The right to retain nuclear weaponry

From the five countries that were the first to possess nuclear weapons, there have been another four added. Many have criticized the advancements of nuclear arsenals, as well as Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) still having their nuclear weapons, and continuing to develop them. Then an argument arises, if countries should have the right to retain and keep their nuclear weapons. Here the retention of nuclear weaponry will be defined, and later discussed if countries should have that right.

The first argument a country might make to justify the reason to keep their nuclear weapons is for national security. With many arising conflicts, which do not seem to end anytime soon, having a nuclear weapon shows that a country has the ultimate weapon, and to not attack them. Sort of a blank check, where if a country attacks one with nuclear weapons then they have the nukes to respond and would respond. This acts like a fear factor that is present in many of the countries possessing nuclear weapons at the moment. A prime example is Russia with their war in Ukraine. The reason that the EU, NATO, and Europe haven't really fought back the Russian army is because of the fear that Russia imposes with a nuclear weapon. So for many nations including the NWS having a nuclear weapon nearly ensures that their country won't be attacked, precisely because they have a nuclear weapon, and therefore do not want to give up their nuclear weapons.

Many arguments for the retention of nuclear weapons are all tied to the fact that they ensure a level of security. Another reason why countries keep their nuclear arsenal is to maintain influence on the world's stage. Take example from the United Kingdom, which has slowly been less active diplomatically, especially after the withdrawal from the EU. But having a nuclear weapon guarantees that they will be listened to and seen, because of that feared bomb. Asking a country to eliminate their nuclear arsenal would ask them to both eliminate their presence on the global stage as a powerful and capable nation. Additionally it would make them vulnerable in their eyes, as they cannot inflict the fear of having a nuclear weapon to protect them. So there are reasons why NWS and other countries possessing nuclear weapons are trying to keep their power especially in a time like this.

Continuing from this final point, another problem emerges with countries trying to keep nuclear power, the UN Security Council (UNSC), and more importantly the P5 VETO. The first thing to notice is that all P5 members of the SC hold nuclear weapons, USA, Russia, China, UK, France. Furthermore, as commonly known these five global powers hold the power to VETO resolutions halting its creation and existence. Combining both the power of a nuclear weapon and the power to VETO, when it comes to nuclear disarmament it is quite simple to say that the P5 are against it. Maybe not all, as France and the UK have started to disarm but other global powers decide to VETO resolutions with aims of global nuclear disarmament. This leaves a great unbalance of power between non-nuclear states and the nuclear ones. Since the majority can simply VETO their way out of disarming their nuclear arsenal, it gets a lot harder to stop their retention of nuclear power.

Do countries have the right to retain and advance their nuclear arsenal?

With an opinionated question like this there are many factors that play a role in deciding if a country should have the right to retain their nuclear arsenal. Firstly we have to understand the world that we are living in, a world where everything is extremely interconnected where a country disarming themselves can immediately result in a conflict. That is the main reason why countries keep nuclear weapons, the fear factor and importance of the bomb, as previously mentioned. But there are many reasons that justify the need for a nuclear free world.

The very first reason is that a nuclear weapon is the most destructive weapon known to man at this moment. The consequences of a nuclear missile being launched and detonated is that it would destroy and exterminate a huge number of people depending on the target. Not having a massive threat like this shows how a nuclear free world would and could be the best way to maintain global peace. Furthermore, we have learnt how massive the consequences on not only a country but a whole culture and population, meaning not allowing countries to keep their nuclear weapons would greatly improve the global stability.

Another big reason is that there are moral consequences with detonating a nuclear weapon, probably not for the president or head of state, but rather for the people actually deploying the bomb. A human error is something that is very probable and can result in many years of trouble for the country it was sent from, especially if it was a mistake. Moreover many uranium enrichment sites and nuclear power plants are very prone to failing, or breaking as happened in Chernobyl. So there are also moral and greater consequences that are brought with retaining and possessing nuclear weapons which could easily affect anyone around the world.

Even with the errors that could occur when using nuclear energy for bad, like with a nuclear bomb the NPT also highlights the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Article IV states, *"Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of this Treaty."* The NPT clearly states that signatories should not halt the development of nuclear energy as a whole, but rather continue on developing nuclear technology for scientific purposes. Highlighting that nuclear energy is not all bad and that it should be used for scientific growth rather than for harm on people.

So with both pros and cons the question still remains if countries should have the right to retain their nuclear power. Many countries have spoken out about this, the USA has said that they need their nuclear weapons to act like a nuclear umbrella for Europe and other countries, one of the reasons to keep them as mentioned above. But there are organizations such as the UN, and IAEA which are trying to reduce the amount of nuclear weapons that are present on the globe. I encourage all Member States to think in their countries interests if they would agree that countries should have the right to retain nuclear weaponry.

Major Parties Involved

United States of America (USA)

The first nation to develop and detonate a nuclear weapon, now possesses around 5,100 nuclear warheads. The USA primarily keeps their nuclear arsenal for deterrence, aiming to discourage attacks on itself, and allies. Further the USA seeks to strengthen the NPT as well as adhering to it.

Russian Federation

Holds the most amount of nuclear warheads on Earth, with around 5,400 in their arsenal. Further complies with the NPT, but aims to keep nuclear arsenal for strength and power over regions, and to inflict fear. As of right now Russia has not yet used or threatened to use nuclear weapons in their active conflict against Ukraine, but has not yet closed the door to that option.

Iran

Recently accused of developing nuclear weapons, there is no knowledge of that being true. Iran has signed the NPT, as well as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to reduce nuclear development and the threat of a nuclear bomb. Although this is true the nuclear situation of Iran is closely monitored by greater powers and more importantly the IAEA.

Israel

Never formally addressed having any nuclear weapons, although it is widely believed to have nuclear weapons. It has also not signed any nuclear treaties such as the NPT, and continues to threaten the world by saying Iran is close to them. Recently resulting in an escalation, and the bombing of Iran's nuclear power plants.

People's Republic of China

First atomic bomb test was on October 16 1964, currently possessing around 500 nuclear warheads. It is expanding its nuclear arsenal for long distance missiles, and is also a signatory of the NPT. China further does not see the need to use a nuclear weapon, but does however want to keep them for safeguarding.

United Kingdom

The main European power in possession of nuclear weapons with around 225 nuclear warheads, the UK is also a signatory of the NPT. The UK is one of the main advocates for nuclear disarmament and is the leading nation in their efforts.

France

Along with the United Kingdom, France is the only other nation in Europe to possess nuclear weapons. France has further made clear that they are committed to nuclear disarmament and are already doing that with a three-step approach. Although wishing for the disarmament of nuclear weapons, France has also said that they will only use a nuclear weapon if an adversary were to attack the vital interests of the country.

Pakistan

Pakistan's creation of a nuclear arsenal was due to the 1971 war with India, which led to India's first nuclear test. In response to India's nuclear development, Pakistan also developed their own arsenal. As of this moment Pakistan has not signed any agreements concerning the disarmament of nuclear weapons, while still storing their nukes for a later time.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

The DPRK had started as a neutral nation on the topic of nuclear weapons, signing the NPT and standing by the rules set in place, and until 1993 both Koreas agreed to a denuclearized peninsula. In March of 1993 the DPRK threatened to withdraw from the NPT, after rejecting inspections by the IAEA. In 2002 the DPRK withdrew from the NPT, and accelerated its nuclear testing and development. Now DPRK is focussing everything on their nuclear arsenal, and global powers are becoming increasingly worried about their nuclear arsenal.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The International Atomic Energy Agency is the world's central intergovernmental forum for scientific and technical cooperation in the field of nuclear energy. It works along with the UN, and other bodies to ensure a safe use of nuclear energy. The main function of the IAEA in global politics is the inspections done to each Member State ensuring the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
August 6th-9th 1945	The first and only time a nation has used a Nuclear weapon, this case a bombing of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
Aug 29th 1949	The Soviet Union tests their first atomic bomb, starting the Cold War competition between the two largest atomic armed states.
1968	The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is created, aiming to reduce and prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, as well as promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

1970	The NPT goes into effect for all 62 signatories, including the 5 nations with nuclear weapons at the time, USA, Russia, China, UK, and France.
1974	India acquires their first nuclear weapon.
1993	North Korea announces its withdrawal from the NPT before the UN Security Council and IAEA responded on their noncompliance with the agreement.
1998	Pakistan gets their first nuclear weapon in response to the threat posed by India having one too.
September 27th 2012	Benjamin Netanyahu addresses the UN General Assembly describing his concerns on Iran's nuclear energy program, claiming they would have a nuclear weapon by next spring.
2015	Iran signed the NPT and the JCPOA severely restricting its nuclear capabilities.
July 7th 2017	The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is adopted by the UN.
2021	USA and Russia fail to extend the New-START Treaty, as Russia suspends it leading to the US withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF). Both jeopardizing the stability between Russia and the USA in terms of nuclear weapons.
June 13th 2025	Israel launches preventive strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities, claiming they were weeks away from obtaining a nuclear weapon.
June 22nd 2025	United States bomber planes (B2 bombers) hit Iran's nuclear facilities in Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. Presumably destroying their underground nuclear sites.
June 23rd 2025	Donald Trump, announced a cease-fire deal had been made between Iran, Israel said to come into effect on the 25th of June.
June 25th 2025	Iran's parliament approves a deal to suspend all IAEA cooperation.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Declaration on the prohibition of the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons, adopted at the 1063 plenary meeting, 24 November 1961 (A/RES/1653(XVI)-EN)

This resolution is a formal declaration, not a legally binding treaty, on the prohibition on the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons. It further calls for all Member States to refrain from use under effective control.

- Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, 3 December 2012 (A/RES/67/56)

The resolution establishes a UN Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) in 2013 to develop proposals for multilateral nuclear disarmament, for a world without nuclear weaponry. The resolution further passed with a majority of 147 for and 4 against.

- Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, 5 December 2013 (A/RES/68/46)

Continuing from resolution 67/56 continues the mandate of OEWG, and further requests Secretary-General reports, and social and international input based on proposals in the first year of the OEWG.

- Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, 2 December 2014 (A/RES/69/41)

Reaffirms the OEWG process and recognized contributors of international organizations. Further emphasizes comprehensive, interactive negotiations towards global nuclear disarmament.

- Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, 7 December 2015 (A/RES/70/33)

Re-established the OEWG for a second phase in 2016, outlining the key tasks of the group including, developing proposals and holding meetings in multiple sessions throughout 2016.

- Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, 23 December 2016 (A/RES/71/258)

Built on the OEWG's recommendations and mandated in a UN conference in 2017 to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.

- 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, 7 July (A/RES/71/258)

Represents a major turning point in the global nuclear disarmament, innovating the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) negations, adopted by a large margin of 130 for and 37 against.

- The Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), 13 July 2021 (A/RES/76/128)

Emphasizes cooperation across the humanitarian-development nexus, urging UN systems and Member States to strengthen preparedness, risk reduction, response and recovery. Further calls for the Secretary-General to enhance international disaster response coordination.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Written Agreements

The first attempt to reduce nations' right of retention and expansion of nuclear weapons, was the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The NPT was made to reduce the spread of nuclear weapons, and promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy. As done with the P5, or the five nations possessing and testing a nuclear weapon before January 1st 1967 they were immediately halting these powers to transfer nuclear weapons, and assist others in creating one of their own. These efforts were successful, along with protecting 191 UN recognized countries. Although it was a success, there have been some countries that made it harder than others to ratify the treaty. For example, North Korea was a signatory in 1985 and later withdrew in 2003, after having violated the treaty's test ban, testing their first nuclear weapon. There are another three nations that have never agreed to sign the NPT: Pakistan, India, and Israel. Pakistan and India have officially declared that they do possess nuclear weapons, meanwhile Israel still has never officially declared anything. The NPT was the first step towards containing nuclear weapons and removing them from a war threat, as said they have succeeded with many nations, however there are still 3 or 4 nuclear armed nations that have not signed it. Granting them freedom to experiment and possess nuclear weapons, something that should not happen in today's world.

In 2012, the General Assembly adopted resolution 67/56 "Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations". This resolution started as 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 2022, after the 2021 Treaty of Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), the first "Meeting of States Parties" was held in Vienna. 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 established that deadlines should be made for the removal of operational status and destruction of nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosives. Their removal from national territories, as required under article 4 of the Treaty. There has been another "Meeting of States Parties" in the UN Headquarters, New York in November 2023, and another one in June 2024. This shows how committed the UN is to reduce the nuclear power of each nation, and also against the right of nuclear weapon holding countries to retain their power.

Failure of Multilateral Talks

Along with the actionable steps that the UN and other organizations have taken with the goal of nuclear disarmament, there have been multilateral talks involved to try and solve the issue. These talks usually happen throughout many forums such as the IAEA, and sub-commissions of the UN with a notable one being the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG). An example of a result of these multilateral talks into a step to a greater solution is inside the OEWG which have created legal measures, provision, and norms on the use of nuclear weapons.

Although there are good things coming with the vast integration of multilateral talks, there have also been failures, highlighting the fact that there is also a need for more actionable solutions rather than just discussions. A great example was during a press release of the General Assembly, advising and demonstrating that there had been a failure in multilateral talks in the face of nuclear disarmament (GA/DIS/3299) on October 10th 2005. The press-realease states that there has been a failure in multilateral talks and security mechanisms. Further it states that there is weakness in the NPT, as highlighted by the delegate of Iran to the GA's first committee saying *"that one nuclear-weapon State "cries wolf" about the risk of proliferation by States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), whose facilities for peaceful nuclear energy use were under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, while it concluded agreements for the transfer of all kinds of nuclear technology to non-NPT parties."* Later the article says that the delegate of Iran mentioned this regarding the accusations by Israel on Iran's nuclear program. With this statement the delegate of Iran told the UN that while their facilities were under

full NPT regulations, others like Israel (non-signatory of the NPT) use their nuclear programs for weaponry purposes rather than research and scientific ones. In addition, Iran expressed its criticism of the USA's use of nuclear umbrellas and sharing of its nuclear power expanding rather than diminishing the nuclear threat in the world.

As seen there are not only positive attempts to solve this very complicated issue but rather a lot of failures. We live in a very complicated and inter-connected world where it is hard to make everyone agree on one thing, especially concerning weapons of this measure. There should be a balance achieved between diplomatic talks and actionable steps towards the disarmament of nuclear weapons.

Possible Solutions

Treaties and Written Agreements

There have been solutions proposed in the past, and now it is up to you delegates to find the best one to solve this pressing issue, if countries should have the right to retain their nuclear weapons. A possible solution would be to create a treaty or ban on any state currently possessing nuclear weapons from further developing their nuclear arsenal. This could introduce a separate check from the IAEAs one or integrated to check if each country is further developing their nuclear arsenal. This would allow countries with them not to fully lose the control of having them, but also limit the expansion of such weapons of mass destruction to unimaginable numbers, threatening international security.

Taking the first solution as an inspiration, having a maximum limit for nuclear weapons for each country. If a regular maximum would be set, countries such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to create nuclear weapons till they have reached the maximum which would only escalate the threat rather than diminish it. Instead having a maximum which is relative to their nuclear weapons at the moment would deescalate the threat and allow for a more peaceful world with a diminished threat of nuclear war, and use of nuclear weapons.

Diplomatic and Actionable Solutions

Considering the decline in diplomatic talks in recent times, there could be a more evident pressure on keeping positive diplomatic relations with organizations such as the IAEA and other countries about nuclear programmes. Trying to resolve any exponentially growing threat with talks rather than action. Moreover this would improve the strengths of these organizations in the face of nuclear weapons, and a more diplomatic approach might lead to some countries diminishing their nuclear arsenal.

Seeing as the majority of these solutions include diplomatic and written agreements to solve the issue of a nation's right to nuclear power, there should also be a few with enforcement mechanisms. This solution is more of an addition to the ones above, adding a way to enforce them. Starting with the very first solution about a ban or treaty to halt the development of one's nuclear arsenal, an enforcement mechanism might be to impose sanctions on countries that do not comply with the checks and requirements of the treaty. Furthermore, another way to enforce one of these possible solutions is that whenever a breach is found it is directly reported to the security council, and urging the SC to take actionable measures.

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