The background image shows a large, orange and white missile mounted on a heavy-duty transport trailer. The trailer has the number '1408' on its side and a prominent yellow diamond-shaped warning sign that reads 'EXPLOSIVES' and '1.3'. Two men in military uniforms are visible near the trailer, one appearing to be operating it. The scene is set in front of a large, light-colored industrial building with a dark doorway. The sky is clear and blue.

BSAMUN 2023 Addressing the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction Among the P5 Nations

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Introduction

The P5 nations, including the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom, are all recognized to be in possession of significant arsenals of WMDs, and are all nuclear powers. The proliferation of these weapons pose a significant threat to global stability and security, and thus the international community has sought to address the issue of WMD proliferation through various mechanisms. An example would be the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which aims to contain the spread of nuclear weapons and promote disarmament among states. However, there are concerns that the P5 nations are not doing enough to fulfil their obligations under the NPT and other international agreements.

Definition of key terms

WMDs: Weapons of mass destruction include any large scale weaponry that is chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear, that can cause significant harm to humans or our environment.

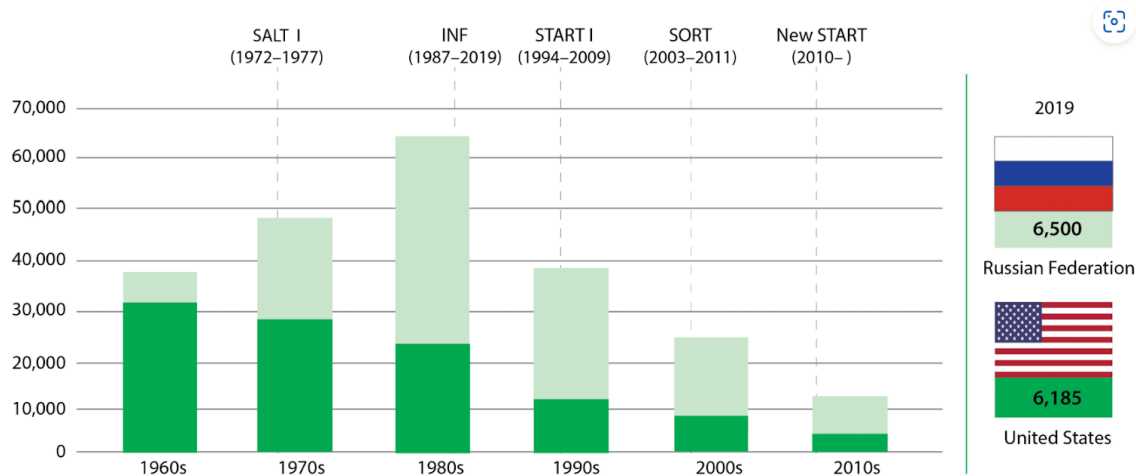
Proliferation: The spread and/or increase in quantity of WMDs within a nation, or worldwide.

P5 nations: The UN Security Council's five permanent members including China, France, Russia, the UK and the US. These countries also hold the power of veto, so they can block any resolution draft.

Arms race: A competition between nations in the development and accumulation of weapons.

Arm embargoes: An official ban on trade and export of weaponry and 'dual use technology'.


General Overview



This chart made by the 'Federation of American Scientists' shows the number of nuclear weapons in the US and the Russian Federation over the years.

Proliferation of WMDs among the P5 nations could have far-reaching consequences for global stability, security and diplomacy. Nuclear weapons have only been used twice in warfare, like in the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, but there have still been over 2000 nuclear tests conducted to date which could have been extremely hazardous and could have caused mass destruction. Therefore, disarmament is the best protection against any such dangers, but achieving this is an extremely difficult challenge, especially with the proliferation of new WMDs counteracting this.

The P5 nations are among the world's most powerful countries, so their possession of WMDs raises concerns that they could be used in conflicts, leading to massive damage, as WMDs hold the potential to cause mass destruction. As well, there is concern that the possession of WMDs by the P5 nations can fuel another arms race among other countries seeking to develop their own nuclear arsenals or other WMDs. This would counteract international cooperation and would increase tensions globally, as countries could start seeking to match the military strengths of the P5 countries and increase their spending on arms. Even between P5 countries most of their diplomatic tensions stem from the ownership of WMDs. This is definitely alarming as the P5 nations are the countries who have the responsibility, and influence, to uphold the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and promote disarmament efforts to other countries.



The issue of WMD proliferation among the P5 nations has a long and complicated history, and will thus also require sustained international cooperation to address and undo. The issue stems all the way back to 1945, when the US was the first country to successfully develop and use an atomic bomb. This has prompted other countries to begin developing their own nuclear weapon programs, which has ushered the whole world into the nuclear age. Soon after, the Cold War emerged between the United States and the Soviet Union, which has further intensified and triggered the arms race, and led to the proliferation of nuclear weapons among the P5 countries. During this time both the US and the Soviet Union were actively testing their nuclear weapons. Large global non proliferation efforts by the UN only followed much later in 1968.

In 1998 both India and Pakistan started conducting nuclear tests. This triggered mass concern about the spread of the proliferation of WMDs outside of P5 countries. This resulted in international condemnation to both states. Likewise, Iraq in the 1990s had sanctions imposed for their WMD programs, and even had international inspections. In 2003 the US led the invasion of Iraq, declaring their concerns about their WMDs, although no such weapons were found.

The proliferation of WMDs has a much broader and complex history, and the same sensitive issue is still prevalent today. Ongoing efforts to stop this issue include The US' prevention of North Korea from developing nuclear weapons, over the past few years. They have attempted this by imposing various sanctions to deter the country's nuclear ambitions. However, most measures were unsuccessful, resulting in North Korea being one of the newest nuclear weapon possessing states, and the size of their stockpile is estimated to be 40-50 nuclear warheads.

Other relevant ongoing negotiations regarding the issue of proliferation of WMDs include those held with Iran, and those revolving around the conflict in Syria. In 2015, the P5+1 nations (which includes Germany) signed a deal with Iran to limit its nuclear program. This was in exchange of relief to their sanctions, however, in 2018 the United States withdrew from the deal as the US was sceptical over Iran's compliance with its terms. There have been ongoing discussions trying to salvage the deal in an attempt to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. As for the conflict in Syria, there has been use of chemical weapons. Thus, the international community has implemented measures to prevent their use and punish those held accountable. The UN has been able to control this through the OPCW (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons), who have been

investigating and reporting on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, they have also taken steps to eliminate Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons.

Major Parties Involved

The International Atomic Energy Agency: The IAEA's role is to be responsible for promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy while preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. They achieve this by monitoring and inspecting nuclear facilities in member countries to ensure that they are being used for peaceful purposes.

The Nuclear Suppliers Group: Founded in 1975, the NSG is a group of countries that seek to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons by controlling the export of nuclear-related materials and technologies. There are 48 members of which all have to have signed the NPT before joining.

The Missile Technology Control Regime: MTCR is a group of countries that seek to prevent the proliferation of missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. They do this mainly by controlling the export of missile-related technologies.

Russia: Russia is currently playing a huge role in regards to the proliferation of WMDs. Russia has been accused of aiding Iran's nuclear weapons program, as well as selling weapons and technology to countries such as Syria and North Korea. As well, due to increasing tension with NATO members, Putin has recently, on the 21st of February, frozen the New START treaty against nuclear arms. The START treaty was initially put in place to reduce and limit the amount of strategic offensive arms. Considering Russia and the US collectively own 90% of the world's nuclear weapons with a stockpile of over 8000 between them, Russia temporarily suspending the START Treaty results in a great deal of concern for global security and stability.

The United States: The US has sold nuclear technology to countries such as Israel and Pakistan, and has thus actively been involved in nuclear weapon proliferation in the past. In addition, the US has been accused of using its military and political power to prevent other countries from developing nuclear weapons, while maintaining its own nuclear arsenal. The US, as of 2021, is estimated to be in possession of 3708 nuclear warheads, of which 1744 are deployed and 1964 in reserve.

Previous Attempts to Resolve this Issue

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT): Although it only entered into force in 1970, the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was opened for signature in 1968, and is still highly relevant to this day. This multilateral treaty aims to promote disarmament and prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and WMDs. 191 States have joined the Treaty, including all P5 nations. By signing the NPT, states have specifically agreed to pursue disarmament, and ensure that states without nuclear weapons will not acquire them. However, the NPT does also state that all states can have access to nuclear technology, as long as it is for peaceful purposes, and should be under the supervision of IAEA safeguards.

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT): The CTBT dates back to 1996 when first adopted by the UN General Assembly. The CTBT bans all nuclear explosions, whether peaceful or military, and including those conducted underground. Not all P5 countries have all ratified this treaty, but 174 other states have, however it is yet to be put into action as it requires 8 other crucial countries to ratify first. These 8 countries include North Korea, Israel, China and the US.

UN Security Council Resolutions: Within the UN Security Council several resolutions have been aimed at preventing the spread and proliferation of WMDs. An example includes resolution 1540 from 2004, where the Security Council has determined that all States must refrain from providing any form of support for the developing, acquisition, manufacturing, possession, transport or transfer of any chemical and biological weapons, to non-State actors. This resolution was aimed to particularly prevent the use of WMDs for terrorist purposes, and has required countries to enforce new laws. Unlike other resolutions the Security Council has passed, the 1540 does not impose any sanctions on countries that violate non-proliferation agreements, as their goal was to facilitate a cooperative relationship within the international community to increase the chance of the resolution's success and implementation.

Possible Solutions

1. Enforce non-proliferation agreements- One of the most obvious solutions is to engage in stronger enforcement of existing non-proliferation agreements, or create new agreements all together. An example would be to re-enforce treaties such as the NPT. As well, they should make sure countries that have already signed comply with all their commitments and obligations. Subsequently, the Security Council could also use harsher consequences, such as sanctions, in the case that countries fail to follow these agreements.
2. Increase in transparency- The Security Council should also encourage transparency of states regarding data on WMBs and nuclear facilities, specifically for P5 countries. As well, the Security Council can authorise and request the inspection, and more frequent monitoring, of P5 countries' nuclear facilities and other WMD-related sites to verify compliance with non-proliferation agreements.
3. Addressing regional conflicts- As well, the Security Council could also encourage the UN to address and help resolve regional conflicts, even if they are on a smaller scale. This allows conflicts to be solved in a peaceful way, reducing the risk of the conflict escalating and resulting in usage or proliferation of WMDs.
4. Imposing arm embargoes- To contain the spread of nuclear weapons the Security Council can impose arms embargoes on countries that violate non-proliferation agreements. This limits the countries' ability to acquire the materials and technology needed for WMD development, thereby decreasing the rate of WMD manufacturing and acquisition.

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