



**ANTI-NUCLEAR
PROLIFERATION AND ARM
CONTROL AGENCY**

BCNMUN 2024

Identity and Conflict

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Topic: Measures to prevent the misuse of nuclear weapons by nongovernmental groups

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Introduction

Ever since the first successful nuclear explosion in 1945 as a result of the Manhattan Project, these weapons have posed significant dangers to global security due to their nature of mass destruction. Especially when such weapons could get in the hands of non-governmental foundations. Terrorism has been a worldwide issue for decades, as well, and continues to pose significant threats to global safety due to the many attacks over the years. The nexus of these two different issues of international security; terrorist acquisition and possible use of nuclear explosive devices, radiological weapons, or attacks on nuclear facilities, is a major threat that calls for the concern of all nations.

Nuclear weapons tend to attract a lot of attention due to their scale of destruction, as with one explosion a nuclear bomb can completely wipe out an entire city, not even to mention the radiation and radioactive debris that would take the place of the hundreds of buildings and homes. As of 2024, 9 countries possess nuclear weapons - USA, UK, Russia, France, India, China, North Korea, Israel and Pakistan. Countries seek to go nuclear for various reasons, but the primary motivations are the following:

Security: A country possessing nuclear power automatically makes the country safer on an international scale. These weapons provide a sense of security and protection for the country itself and its allies. They can also serve as a guarantee of territorial integrity, as seen with Ukraine giving up its Soviet-era nukes in exchange for a guarantee of sovereignty from Russia, which was later

broken. Nuclear weapons also prevent a state from being invaded or having its regime changed. Libya is a prime example of this as when it gave up its nuclear program in 2003, the country was invaded and overthrown soon after.

Prestige: A nation's possession of nuclear weapons can enhance its international standing and influence in geopolitical affairs, as well. Obtaining nuclear weapons is seen as a symbol of power, prestige, and technological advancement on the global scale. It can help gain regional dominance and power, too, as seen with both India and Pakistan.

Deterrence: Nuclear weapons also serve as a deterrent against attack by other nuclear-armed states or countries seeking to develop their own nuclear weapons. Since such weapons are viewed as the ultimate power, a country's possession of such makes it automatically less likely to be attacked. North Korea has been proven to use their place in the nuclear club to gain security guarantees, financial concessions, and overall using their possession of nuclear power as a threat to other non-nuclear states.

In general, terrorist groups commonly form and operate to drive political change, promote specific ideologies or religious agendas, and gain influence through violent means. Considering the reasons why nations seek to obtain nuclear power, it is clear to see why nongovernmental organizations would benefit from gaining access or developing improvised nuclear devices, too. Gaining security, prestige, and deterrence is something every terrorist group seeks, hence their motivations to attaining such weapons is apparent. Though fortunately in this case, attaining nuclear devices is not easy. They are held underground in either underwater submarine bases, or massive military bases, highly protected and surveilled 24/7. Still, terrorist organizations and non-official militias actively look for ways to get their hands on entire warheads, the materials to manufacture their own explosives, or radioactive materials to create a radiological dispersal device (RDD). This is the main threat. The possibility of non-state groups obtaining an entire nuclear warhead or explosive is highly unlikely, which is why terrorist groups attempt to either buy or steal parts or radioactive material to create improvised explosives.

To develop a nuclear device both highly enriched uranium and plutonium are necessary. These resources are only found in less than 20 countries, and mining these materials is close to

impossible without proper technology and funds, which terrorist organizations currently do not possess. Nevertheless countries such as the USA, Russia, UK, China, and North Korea produce thousands of pounds of such materials a year, and large amounts of such materials are transported from one plant to another each year. The dangers of theft in transit is evident and poses a significant concern to nuclear security worldwide.

Even if nongovernmental groups do not manage to gain access to nuclear weapons, materials such as Cobalt, Cesium, and Iridium Isotopes can be used to create similarly destructive explosives. They are found in more than 150 countries, and are a lot more attainable due to their high quantity. These substances can be used to develop dirty bombs. While dirty bombs are not as destructive as nuclear explosives, they are still considered a form of nuclear terrorism because they involve the use of radioactive materials to cause mass destruction.

Overall, if a terrorist foundation were to intercept a nuclear transit, somehow source radioactive materials, and come to create a nuclear or dirty bomb the implications would be more than severe. The obvious being the mass destruction that would come to both infrastructure, but also to human lives. Any use of such destructive ordnance that is unauthorized by government bodies is incredibly dangerous and can lead to mass casualties. It will also instigate power and control to those terrorist groups and will grant them more public fear, therefore allowing them to push their religious extremist ideologies and oppressive political systems even further onto vulnerable societies. It is imperative that the United Nations does everything in their power to prevent the misuse of such weapons by non-state actors, as it raises concerns to the safety of humanity.

Definition of Key Terms

Nuclear weapon

A nuclear weapon is an explosive device that derives its destructive force from a nuclear reaction. Such weapons are considered the most dangerous and destructive ordnance ever developed. They are often referred to as “nukes”.

Nuclear Club

The Nuclear Club refers to an informal global politics term used to recognize the 9 countries (USA, UK, Russia, France, India, China, North Korea, Israel and Pakistan) who currently manufacture and possess nuclear weapons.

Nongovernmental organization

In this context, a nongovernmental organization refers to any organization not mandated by government bodies. This includes terrorist groups, militias, and any other non-state actor.

Terrorism

Terrorism is recognized as the illicit use of violence or threats to install terror in a civilian population or government, with the goal of pushing for specific political, religious, or ideological objectives.

Nuclear terrorism

The International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism defines nuclear terrorism as the “unlawful and intentional use of radioactive material with the intent to cause death, injury, or damage to compel a person, organization, or country to do or refrain from doing an act, all in attempt to push for their political or religious agendas”.

Dirty bomb

Dirty bombs are radiological weapons that combine radioactive material with conventional explosives. A successful attack could contaminate several city blocks, create panic, and lead to billions in economic loss due to evacuations, decontamination, and disruption of daily life. There have been no confirmed successful dirty bomb attacks, only tests, though terrorists and other non-government groups have expressed interest in obtaining materials for dirty bombs.

Clandestine operation

A clandestine operation is an act or event that is meant to be unnoticed by the public or “under the table”.

Background Information

The Cold War

The Cold War began in the aftermath of World War II, as tensions arose between the United States and the Soviet Union. The two nations, despite being allies during the war, had fundamentally different ideologies and competing visions for the post-war world. The USA advocated for capitalism and democracy, while the Soviet Union promoted communism and a centralized, state-controlled economy. The war lasted from the late 1940s to the early 1990s, spanning nearly half a century. It was characterized by an intense arms race, proxy wars, and a constant threat of nuclear war. Both the USA and the Soviet Union built up massive nuclear arsenals, each capable of destroying the other.

Nuclear weapons played a crucial role in the Cold War. The USA initially had a monopoly on nuclear weapons, but the Soviet Union successfully tested its first atomic bomb in 1949. This led to an escalating arms race, with both sides developing increasingly powerful and advanced nuclear weapons. The development of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) allowed nuclear weapons to be delivered from great distances, making their production constantly increasing at an exponential rate. The threat of nuclear war loomed large during the Cold War. The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, when the USA and the Soviet Union came dangerously close to war over the deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba, highlighting the

potential for catastrophic consequences. Hence, the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) emerged, which held that a nuclear war between the USA and Soviet Union would result in the destruction of both nations. As a result, both countries had fought for decades to find the most efficient and effective ways to source and manufacture nuclear weapons rapidly but never came to use them, therefore were left with thousands of weapons just stored away.

The end of the Cold War also marked a shift in threat perceptions, as the focus shifted from the fear of a nuclear war between global powers like the USA and the Soviet Union to new security challenges involving non-state foundations like terrorists.

Fall of the Soviet Union

The fall of the Soviet Union (1991) had a significant impact on the rising concern of nuclear terrorism, as it increased the risk of nuclear materials and weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. The disintegration of the Soviet state left a larger number of newly independent nations with nuclear assets on their territories, including Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, which had inherited a substantial portion of the Soviet nuclear arsenal. This raised serious concerns about the security and control of these nuclear materials, as the collapse of the Soviet Union led to a weakening of the custodial system that had previously ensured their protection. The closed nature of Soviet society, authoritarian state, and ubiquitous internal policing that had previously safeguarded nuclear facilities were undermined, leading to fears that the Soviet approach to nuclear security might also collapse, allowing for valuable weapons, materials, and expertise to spread around the world in a nuclear black market.

Furthermore, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the emergence or resurgence of numerous internal conflicts, such as ethno-political disputes and religious militancy, which heightened instability and increased the risk of nuclear materials or weapons being obtained by non-government groups. In response to these concerns, the USA and other countries recognized the urgent need to influence the nuclear outcome in the collapsing Soviet Union and take action to secure nuclear materials and prevent their spread. Programs like the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction (NLCTR) initiative were launched to help the former Soviet states dismantle and

secure their nuclear arsenals, highlighting the international community's efforts to mitigate the risk of nuclear terrorism in the post-Cold War era.

Rise of Terrorist Organizations

In recent decades, several terrorist groups have demonstrated their capabilities and dominance, raising global concerns about the potential catastrophic consequences of their ongoing attacks. In particular, the following non-governmental organizations pose significant danger to nuclear terrorism due to their proximity or potential access to nuclear power:

Al-Qaeda: Al-Qaeda is a transnational Sunni Islamist terrorist group founded by Osama bin Laden in the late 1980s to push Islamist extremist ideologies in conflicts around the world. It rose to global prominence after perpetrating the September 11, 2001 attacks in the US. Al-Qaeda's pursuit of nuclear weapons has been evident since their founding in 1988. Ever since they rose, al-Qaeda had a subcommittee dedicated to acquiring nuclear weapons, which included finding ways to purchase fissile material from the former Soviet Union. Al-Qaeda's efforts to obtain nuclear materials and expertise went on throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. In 1993, bin Laden allegedly paid a Sudanese general \$1.5 million for a cylinder of cinnabar, which he believed contained South African highly enriched Uranium (HEU). More recently, a businessman from Bulgaria stated in April 2001 that during a meeting close to the China-Pakistan border, bin Laden also made an offer to purchase fissile material from him. Later that year, bin Laden and al-Zawahiri asserted that al-Qaeda had chemical and nuclear weapons that are ready for use, though it is widely believed that they were all alleged statements and based on bluffs. Furthermore, in 2003, bin Laden claimed that using a nuclear weapon against people was the only option available to him, and doing so would be compliant with Islamic law, since it is all part of the larger objective of al-Qaeda.

Moreover, the group took advantage of the Taliban government's support in Afghanistan, which allowed them to create bases of operation for secret, long-term research and development work on nuclear weapons. Despite these efforts, there is no conclusive evidence that al-Qaeda has successfully obtained fissile material or developed a functional nuclear weapon, although their nuclear ambitions remain high. The organization has involved several international stakeholders in

their process of attempting to obtain nuclear power, meaning it has now spread much further from the boundaries of their origin and has risen to global prominence.

Taliban: The Taliban is a Sunni Islamist extremist group that emerged in the mid-1990s in Afghanistan. They captured Kabul in 1996 and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, imposing harsh rules, including the prohibition of women's education and employment, and the enforcement of strict Islamic dress codes. The Taliban were ousted from power by US-led forces in 2001 but regrouped and returned to power in 2021 following the withdrawal of US troops.

The Taliban have actively sought to acquire nuclear weapons. According to US Congressman Scott Perry, Taliban security officials have traveled to North Korea to pursue nuclear technology and establish an arms-related alliance with the country. Former Afghan intelligence chief Rahmatullah Nabil also stated he has reports indicating a faction of the Taliban are examining how to obtain tactical nuclear weapons from Pakistan due to their geographical proximity and historical alliance. The Taliban has also been attempting to develop their own nuclear program while operating in the safe haven of Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. Their current control over the country allows them to take advantage of the vulnerable state and use it to easily progress their research, testing, and further their nuclear agenda.

North Caucasus Terrorists: The North Caucasus is a region in southern Russia that borders the Black Sea and Caspian Sea. It is ethnically diverse, with numerous nationalities and languages, and has a complex history of conflict and integration with Russia. While the Russian government has focused on stabilizing the region through military operations, economic development programs, and co-opting local elites, challenges such as corruption, governance, and cultural integration remain, fostering fertile ground for several terrorist organizations to emerge and grow in the area. Such terrorist groups have actively sought nuclear weapons in recent years. They have also conducted reconnaissance on Russian nuclear storage facilities, suggesting they have been gathering intelligence and potentially planning operations to infiltrate and compromise these vulnerable sites.

Experts warn that the presence of such ungovernable organizations in the North Caucasus, which have become havens for Islamist extremists as well, possess a global threat as a potential terrorist base in close proximity to US and other European allies. This threat of nuclear proliferation

to terrorist groups like those based in the North Caucasus remains a major security concern, as their activities could have catastrophic implications for not only Russia but the entire world.

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS): ISIS, also recognized as the Islamic State, is a Sunni Islamist terrorist organization that emerged from the remnants of al-Qaeda in Iraq in the early 2010s. At its peak in 2014 and 2015, ISIS controlled large territories in Iraq and Syria, where it established a self-proclaimed caliphate and carried out numerous attacks.

Following the fall of Mosul in July 2014, ISIS militants took control of nuclear materials from Mosul University. Iraq's UN Ambassador Mohamed Ali Alhakim wrote to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that the materials were stored at the institution and "may be used in manufacturing weapons of mass destruction." The status of these items is unknown because terrorist operations are conducted via clandestine operation, but it is believed that the Islamic State still has hold of them. It was claimed in October 2015 that gangs which were suspected of having ties to Russia's security agencies, had blocked four efforts between 2010 and 2015 by Moldovan officials cooperating with the FBI to sell radioactive material to ISIS. Due to the poor relations between Russia and the West, it is difficult to ascertain if smugglers succeeded in selling radioactive material originating from Russia to Islamist terrorists or elsewhere.

In March 2016, it was also reported that a senior Belgian nuclear official was being monitored by ISIS members linked to the November 2015 Paris attacks. The Belgian Federal Agency for Nuclear Control (BFANC) believed this was a way ISIS was attempting to gain materials for a dirty bomb. Fortunately, neither of these attempts have proved successful, as the Islamic State still does not possess nuclear power. Though their continuous efforts and ongoing ambition means they will not stop attempting to get their hands on such devices and potentially leading to their misuse, causing global catastrophe.

Aum Shinrikyo: Aum Shinrikyo, also known as Aleph, is a Japanese religious movement founded by Shoko Asahara in 1987. The group is a combination of elements taken from Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christian millennialism. Aum Shinrikyo gained notoriety in 1995 when its members carried out a sarin gas attack on the Tokyo metro, killing 12 and injuring thousands.

Aum Shinrikyo has considerable wealth and resources at their disposal which come from a variety of sources, including donations from members, real estate investments, and other business ventures. The group is estimated to have amassed over \$1 billion in assets. Their financial liberty allowed the group to explore many different ways of building up their nuclear arsenal. One of Aum Shinrikyo's senior leaders, Hayakawa Kiyohide, even attempted to purchase a nuclear warhead for \$15 million through the Russian advanced weapons market, though this was unsuccessful. Despite their financial strength the organization has faced several obstacles that have limited their potential in obtaining nuclear devices in the past. The group went under the radar ever since their major attack in 1995 and has not carried out more attacks since. However, sources claim the organization is currently in the process of reemersion and is said to "come back" in 2026, with improved strategy, motivation and resources. If the group were to re-immense successfully, it would pose serious threats to worldwide safety, calling all nations to take action to prevent potential future disaster.

Current Situation

Among the organizations discussed above, none have yet succeeded in procuring sufficient materials to manufacture and deploy a nuclear or radiological explosive device. That is thanks to the many treaties, organizations and agencies currently active such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), International Atomic Energy Agency, (IAEA), and other like the European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations (UN). However, the numerous near-misses, countless "almosts," and hundreds of attempts across the globe, highlight the persistent threat posed by nongovernmental groups seeking nuclear capabilities. It is imperative to recognize that these organizations, along with several others not mentioned, harbor extraordinarily ambitious objectives and relentless determination to acquire such ordnance, hence perpetuating a significant risk to global peace.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United States of America (USA)

As a nuclear-armed nation with an extensive arsenal, the US has been at the forefront of international initiatives and collaborations dedicated to preventing nuclear terrorism for decades.

The country founded the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program (1991) in an attempt to secure and dismantle weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union. The US also cooperated in the creation of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) in 2006, a partnership co-chaired by the US and Russia, aimed at enhancing global capacities to prevent, detect, and respond to any misuse of nuclear weapons. Former President Barack Obama additionally initiated the Nuclear Security Summit. These summits brought together leaders from around the world to commit to securing nuclear materials and preventing nuclear smuggling. Overall, the US currently remains as the country with the highest risk of being attacked with nuclear ordnance. Former country leaders such as George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry, as well as experts including Graham Allison, Bruce Blair, and Robert Gallucci all stated the US should be actively preparing from a nuclear war with either Russia, Pakistan or a nongovernmental organization due to political turmoil, the growing capabilities of these countries and organizations, and the possibility of their deployment of nuclear power.

Russia

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia inherited a vast stockpile of nuclear weapons and materials, prompting significant international concern over their security. To address these issues, Russia partnered with the United States in the CTR program and in co-chairing the GICNT. However, the country has also been linked to concerns about nuclear terrorism due to reports of nuclear material smuggling and the activities of criminal organizations within its borders. In the 1990s, several incidents were reported where individuals attempted to sell stolen nuclear materials, raising alarms about the potential of these materials falling into the hands of terrorists. Moreover, Russia's extensive network of nuclear facilities and the potential for insider threats have been points of concern for international security experts. Despite these challenges, Russia continues to play a critical role in global efforts to combat nuclear terrorism through its participation in international treaties and cooperation with other nations.

Pakistan

Pakistan's nuclear security has been a focal point of international concern due to the potential for its nuclear materials to fall into the hands of terrorist groups. The 2004 A.Q. Khan network revelation, which exposed the proliferation of nuclear technology to countries like North

Korea, Iran, and Libya, highlighted significant vulnerabilities. Despite Pakistan's strengthened security measures, such as enhanced export control laws and improved personnel security, reports of attacks on nuclear sites by al-Qaeda and the Taliban in 2009 have raised alarm. Additionally, Harvard's "Securing the Bomb 2010" study establishes Pakistan's nuclear stockpile as the site with highest risk to nuclear terrorism. The US has responded to this concern by training specialized units to secure Pakistani nuclear weapons if necessary. While Pakistani authorities express confidence in their improved security framework, the ongoing risk underscores the importance of vigilant and collaborative efforts to prevent the misuse of nuclear weapons by non-state actors.

United Kingdom (UK)

As a nuclear-armed state and prominent in global security, the UK engages in several international initiatives such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and supports the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in safeguarding nuclear materials globally. Domestically, the UK enforces stringent regulations to secure its own nuclear facilities. The British government also invests in advanced detection and forensics to counter attempts by non-state actors to acquire or use nuclear materials, aiming to mitigate the threat of nuclear terrorism and enhance global security.

China

China is a very active participant in global discourse on nuclear safety. It is a signatory of the NPT and often engages with IAEA to make sure its own nuclear arsenal is secure. As of 2024, China is in no risk of nuclear terrorism, due to its extensive protection protocols, geographical location, and current political landscape.

Israel

Israel maintains a policy of nuclear ambiguity, stringent security measures, and proactive intelligence operations. Not a signatory to the NPT, Israel possesses a nuclear arsenal that has been used in the past as a deterrent against regional threats such as Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas. The country employs rigorous physical and cybersecurity protocols to protect its nuclear facilities and collaborates with international efforts to secure nuclear materials.

France

France has a very unique way of managing their nuclear capabilities. It keeps its nuclear arsenal at the lowest possible level as a part of strategy to lower the risk of nuclear terrorism, while still gaining the benefits that come from possessing nuclear weapons. As a result, France faces minimal risk of nuclear terrorism.

Iran

Iran signed the NPT in 1970, but has violated the treaty several times, leading to ongoing dispute over its current nuclear agenda. Despite Iran's claims of pursuing nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, its inconsistent cooperation with international monitoring bodies like the IAEA and instances of non-transparency have raised concern. The regime's support for militant groups such as Hezbollah, in addition to regional instability and the broader geopolitical context in the Middle East, raises significant concerns about the potential for nuclear materials to fall into the hands of terrorist organizations. The Stuxnet cyberattack on Iran's nuclear facilities in 2010 highlighted vulnerabilities in Iran's nuclear infrastructure, underscoring the broader risks associated with the security of nuclear materials. International efforts, including diplomatic negotiations such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), aim to mitigate these risks by restricting Iran's nuclear capabilities and enhancing monitoring measures to prevent the misuse of nuclear weapons by non-governmental groups.

North Korea

Despite international sanctions and diplomatic efforts, North Korea has developed and tested nuclear weapons, which highlights the risk of potential transfer of nuclear materials or technology to nongovernmental organizations. The regime's secrecy, combined with its economic isolation, increases the risk of clandestine nuclear transactions. North Korea's actions have prompted global efforts to enhance non-proliferation measures and secure nuclear materials to prevent them from falling into the hands of terrorists or rogue entities.

India

While India has a strong record of securing its nuclear arsenal and materials, its regional rivalry with Pakistan and history of nuclear tests have contributed to concerns about proliferation. Nevertheless, India's robust nuclear security measures, adherence to export control regimes, and participation in international initiatives like the GICNT reflect its commitment to preventing nuclear devices from falling into the hands of terrorists or rogue actors.

United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

The UNODC plays a crucial role in preventing the misuse of nuclear weapons by nongovernmental groups through its continuous involvement in the issue. Such as the Container Control Programme (CCP), which helps secure ports and detect illicit nuclear materials. The UNODC also collaborates with the IAEA very closely to ensure guidelines and security measures are very clear and most effective. Additionally, the UNODC promotes the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, enhancing legal frameworks and international cooperation to combat nuclear terrorism.

The International Atomic Energy Agency

The IAEA was established in 1957 to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. Key events in its history include its role in enforcing the NPT from 1970, the safeguards implemented following Israel's bombing of Iraq's Osirak reactor in 1981, and its involvement in monitoring Iran's nuclear program, particularly during the negotiations leading to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The IAEA has overall been a crucial stakeholder for global security surrounding this conflict for decades and continues to prevent the misuse of nuclear technology.

Timeline of Events

1967

Arab - Israeli War

Israel's military actions and the subsequent territorial gains transformed its stance from a nation fighting for survival to a regional power, raising fears about the potential use of nuclear weapons in future conflicts.

The war destabilized the region, creating fertile ground for terrorist organizations to rise both domestically and internationally, further raising concern about potential nuclear terrorism worldwide.

1972

Munich Massacre.

The Munich massacre was a terrorist attack by the Palestinian group Black September during the Summer Olympics, where eight militants took eleven Israeli athletes hostage, resulting in their deaths after a failed rescue attempt. This event marked the first time a terrorist attack was broadcast live to a global audience, highlighting the vulnerabilities of major events to terrorism and the potential for such acts to be used for political leverage. The incident prompted the US Atomic Energy Commission to strengthen their nuclear security measures, recognizing the urgent need to protect nuclear facilities from similar threats.

1998

India and Pakistan's Nuclear Tests.

In May of 1998, India conducted a series of five nuclear tests under the codename Operation Shakti at the Pokhran Test Range. These tests included both fission and thermonuclear devices, demonstrating India's advanced nuclear capabilities. In response to India's tests, Pakistan conducted its own nuclear tests, in the Chagai Hills of Balochistan. These tests confirmed India's and Pakistan's status in the nuclear club and significantly escalated the nuclear arms race in South Asia.

2001

The September 11 Attacks.

The September 11 attacks remains one of the most devastating terrorist-caused events in history. Al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked four airplanes and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States, including the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The attacks directly involved the US in the fight against danger posed by nongovernmental groups and as a result led to intensified global efforts to enhance counter-terrorism measures, secure nuclear materials and strengthen non-proliferation initiatives to prevent nuclear terrorism.

2006

Illicit Smuggling Records

In February 2006, Oleg Khinsagov was arrested in Georgia, after crossing the border from Russia with 79.5 grams of 89 percent highly enriched uranium. This significant quantity of HEU, sufficient to manufacture a nuclear explosive, raised serious concerns about its origin, intended use, and the potential consequences had it not been intercepted in time.

2007

Pelindaba Nuclear Facility Attack

Pelindaba is a nuclear research facility found near Pretoria, South Africa. In November 2007, burglars infiltrated the base with unknown intentions. It remains unknown whether they were successful in acquiring any materials or in stealing any knowledge or research held there. Nevertheless, their attempt highlights security threats in such facilities and emphasizes the importance of strengthening safety measures.

2009

Reports of Attacks on Pakistani Facilities

In 2009 a British academic, Shaun Gregory, stated there is evidence supporting the nuclear facilities in Pakistan have been attacked and infiltrated multiple times, via clandestine means. The Pakistani government denies such allegations, though if true, this would prove Pakistan's status in the nuclear club poses a great threat to global security due to its vulnerability to non-state led attacks.

Relevant UN Treaties and Resolutions

Non-Proliferation Treaty

The Non-Proliferation Treaty was negotiated between 1965 and 1968 by the Eighteen Nation Committee on Disarmament, and then passed and officially ratified in 1970. For non-nuclear states, signing the NPT means they pledge to not acquire or develop nuclear weapons. For already nuclear states (USA, Russia, China, UK, France), signing this treaty means they agree not to transfer nuclear weapons or assist non-nuclear states in acquiring them. As of 2024, 191 nations have joined the

NPT, nevertheless India, Pakistan, North Korea, South Sudan, and Israel never signed it. South Sudan has not agreed to the NPT, though it still does not possess or manufacture nuclear weapons. Overall, this treaty remains the most essential legal framework that binds nations to their responsibility to global security and commitment to peaceful nuclear technology.

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is an international agreement that entered into force on January 22, 2021, aimed at delegitimizing nuclear weapons by strengthening the antinuclear norm. It prohibits states from developing, testing, producing, acquiring, possessing, stockpiling, using, or threatening to use nuclear weapons. While the TPNW has gained support from many non-nuclear states, its effectiveness remains debated. Some argue that it reinforces existing nonproliferation efforts and increases pressure for disarmament, while others, including nuclear-armed states and NATO members, state that it could undermine other initiatives like the NPT.

Resolution 1373 (2001)

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1373 on September 28, 2001, in response to the 9/11 attacks. It mandates Member States to suppress terrorism financing, enhance international cooperation, strengthen border control, and established the Counter-Terrorism Committee to monitor compliance.

Resolution 1540 (2004)

The resolution was adopted in response to the uncovering of the Abdul Qadeer Khan proliferation network and aims to close gaps in existing nonproliferation treaties by mandating that states criminalize weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation activities, establish effective export controls, and secure sensitive materials, thus addressing the threat of terrorism and illicit trafficking of WMDs.

Resolution 2325 (2016)

The UN Security Council Resolution 2325, adopted in 2016, calls for intensified efforts to prevent non-state actors from acquiring WMDs by strengthening the implementation of Resolution 1540 (2004).

Resolution 2370 (2017)

The UN Security Council Resolution 2370, adopted unanimously in 2017 addresses the link between terrorism and weapons acquisition. The resolution calls on all states to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons, including through the use of information and communications technologies. The resolution also emphasizes the importance of eliminating the supply of weapons to terrorists and encourages states to become parties to relevant international and regional instruments.

Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I), signed in 1991 between the United States and the Soviet Union, was a landmark bilateral agreement aimed at reducing strategic nuclear weapons, which entered into force in 1994 after the Soviet Union's dissolution. Its main points included limiting deployed ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers to 1,600, capping nuclear warheads at 6,000, and implementing extensive verification measures. The treaty proved highly effective, resulting in an 80% reduction of the world's strategic nuclear weapons by 2001, and it maintained these standards for eight years after full implementation until its expiration in 2009.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1996, was a significant international effort to prevent the misuse of nuclear weapons by banning all nuclear explosions globally. Despite being signed by 187 nations and ratified by 178, the treaty has not entered into force due to the non-ratification by key states, including China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, and the United States. The CTBT's verification regime, which includes a global network of monitoring facilities and provisions for on-site

inspections, underscores its potential to enhance global security. However, the treaty's effectiveness is hindered by the lack of universal ratification, exemplified by Russia's recent revocation of its ratification in 2023. This situation highlights the ongoing challenge in achieving comprehensive international agreement.

Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty

The Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) aims to prohibit the production of fissile materials (highly enriched uranium and plutonium) for nuclear weapons, but negotiations have been stalled for years in the Conference on Disarmament due to disagreements among Member States. While efforts to negotiate the FMCT began in 1993, the Ad Hoc Committee, established under the Shannon Mandate in 1995, has struggled to reach consensus, primarily over verification provisions and whether to include existing stockpiles within the treaty's scope. Countries like China and Russia have linked FMCT negotiations to broader security issues, such as preventing an arms race in outer space, further complicating discussions. Despite widespread support for the treaty, it has not been able to pass, highlighting the challenges of achieving consensus on nuclear disarmament measures. Nevertheless, the FMCT remains a crucial step in the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, with ongoing advocacy from various states and organizations to advance this important initiative.

International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism

The convention aims to criminalize acts of nuclear misuse and promote cooperation among countries in preventing, investigating, and prosecuting such acts, and it is part of a broader framework of universal anti-terrorism agreements, joining 12 previously existing conventions. Although it was opened for signature on September 14 2005, with the United States being the first to sign, not all UN member states have ratified or agreed to the treaty, limiting its effectiveness. The convention requires states to criminalize specific offenses related to nuclear terrorism within their national legal frameworks, but the lack of universal participation underscores the ongoing difficulty in achieving global consensus.

Resolution 1540 (2004)

The UNSC Resolution 1540 (2004), calls upon all Member States to prevent non-governmental groups to acquire nuclear weapons and related materials. Despite its broad scope, the resolution's full implementation has faced significant obstacles. Challenges include raising awareness, collecting national reports, and regularizing information flow to the 1540 Committee. Additionally, some countries have struggled with the necessary legislative and enforcement measures, and there are concerns about the perceived legitimacy of the resolution and the capacity of states to comply. Efforts to address these challenges have included reauthorizing the 1540 Committee, enhancing regional cooperation, and providing targeted assistance, but gaps in implementation remain, particularly in securing relevant materials and adapting to technological advances. Hence, the Council advocated for an edited and more tangible version, Resolution 2325 (2016). Although, as of 2024, this resolution also remains largely unsuccessful.

Possible Solutions

The risk of potential nuclear misuse has been a global concern for several decades. Fortunately, as of 2024, all the measures implemented seem to be effective since no nongovernmental organization has successfully acquired a nuclear device, manufactured an improvised one, used a dirty bomb, or otherwise engaged in nuclear terrorism. However, as technology advances, terrorist groups gain more regional and international dominance, and the global political landscape shifts, the world grows more vulnerable to a potential nuclear attack. Thus it is vital for the UN to intensify their prevention measures. The following ideas are possible solutions to the issue at hand, though when considering these proposals it is important to note both the merits and consequences that could come of the implementation of such frameworks on a global scale:

International compromising and transparency: A key pattern in the failed attempts discussed above is the lack of agreement and compromise among Member States. Many initiatives and proposals require unanimous support and to make sure that the global community is reaching their full potential of security it is crucial that all nations are on the same page. This includes maximum transparency regarding intentions and purpose behind manufacturing nuclear devices, granting access to nations' stockpiles, and overall being open to sacrificing national agendas for

international safety. Once all governments are on board to sacrificing their independent military goals, and fully commit to cooperating, the world can be one step closer to entirely preventing a nuclear attack from a nongovernmental group.

Limiting access and the spread of information: Other experts argue countries should instead focus on restricting the flow of valuable nuclear information and technology. This approach involves tightening controls on nuclear-related knowledge, materials, and equipment to prevent them from falling into the hands of non-state actors. When information is traded among governments it is more likely for there to be incidents of important research, records, documents or any knowledge to be used by nongovernmental foundations, which would pose massive safety threats. Hence, if all important and relevant information stays completely safeguarded by national governments, there is close to zero chance it gets into the hands of a terrorist foundation, preventing the misuse of nuclear weapons.

Enhanced border control: Terrorist foundations take great advantage of their ability to traffic materials, resources and personnel across borders easily. This is how they can proceed with their operations despite being limited by national security. Enhancing border control is one of the key ways to limit terrorists' international dominance and minimize their growth potential. Enhancing border control can mean improved physical barriers, advanced surveillance technologies, stricter documentation processes, and more rigorous inspection procedures, all aimed at strengthening a country's ability to monitor and regulate the movement of any non-state organization.

Heightened security: Security is the underlying issue of every proposed solution as several previous incidents prove nuclear facilities and storage units significantly lack protection, making them vulnerable to infiltration by terrorist and other rebel groups. Therefore, enhancing physical security measures, implementing advanced surveillance technologies, conducting regular security audits, and fostering international cooperation for information sharing and rapid response is crucial to safeguard these sites from potential threats.

Disbanding nongovernmental organizations: Some experts argue nations should be taking the more radical route and targeting the terrorist foundations directly. By disbanding and

weakening them, it will automatically decrease their chances and potential of misusing nuclear weapons. Currently, terrorist groups maintain control because they often exploit the lack of stringent regulations and oversight in certain regions, allowing them to operate with relative impunity. Many countries have passed laws to disband nongovernmental groups that are deemed to threaten national security, as seen in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Russia, where governments have used their state resources and funds to impose harsh restrictions, surveillance, and even dissolved organizations outright. This global crackdown on terrorist groups is part of a broader strategy to limit the influence and capabilities of groups that might engage in nuclear terrorism, though it often sparks controversy for suppressing civil society and human rights.

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