
1ST COMMITTEE: DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Proliferation of Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Weapons

With the United States' development of the atomic bomb during World War II, the world was thrust into a new era: one where unimaginable horrors now ruled the geopolitical climate. The international community has since learned from its predecessors and taken steps to restrict and regulate weapons of mass destruction. However, with few states still having enormous nuclear arsenals, as well as the aggressive advances of non-compliant states and the ever-present threat of rogue actors, the discussion around nuclear weapons is still scarily relevant today. Just recently, the first nuclear weapons prohibition treaty was signed, yet without the support of any nuclear-weapon states or NATO members. Additionally, there has been an uptick in chemical attacks in recent years, specifically surrounding Syria, with both the Assad regime and the United States Armed Forces being accused of using such armaments. These and other current events will provide a complex array of challenges for our committee to tackle.

This is a tried and true topic that has seen light in a multitude of committees, from the General Assembly to the International Atomic Energy Association and beyond. Part of what makes this topic great is that it works well to introduce delegates to international relations. Armed conflict, and specifically weapons of mass destruction, are easy points for delegates to understand: war is bad, nuclear war would be devastating. A big learning objective, for new delegates especially, is to learn the triumphs and limitations of international bodies. Huge strides have been made to regulate these armaments, but what do you do when states are non-compliant? What happens when irrational, non-state actors seize control of these weapons? These are all lessons you can teach delegates at any level to help them understand armed conflict in a broader sense.

Likewise, the importance of the topic is fairly obvious to the delegates: use of these weapons is not only unusually cruel, but could spell disaster for humanity. The fact that these weapons still exist suggest that the current geopolitical balance of power is not as simple as avoiding conflict at all costs. In addition, many technologies that are seen as invaluable for the peaceful uses, such as nuclear energy, can easily be weaponized by rogue parties, making oversight a huge challenge. Delegates can tackle these challenges from a variety of angles. Perhaps increased transparency will allow countries to exchange technology without fear of weaponization. Infrastructure can also be strengthened to prevent incidences like the meltdown in Iran caused by the Stuxnet virus. Security can be improved to prevent these weapons from falling into the hands of non-governmental actors, which do not possess the rational fear of retaliation that countries do.

In fact, perhaps the most immediate question that arises is why these weapons are not used in the first place. This stems from the idea of mutually-assured destruction (MAD), meaning that no rational government (and governments are assumed to be rational for the most part) would launch an attack against another government using weapons of mass destruction for fear of an equally devastating retaliation. This might suggest why nuclear-weapon states, despite having made progress in the past such as START, are so reluctant to continue disarmament efforts. As armed conflict is always in the back of diplomats' minds, understanding the implications of these arsenals and their



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soft power effects (a more advanced concept) in geopolitics is a great way to dive into the world of international relations.

Small Arms and Light Weapons

Looking at the other end of the arms spectrum, small arms and light weapons present a vastly different, but equally significant problem for international security. Conflicts during the last century, many of which also arose out of the Cold War struggle between the United States and Soviet Union, saw a rapid influx of weapons into unstable areas. As these conflicts ended, the surplus of small arms and light weapons in these regions proved to be an issue as they made their way to the black market, militias, criminal organizations, and civilians alike. Many of these arms go on to fuel future conflicts, creating a cycle of violence. This illicit trade is also bolstered by rightfully owned government and military arms that make their way into the black market or conflict areas due to a lack of proper controls or supervision. Due to their availability and ease of use, small arms and light weapons remain the primary tool in armed conflicts and the primary cause of criminal and interpersonal violence.

This topic has also seen much debate at Model United Nations conferences, but remains continually relevant as armed conflicts, civil wars, and domestic violence arise year after year. My hope is that the scope of this topic will be much more relatable and its impact easier to grasp than Topic A. In contrast to Topic A, which tackles dealing with a massive threat we hope to never see, Topic B will address a smaller, but ever present threat that plagues the international community daily. The issue of small arms and light weapons presents its own host of challenges, as world leaders are not as quick to the drawing board as they are when problems are related to weapons of mass destruction. This means that Topic B will require a more multi-faceted approach to tackle the illicit arms trade than a more single-minded approach towards disarmament.

I believe that this topic will serve as a good introduction for new delegates, as the issue is easy to understand and many of the controls and regulations already in place are straightforward and easy to digest. However, the topic also allows seasoned delegates to exercise their research talents. New manufacturing technologies, tracking methods, and recordkeeping tools allow for a multitude of solutions to this complex issue. I encourage you to look into these novel technologies and strategies and take advantage of the work that many have done already. However, as you learn more about the methods that are already in place, you should also think about their shortcomings and areas where they can be improved. Often times, problems don't require entirely new solutions, but simply improvements on what is currently in place. That is why there are often many iterations of treaties and conventions that span decades, each building on the previous.

Lastly, I encourage you to think about the broader impact of small arms and light weapons. The illicit trade definitely leads to violence and conflict, but what is the result of that? Does this disparately affect poor regions? How does the trade affect children? By thinking about these questions, you might find that there are even more angles from which to tackle the problem.

