

# Research Report

## General Assembly 1



***The issue of a potential new arms race, emerging bioterror threats on security horizon and imploring nuclear weapon nations to cut arsenals.***

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## Introduction

It is widely known that countries have always struggled when it comes to weapons, more specifically nuclear weapons. Over the years countries have sometimes even taken it a step too far, for example when looking at the Hiroshima incident back in 1945. As a result, governments have generally decided to lessen the use of nuclear weapons or even eradicate them fully. Currently, the European Union decides which countries, of those that are part of the EU, can own these types of weapons. In the beginning of 2020, it was estimated that, on earth, there are about 13,400 nuclear warheads in total. Governments are being encouraged to cut arsenals on nuclear weapons, and discuss the upcoming threat of bioterror.

## The Committee

Our committee will be GA1, formerly known as the United Nations General Assembly First Committee. The First Committee deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community and seeks out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime.

The issues of GA1 fall under seven thematic clusters.

- Nuclear weapons
- Other weapons of mass destruction
- Outer space (disarmament aspects)
- Conventional weapons
- Regional disarmament and security
- Other disarmament measures and international security
- Disarmament machinery

The GA1 is the only Main Committee of the General Assembly entitled to verbatim records coverage.

Historical fact: GA1's first resolution was created in 1946 in London.

## Keywords

Arms race = The situation in which two or more countries try to have more and/or stronger weapons than each other.

Bioterrorism = Violent action using living matter, such as bacteria, to harm or kill people for political reasons.

Nuclear weapon = An extremely powerful bomb that uses the explosive power obtained from splitting or fusing atoms.

Arsenal = A collection of weapons.

## Overview

As the world is currently tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, new arms races and emerging bioterror threats are unfolding and nations have loads of nuclear weapons ready for usage. In addition to this, in the past, agreements about disarmament of biological and nuclear weapons have been undone. A great recent example of this is the United States of America leaving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The plan restrained Iran from making nuclear weapons. However, with the nation leaving the plan, Iran threatens to restart developing and producing nuclear weapons.

The first atomic bomb was invented through a top-secret program called the Manhattan Project. Many scientists from the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom collaborated to create a bomb, so powerful, that it would have the potential to end the war. From the moment that the first nuclear bomb exploded, people have been afraid. It raised a moral question: Is it good to have weapons powerful enough to blow away a potential enemy in one day to ensure global security, or is it bad that humans have the potential to end the entire human race in a matter of days? The struggle seems endless and a balanced answer to this question seems almost impossible. Good examples of this struggle are the events of the Cold War.

The views on this issue are extremely divided (see opening debate). Generally, however, the UN agrees that measures need to be taken against the threat of bioterror. "If you look at the history of the last century we see a very clear trend - every time we make a major step forward in our understanding of biology, we find a weapons application for it", as Piet Millet from the UN's biological weapon convention said. "The traditional approach of the international community to dealing with weapons is this - they recognise a threat, develop a treaty, and then they turn that treaty into some operational form, normally by trying to control technology associated with it." However, it is not that simple when it comes to bioterror, because there is a lot more to take into account. Bio weapons can be quite dangerous, and the way that it is recognized is too, the only way to balance the threat is to counter it with a similar threat. "With the advancement of synthetic biology, it becomes possible to do dangerous things - but it also becomes possible to respond to those more rapidly, more effectively, with advanced technology."

## Arguments

Generally, the discussion can be split up into two different parts. The first part being the cutting of the nuclear arsenal and the second one addressing the threat of bio terror on the security horizon. It is thereby important to take both into account when debating about this issue. One does not go without the other.

Currently an estimated number of 13,400 nuclear weapons are in possession of governments. Back in 1985, this number was about 4.5 times as much. Most of them being in possession of the Russian Federation and the United States of America. Over the years, these numbers have decreased, but not enough. It is important to take different aspects into account when talking about cutting arsenals. The strategy needs to be effective and most importantly, it needs to be safe. In history many mistakes have been made and repeating those with bioweapons is what the UN is trying to prevent.

The invention of nuclear weapons has resulted in quite a lot of issues. Several countries have lied about their possession of nuclear weapons, and so it has become an issue of trust and security. It causes the peace to be disturbed and fear to grow. Some are wondering whether it still is useful, in a society where cybercrime, terrorism and climate change are dominating. Furthermore, "Proliferation is the risk that states that have nuclear weapons increase their weapon stockpiles or that new states become nuclear-armed. To combat these huge risks, an international non-proliferation treaty entered into force in 1970 with the aims to prevent non-nuclear states from developing nuclear weapons, and to get nuclear states to reduce their arsenals. Unfortunately, these undertakings remain for the most part empty rhetoric. How can it be possible to claim that the security of a nation is based on a nuclear deterrence policy when at the same time other nations are asked not to use this means of 'security'?" Nuclear weapons have caused 200,000 deaths; in the two times they were actually used during a war.

While biological and chemical weapons have been prohibited worldwide, since 1972 and 1993 respectively, nuclear weapons have not been constrained up to now. This is a legal anomaly that is in the process of being fully corrected with the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This treaty is set to come into force in 2020, and was adopted in 2017 by 122 states at the United Nations. Of course, states that have nuclear weapons, including France, have boycotted this Treaty. But the pressure on the nine nuclear-armed states is building – from the growing number of nations and financial institutions, who are ceasing to invest in the production of these weapons systems, to thousands of people speaking out across the globe.

However, the possession of nuclear weapons reduces the threat to a country's military forces. Also it is impossible to remove all of the weapons at once, there will always be exceptions and it is important to take into account a potential future war with the use of nuclear weapons. In this case, a counter threat needs to be established. Finally, nuclear weapons are extremely reliable, as they do exactly what they are supposed to do, that is also why the threat is this great.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has made the use of biological weapons particularly attractive. Bioterrorists have possibly recognized the benefits of using this, since it is less traceable and the effects can be limited. However, if it falls into the wrong hands and control is lost, the effects can be unimaginable.

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## Timeline of Events

- Biological weapons were used as early as the 18th Century, when Britain infected tribes of Native Americans with smallpox.
- Geneva protocol in 1925 forbid the use of any biological agent in war, but did not ban the research or production of such agents. The USA signed the protocol, but did not ratify it until 1975.
- The first nuclear weapons were used by the United States of America during the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.
- The Cold War started in 1947.
- The Cuban Missile Crisis threatens nuclear war between the US and the USSR in 1962.
- First International Treaty to prevent spread of nuclear weapons is signed in 1968.
- In 1969, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention was signed by the US, UK and the USSR (and more nations).
- The Cold War officially ended in 1991 with the signing of the START treaty.
- The START treaty expired in 2009.
- In 2010 the New START treaty was signed by the US and the Russian Federation, it was set to expire in 2021 but has been extended to end in 2026.
- In 2018, the United States of America withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

## Resolution

In order to solve this issue, we must agree upon a resolution. It is therefore your task to write a resolution that finds a balance between the two sides of bioterror and the cutting of the nuclear arsenal.

In your resolution you must include an image of your stands of this issue.

We would like you to represent your country with its norms and values and not your personal ideas and values. You must therefore research how your country looks upon this issue on economic, cultural and ethical factors.

If this issue does not immediately affect your country, research all the countries you are allied with and the stance they take on this issue so you know which resolutions to help with and vote on.

Furthermore, your resolution must also include possible solutions that are clearly elaborated.

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## Links and sources

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