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Topics

Topic A: Nuclear technology as a detonator for grand scale international conflicts

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Introduction to the chairs

Hello delegates, my name is Juan Bákula, and I'll be serving as your President for the Disarmament and International Security Committee, DISEC. If you have any questions or need clarification at any point, feel free to reach out to me at juanmiguel.bakula@bab.edu.mx

Hello delegates, my name is Cristobal Orozco and I will be serving as your Moderator in the committee of Disarmament & International Security. If you have any issue regarding the topics we will be addressing or anything else, you can contact me via email; cristobal.orozco@bab.edu.mx

Hello delegates, my name is María José Serrano and I will be serving as your Officer of Chair in the committee of Disarmament & International Security Committee, DISEC. If you have any problem regarding the tasks our doubts, feel free to reach me via email! majo.serrano@bab.edu.mx

Introduction to the committee

The Committee on Disarmament and International Security (commonly referred as DISEC or the First Committee) is one of the six principal committees of the United Nations General Assembly. Its mandate covers disarmament, arms control, and international security issues and provides a multilateral platform where member states debate challenges related to weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons, new military technologies, regional security, and institutional mechanisms for disarmament. During this historical period, DISEC placed increasing emphasis, on how scientific and technological developments impact disarmament and security. Rapid advances in areas such as artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, biotechnology, directed energy, and nuclear technologies present both opportunities and threats, especially when they exceed the capabilities of existing legal and normative frameworks. The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), also known as the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, is structured to address international peace and security issues with a focus on disarmament and arms control. DISEC consists of all 193 UN member states as parties, providing a comprehensive global platform for dialogue.

- Committee Structure and Roles
    - DISEC operates under the umbrella of the General Assembly as its first main committee, established by the UN Charter in 1945.
    - It functions through stages including a general debate, thematic discussions, and drafting and adopting resolutions.
    - The committee works closely with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs
      (UNODA) and related bodies like the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament to coordinate disarmament efforts.

- Major roles include setting principles for international peace and security cooperation, recommending disarmament measures, and addressing new security challenges.

In summary, DISEC remains a critical forum for addressing evolving international security challenges, balancing technological innovation with regulation, and striving towards global disarmament goals amid complex geopolitical realities of the Cold War era. This committee plays a central role in shaping multilateral security policy and creating a platform for cooperation on peace and disarmament issues within the UN framework.

Topic Overview

Topic A: Nuclear technology as a detonator for grand scale international conflicts

Note to delegates: This is a historical committee set during the Cold War era. Delegates are expected to represent their countries' positions as they stood during that period.

- In today's security landscape, nuclear technology holds a significant and distinct role. It is seen both as a remarkable scientific breakthrough and as a powerful means of deterrence. At the same time, it poses a constant danger to humanity's existence. This dual nature of nuclear abilities being an impressive advancement while also presenting a serious threat makes them particularly unstable when they mix with international tensions and arms build-ups. In this setting, DISEC faces the issue of whether nuclear technology is more of a trigger for widespread conflict than a means of ensuring stability, and how countries, organizations, and regulations should react.
- Improvements in science and technology have repeatedly transformed the strategic environment. According to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, since the late 1980s, the First Committee has acknowledged that developments in fields like microelectronics, fuel and laser technologies, along with nuclear technology itself, have both civilian and military applications. The UN emphasizes that the speed of these advancements is increasing, often surpassing the ability of current legal and regulatory systems to address their associated risks.
- The growth of nuclear technology has had a big effect on international security since the mid 20th century, changing how wars are fought and how peace is made. The Manhattan Project (from 1942 to 1945) was the first major scientific and military effort to create nuclear weapons. The result was the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, which not

only ended the Second World War in the Pacific but also showed the world the incredible and destructive power of nuclear weapons, starting the nuclear age (Rhodes, 1986). Right after the war, the U.S. and Soviet Union started competing in weapons programs, which led to the Cold War arms race. The Soviet Union's first successful nuclear test in 1949 ended the U.S. monopoly on nuclear weapons. Later developments like the hydrogen bomb (from 1952 to 1953) and long-range intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) increased the risk of global destruction. During this time, there were also early attempts to regulate nuclear weapons, such as the creation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1957 and the signing of the Partial Test-Ban Treaty (PTBT) in 1963.

- Nuclear technology has been a key factor in shaping international relations since it was first used in warfare. The bombings of Hiroshima y Nagasaki in 1945 marked the beginning of a new era where the threat of mass destruction influenced global politics deeply. Since then, nuclear weapons have not just been tools of war; they have become strategic deterrents that prevent countries from launching full-scale wars. This is especially clear during the Cold War, when the United States and the Soviet Union avoided direct conflict largely because of the fear of nuclear retaliation.
- The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 showed how quickly nuclear tensions could escalate and bring the entire world close to disaster. When the Soviet Union placed nuclear missiles so close to the US, it resulted in a dangerous standoff that was only resolved through intense diplomacy. Beyond the Cold War superpowers, the spread of nuclear weapons to countries like China, India, and Pakistan introduced new risks, making some regional conflicts even more dangerous since these states view nuclear weapons as essential to their security.
- However, nuclear technology is a double-edged sword. While it prevents outright wars between big powers, it also creates an atmosphere filled with distrust and fear. The weakening of arms control agreements and ongoing nuclear programs in countries like Iran and North Korea demonstrate how fragile international security remains. Therefore, nuclear weapons mainly act as a threat or a “detonator” of large-scale conflicts, influencing the way

countries form alliances and negotiate. This reality highlights the importance of constant diplomacy and arms control to avoid disasters that could have catastrophic global effects.

- Nuclear technology profoundly shapes international stability and conflict risk. While it has prevented major wars through deterrence, its presence also deepens mistrust and the potential for catastrophic escalation, especially in volatile regions. Balanced, multilateral diplomacy combined with strengthened arms control frameworks and preventive measures is essential to reduce nuclear dangers and manage this potent but precarious tool of international security.

Suggested Tools for Further Research, Documents of Significance, and Guiding Questions

Here is a timeline of the most important Nuclear Technology related events that had happened through our history.

- 1945: The United States drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima y Nagasaki (Japan) abruptly ending WWII. This event demonstrated nuclear weapons' unparalleled destructive power, reshaping global military strategy and initiating the nuclear era. The bombings established nuclear arms as ultimate deterrents and instruments of geopolitical power.

- 1949: The Soviet Union detonates its first atomic bomb, breaking the U.S. monopoly on nuclear weapons. This event marked the start of the intense nuclear arms race in the Cold War era, fueling mutual suspicion and global tensions between the two superpowers.

- 1962: Cuban Missile Crisis-U.S. spy planes discovered Soviet nuclear missile installations under construction in Cuba, just 90 miles from U.S. soil. President John F. Kennedy responded by enforcing a naval "quarantine" to block further Soviet shipments and demanded removal of missiles. For 13 days, the world teetered on the edge of nuclear war. Negotiations ended with the USSR agreeing to remove its missiles in exchange for U.S. promises not to invade Cuba and secret withdrawal of U.S. missiles from Turkey. This crisis exemplified how nuclear weapons

could bring global powers close to catastrophic conflict while also forcing diplomacy.

- 1964: China conducted its first nuclear test, entering the nuclear arms club. This development increased regional and global complexities, intensifying the balance of power considerations during the Cold War.

- 1974: India's "Smiling Buddha" nuclear test asserted its status as a nuclear power, disrupting South Asian strategic stability. This heightened tensions with Pakistan, sowing seeds for future conflicts under the shadow of nuclear weapons.

- 1998: India and Pakistan both conducted nuclear tests, formalizing their nuclear capabilities. This escalation heightened the risk of nuclear confrontation, especially amid border conflicts like the 1999 Kargil War.

- 2002: U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty removed key constraints on missile defense systems and renewed fears of an arms buildup, unsettling the global nuclear balance.

- 2003: Nuclear tensions remain acute with Iran's disputed nuclear program and North Korea's nuclear weapons tests, perpetuating regional instability and fear of nuclear triggered conflicts.

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