**Forum:** Disarmament Commission

**Issue:** Measures to safely dispose of armaments following conflict

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Introduction

Since the end of World War I, the necessity of exploring methods to safely dispose of used armaments after a conflict has significantly increased. Currently, after the development from decades ago, there are various methods to dispose of armaments that were utilized in conflicts and wars. However, there is a need to discover a safer and more effective way to dispose of the armaments following a conflict, as it caused severe harm to pollution and the population.

For instance, a group of researchers found marks of arsenic-containing agents and specific gas products in sediment in the ocean near the three weapon disposal sites, indicating contamination due to improperly disposed chemical weapons. These agents and weapons came from the German Army in World War 2. After Germany’s defeat, the Soviet Union, Americans, and the British threw all their chemicals into the Baltic Sea because disposing of weapons in the ocean was more popular than burning the armament at the time. However, the explorers, who developed their analyzing technology, now in the Baltic Sea, figured out how chemical agents were seabed sediment, while some were still considered toxic.

Another reason is that during the process of disposing of armaments after conflict, there is a high possibility of accidents due to the risk of explosion, combustion of toxic substances, and heavy metals and dioxins. Therefore, for the workers at demilitarization plants, there should be improved measures to dispose of armaments safely.

In addition, as the Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons has entered into force in 2021, which mitigates the use and testing of nuclear weapons, hints that several countries, in order to join the Treaty, are required to dispose of their stockpiled weapons. This increases the need for procedures that allow the safe disposal of the armaments.

Definition of Key Terms

**Armament**

Military weapons and equipment, including chemical weapons and nuclear weapons.

**Dispose**

Getting rid of armaments by throwing away or selling away to someone else, including the government and weapon-making programs.

**Arms Control**

International control of the weapon-making process, including the development, production, and testing, is based on the premise that the establishment of the national military is assured.

**Chemical Weapons**

Weapons that contain chemicals with the purpose of causing death or harm through toxic substances. Munitions and devices that were designed to weaponize chemicals are also categorized as chemical weapons.

**Nuclear Weapons**

Weapons and devices that are explosive from nuclear reactions, including fission or a combination of fission and fusion that produce a nuclear explosion.

**Scrap**

Metal that was discarded for reprocessing and removing weapons.

**Demilitarization**

The process of eliminating the military offensive and defensive advantages inherited in specific weapons and armament.

Background

Armed conflict is a widespread issue in our current world, and one that has devastating consequences when not regulated properly. One of the most volatile factors that derive from this conflict is unchecked arms – which is thus why the regulation of these arms is such a principal issue in disarmament.

**History of previous attempted methods to aid armament disposal**

Humanity has only begun to formulate combined efforts towards armament control in the most recent century – of which most were in the form of either international agreements, treaties, or conventions. These policies gained large momentum after the conclusion of the second world war: as people began to become painfully aware of the danger of unregulated weaponry (especially with the detonation of the atomic bomb upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in 1945). Disarmament policies developed further with the progression of militant conflict during the Cold War (1947~1991). The cold war especially escalated the discussion over the regulation on nuclear arms especially – it created conditions in which arms control law became an issue that everyone began to be interested in. However, in the first decade following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, as global politics became a centralized, unipolar system (with the USA at its epicentre), attention given towards disarmament decreased. Nowadays, most disarmament efforts are concentrated towards regional conflicts (ex. Armed conflicts in Africa and the Middle east), disarming terrorists, and preventing arms proliferation. Next is a comprehensive overview of milestones in weapons disarmament.

***The Hague Conferences***

The first multilateral and international arms control agreements were established in a form of joint declarations published in 1899, at the First International Peace Conference set in Hague. These regulations listed prohibitions on projectiles containing asphyxiating or toxic gases, and ‘dumdum’ bullets (specialized designed bullets that were built to amplify damage done in contact with the target). This conference was initiated in Russia, in an attempt to regulate the massive growth of weapons that was observed in other European superpowers (ex. Germany). At this time, there was a general resistance against inspections and regulations as national powers were rather protective of the fundamental principle of national sovereignty and inviolability. In the second Hague Peace Conference, more laws were able to be established concerning the methods and means of warfare. Armaments that caused unnecessary suffering or superfluous injury were also prohibited. The Hague peace conferences were halted as the First World War broke out in 1914. These conferences influenced most future agreements concerning arms regulation, as it set in motion a trend of establishing international rules for disarmament and weapons usage.

***The Geneva Convention***

The final version of this convention was signed on 12 August 1949. Some weapons that are limited by the Geneva convention are biological weapons, chemical weapons anti-personnel landmines, and certain restrictions placed on the usage of booby-traps.

***Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT)***

Signed in 1963, this treaty required prohibited parties from carrying out nuclear experiments (i.e. explosions) in any environment in which these experiments could cause any lasting radioactive harm (ex. Radioactive debris) outside the limits of the state that initiated the experiment.

***Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)***

The NPT was an international treaty signed with the objective of preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, in order to promote cooperation on a global scale towards the final goal of general and complete disarmament. This treaty is the only binding, and multilateral treaty in uniting nuclear-weapon States under the banner of disarmament. Although its goals have not yet been accomplished (the treaty was extended indefinitely in May 1995), its importance still persists today. Currently, a total of 191 states have entered into the treaty, of which includes the five nuclear-weapon States (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the USA). North Korea proclaimed to not be bound by this treaty in 2003. States such as South Sudan, India, Pakistan, and Israel are states that are thought to have never accepted the treaty.

A central point in the entire course of disarmament history is that most disarmament policies have been focused mainly on limiting the weapon stock of nations, and considerably less so on the safe disposal of arms. However, with the entrance of the UN, more light has been shed in this area. The key to the efficient, and safe disposal of arms is for operations, regulations, and strategies concerning this topic to showcase the ability to not be affiliated by any political, or nationalistic aims but be focused on the pursuit of extraction itself. The issue of minimizing humanitarian and environmental harm is the issue at hand – and of course, in recent years, strategies addressing this issue have been made; but it is an area with a large potential for improvement.

**Major consequences of the mishandling of arms after militant conflict**

The consequences that war-torn region experiences are immeasurable, but some characteristics that are often seen are death and injuries, forced migration, increased refugee flows, capital flight (when (financial) assets rapidly flow out of a country as the result of an economic or political crisis), and the destruction (i.e. disruption) of societal infrastructure. In particular, leftover armaments such as landmines may cause even more human casualties, creating unnecessary victims of war. Synthetic materials left over from chemical warfare such as sulfur mustard, nitrogen mustard, phosgene oxime, phenyldichlorarsine, and lewisite can cause extreme damage to all organic life in the near area, basically eradicating all possibilities for the growth of life in the region. Other conventional weapons that are not disposed of correctly can filter into the illegal arms trade and proliferate more violence in both nearby and faraway nations.

**Currently existent strategies outlining armament disposal methods**

As of now, the United Nations has developed two sets of guidelines concerning the entire life cycle of weapons and ammunition management (WAM): the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG), and the International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS). These strategies are implemented according to the integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration standards (IDDRS (i.e. DDR)).

***International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG)***

These guidelines were established in order to accord to the mandate that the General Assembly issued to the United Nations in 2011 – which required the UN to provide effective, high-quality advice and support in WAM. Overseen in its development by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), its credibility has already been established in usage by many different stakeholders such as international organizations, non-governmental parties, and national authorities. Primarily based on an incremental approach, the guidelines are flexible – which thus makes them adaptable to many different settings and circumstances. The main content of the IATG can be divided into 3 different risk-reduction process levels (RRPLs): which is Level 1 (basic), Level 2 (intermediate), and Level 3 (advanced). These levels are divided according to the degree of complexity of each task or activity, and in which the level of asset investment increases with each level. The IATG also utilizes a ‘Risk Reduction Checklist’, which would enable users to calculate the RRPL level for their (target) stockpile.

Not only to be used for weapons disposal, the IATG also provides guidelines on national authorities wishing to improve the safety and security of ammunition stockpiles within their nation. The IATG is primarily promoted by the ‘UN SaferGuard’.

***International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS)***

Developed in 2012, the ISACS includes a total of 24 modules that provide practical guidance developed in respect to all aspects of small arms, and light weapons (i.e. conventional weapons) control, including programme design, operational support, and legislative measures. The United Nations Programme of Action on illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (PoA), the Firearms Protocol, and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) frame the ISACS – as it has been based on previously decided-upon international agreements, the credibility and effectiveness of these standards can be vouched for. The private sector, civil society, international and regional organizations, have all contributed to the development of the ISACS by providing small arms specialists to create the standards.

An example of one of the guidelines in the ISACS is an electronic assessment tool that enables users to compare and contrast existent operational small arms and light weapons controls with overarching international standards in order to speed up the identification and prioritization process of areas that are lacking.

***Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS)***

The DDR is a process through which members of militant forces and organizations are supported to give up their arms and transition back to civilian life. This process is vital in the future of complete disarmament and may aid in helping tackle the central issue of the mishandling of munitions (ex. Dumping leftover munitions in random locations after battle) by disarming the parties that possess munitions.

Major Parties Involved

The united nations office for disarmament affairs (UNODA)

Also called the United Nations ODA, this organization was established in January 1998 as the ‘Department for Disarmament Affairs’. The primary goal of this organization is to pursue the complete and general disarmament of the globe, under strict and effective international control. The central office of the UNODA works to address the humanitarian impact of major conventional weapons, and new emerging technologies such as autonomous weapons. The UNODA is an organization that has the capability to, under effective cooperation with states, supervise the extraction and demolition of weapons sufficiently

Ammunition management advisory team (AMAT)

This is an initiative run by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and the Un SaferGuard. The AMAT provides assistance to requests from nations, partners, and the UN SaferGuard Programme, with consideration applied to available resources. The AMAT is able to calculate and assess the risks involved with arms disposal, which thus enables them to aid disposal operations. Continue listing the relevant countries and organizations with their role place in the issue.

United nations institute for disarmament research (UNIDIR)

The UNIDIR is a voluntarily funded and autonomous institute set under the United Nations. It is one of few legislative organizations across the world that directly focus on disarmament – and it generates knowledge and research concerning the task of developing solutions to solve critical security problems. This could be directly applied to armament disposal.

Timeline of Events

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| Date | Description of event |
| 1899 | First International Peace Conference (aka. The first Hague conventions). Initiated in Russia, these conventions listed prohibitions on certain projectiles and arms – along with acting as a deterrent to the massive growth in militant forces amongst European superpowers. |
| 1907 | Second international Peace Conference (aka. The Second Hague conventions). This conference, in comparison to the first, accomplished less – but still more laws were able to be established concerning the methods and means of warfare (ex. Banning weapons that cause superfluous injury). A third Hague conference was planned but did not continue due to World War 1. |
| 1914 July 18th – 1918 November 11th | World War 1 |
| 1939 September 1st –1945 September 2nd | World War 2 |
| 1949 August 12th | Final version of the Geneva convention signed. |
| 1963 August 5th | Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) is signed. This treaty prohibited nations from carrying out any further nuclear experiments, in any sort of environment that could cost long-lasting radioactive harm. |
| 1968 | Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) signed. This treaty was signed to prevent the further proliferation of nuclear weapons – and in 1995 May, this treaty was extended indefinitely (a total of 191 states have entered into this treaty). This treaty is the only binding, and multilateral treaty in uniting nuclear-weapon States under the banner of disarmament. |
| 1991 March 23rd – 2002 | Sierrea Leone Civil war. This war was a civil military conflict in the African country of sierra Leone that occurred when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), in alliance with the special forces of Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). These two forces intervened in Sierra Leone’s administration with the goal of overthrowing the Joeph Momoh government. The war was especially characteristic in further proliferating the illegal arms trade within the African continent and left over 50,000 dead in total. |
| 1998 – 2003 | Second Congo War. |
| 2001 October 7th – 2014 December | War in Afghanistan. This was primarily an example of a war waged against terrorism – this war was triggered by the ‘September 11 attacks’ (a series of airline hijackings and suicide missions committed by 19 terrorists associated with al-Qaeda (an Islamic terrorist group), in 2001. It was committed within the borders of the United States of America), and advanced in a total of 3 phases. The first phase consisted out of toppling the ‘Taliban’ (in short, the ultraconservative, political and religious faction that enabled the al-Qaeda to exist). This lasted for 2 months. The second phase (2022 – 2008) consisted out of the US defeating the Taliban military and building the fundamental institutions of Afghanistan. The third phase can largely be defined as the ‘counterinsurgency phase’ in a war waged against Taliban and al-Qaeda. The war was formally ended by the US and NATO in 2014 December. This conflict greatly increased the dangers of weapons being proliferated through terrorist activities – and consecutively led to the ‘war on terror’. |
| 2001 – 2003 | Global War on Terrorism |
| 2009 July 26th – Present | The Boko Haram conflict. A war waged by the Islamic state in West Africa (also knowns as Islamic State’s West Africa Province or ISWA), commonly known as Boko Haram, against the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the northern political sector of Africa. Boko Haram wishes to create a ‘pure’ Islamic state ruled by sharia law. This is another example of munition being proliferated to terrorists and causing further conflict. |
| 2022 February 24th – Present | The Russo-Ukraine conflict. It has been documented that Russia has been using weapons considered illegal by the global community, such as ‘cluster munitions’ or ‘thermobaric weapons.’ If these chemical/biological weapons go unchecked, it is highly likely that the environment surrounding eastern Europe will be severely damaged for an elongated period of time. |

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Many actions and methods were invented to devise measures to dispose of armaments following conflict safely. Firstly, the method named incineration was selected in 1982 as the method for disposing of chemical agents and munitions. Incineration is the process of burning dangerous materials at a high temperature that is enough to destroy the contaminants that are inside. It was considered a safe technology because it was able to break down any agent and make it into almost harmless end products and existed long enough that scientists had enough knowledge to control the technology effectively. The capability to operate safely for workers and the public was proved. Additionally, all the incineration is equipped with a monitory system, which records the temperature of the combustion chambers, the declination of pressure, and the emission of various gases during the process. Furthermore, while the disposal of heavy metals and dioxins is concerned as it is the most challenging material for the incinerator, many of the heavy metals and dioxins were disposed of by the incineration as it shows that emission levels are safe for incineration. This reveals how incineration was a fully developed technology and had monitoring systems that supported and allowed the development of the technology.

There are also several methods of physical destruction, including dismantling, recycling, and scrap. Dismantling, or cutting, the metal, followed by the process of scrap and recycling, is a way to physically destroy the armaments. This process is the most financially attractive because the operating costs offset the value and the cost of scrap. For instance, in 2004 and 2005, the Czech Republic used the dismantling and recycling process for a commercial company (VOP 025, Novy Jicin s.p.) and profited by earning $2000 US per vehicle. This method can be effective for smaller weapons that can be easily destroyed, but for weapons that contain chemicals or have certain requirements when demilitarizing, such as nuclear weapons, scrap can pose hazardous risks. This indicates that scrap and recycling are successful to a limited extent.

Other than physical methods, various international regulations limit specific amounts or materials that can be too toxic when using and disposing of weapons. For instance, the Saint Petersburg Declaration that was adopted in 1868 limited the use of projectiles to under 400 grams that explode or contain flammable substances, preventing unnecessary suffering during the disposal process. This international regulation is still valid today, but there is a necessity to discover a more advanced solution that will safely destroy a broader range of armaments following recent conflicts as the technology has been highly developed in recent days and is continuously developing.

Possible Solutions

A large factor of the disposal of arms is that harm is attributed to the fact that uncharted munitions have the potential to cause widespread harm, even after the conclusion of militant conflict. An example of this is chemical weapons that were dumped in a variety of locations after World War 2 – an estimated that an amount of 50 000 tons of chemical weapons (CW) were dumped to the Baltic Sea after the Second World War. As you can see, ill-managed munitions are bound to cause long-lasting, harmful effects that have dire consequences. What we can do to combat this is to divide up disposal operations into two different parts – one, which deals with previously disposed weapons, and another that deals with recent militant conflicts.

The objectivity of the United Nations can be utilized to a great extent in this matter, in that they can conduct operations in maritime areas without being attributed to one side. This means that the extraction of weapons may be made easier under the banner of an international agreement, lest opposing states decide to go against the UN itself.

Another point of concern is illegal arms proliferation – especially with the growing number of terrorists and anti-government organizations, it is crucial that policies must take this factor into account when devising extraction, and stockpile management strategies.

It is highly advised that delegates utilize information provided by pre-existing United Nations organizations and legislations such as the UNODA, UN SaferGuard, the United Nations Programme of Action on illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (PoA), the Firearms Protocol, and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), as they provide vital information on how arms management is occurring at our point in time.

The whole point of weapons disposal is to safely dispose of arms, not to stop militant conflict. Thus, there may be a more technical aspect to the policies and/or legislations passed, rather than diplomatic or political aspects. Some points to take into consideration while drafting your resolutions are:

* That the primary goal should be to minimize harm done to the environment (both including organic life forms and general infrastructure)
* That special policies concerning the disposal of biological and/or chemical weapons may have to be constructed, depending on the situation (ex. Considering the environmental aspects of incineration)
* To incorporate the use of tracking technology (ex. Raio Frequency Identification (RFID), Near-Field communication (NFC), Geofencing, GPS, Satellite tracking, and etc.) to enable surveillance of active (i.e. moving) militant parties, so as to pinpoint where weapons may be dropped off or scrapped following militant conflict.
* It is recommended that technical professionals should be employed in dealing with explosive material, such as landmines or bombs.

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Appendix or Appendices

1. [www.cdc.gov/nceh/demil/articles/safedisposal.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/demil/articles/safedisposal.htm) (Safe Disposal of Chemical Weapons)

*This website is useful when specifically elaborating on chemical weapons because it provides detailed solutions for the safe disposal of chemical weapons and a very broad range of techniques that might be used for safe measures.*

1. <https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/SALW-Destruction-2/Defence-Conversion-The-Disposal-and-Demilitarization-of-Heavy-Weapon-S.pdf> (Defence Conversion - The Disposal and Demilitarization of Heavy Weapon Systems)

*This website provides sufficient background information about the issue, methods for disposal of weapons, and previous experiences in different countries.*

1. <https://smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/A-guide-to-the-destruction-of-SALW-2004.pdf> (A Guide to the Destruction of Small Arms and Light Weapons)

*This website provides background knowledge, various parties and organizations, specific examples of disposal and destruction of weapons.*

<https://lawexplores.com/historical-development-of-disarmament-and-arms-control/> (Historical Development of Disarmament and Arms Control)

*This website lays out historical facts and dates about disarmament and arms control, along with previous attempts to solve this issue, which could be used as a reference for new solutions.*