BATHMUN

Conference 2025

DISEC Study Guide

Evaluating the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions

Table of Contents

Message from the Dais

Dear Delegates,

We are beyond thrilled to welcome you to the DISEC Committee at BathMUN 2025! It is our pleasure to serve as your dais throughout the weekend where we will be exploring the complex topic of Biological and Chemical Weapons Management Internationally, a topic that sits at the very heart of global security, international law, and humanitarian concern.

As the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, DISEC actively tackles some of the most important and difficult crises the international order has to face. The regulation of prohibited weapons and violations of such regulations is an area of large importance for many nations across the world. People suffer at the hands of such weapons and so it falls to committees such as DISEC to help those who face the repercussions of the usage of these weapons. Therefore, whilst we are facilitating a fictional debate this weekend, we would encourage everyone to truly engage with the real world impact of these weapons, and to use what you learn in your future pursuits. The use and development of such weapons not only contravene conventions, but also challenge the very principles of international humanitarian law. Yet, despite decades of progress and legislation, violations persist, and geopolitical rivalries continue to obstruct the path towards the verified destruction of stockpiles to ensure total disarmament. Thus, it falls to forums such as DISEC to imagine a more secure and accountable international order. Over the course of the weekend, you will be called upon to balance your nation's interests with global responsibility, reconcile moral imperative with political realities, and craft both principled and pragmatic solutions.

We encourage you to both utilise this study guide and to explore the further reading we have compiled at the end of this document. From this, we wish for you to draw your own conclusions from the historical and contemporary discussions and to find solutions that will assist the global community to enable a move towards complete control of the usage, manufacturing and trade of these weapon types. Above all, we hope that this experience inspires you to think critically about the power of diplomacy, the limits of international law, and the responsibility that global institutions share in ensuring that such weapons are reliably destroyed.

We cannot wait to see the passion, intellect, and diplomacy you bring to our committee. We wish you the very best for BathMUN 2025; may this weekend challenge and empower you to engage with the complexities of disarmament in a meaningful and memorable way.

If you need any help or have any questions, please feel free to contact us, we are here to help!

Diplomatically,

The DISEC Dais
Lilian, Carolina and Laureen.

Chair Introduction

Lilian Connolly-Woods
Head Chair

Hi everyone!

I'm Lily and I will be your Head Chair for DISEC at BathMUN 2025! I am a third year student at the University of Exeter, studying a BSc in Politics and International Relations. I was born in Belfast but raised in London, and I began my MUN journey in 2018 as a result of my growing interest in international diplomacy and conflict resolution.

I continued pursuing MUN when I arrived at university, joining Exeter MUN (ExMUN) immediately, where I partook in the chair training programme, was elected as Social Secretary 24-25, and finally became elected as President for this academic year. Outside of Exeter, I have chaired across the UK, attended conferences across the continent, and I am currently the Deputy Secretary General for LIMUN High School. I spend my little free time planning holidays, making spreadsheets and trying to find the best pizza in the UK.

Carolina Marques
Deputy Chair

Hello Delegates!
I am Carolina, I am a second year Politics and International Relations student at Queen Mary University of London and I come from Portugal. I have been doing MUN since I started university as a very shy delegate who would not dare to speak and now I am the USG Logistics for QMUN. In my free time I adore going out with friends and exploring new places around London and even outside. I love the beach and when I am home I try to go as much as I can. I also love planning things and writing them down in my schedule... such a logistics nerd. Lastly, I would trade anything for an iced chocolate.

Laureen Raheel
Deputy Chair

I'm Laureen and I am currently a 2nd year Politics and International Relations student at QMUL. I'm originally from Pakistan but was born in England. I've always been closely connected with my Asian heritage, and became interested in MUN in university, seeing the opportunity to talk about culture beyond just the basics. I've been doing MUN for a year now, and am the ASG Logistics for QMUN 2026 (I hope to see you all there)!
Beyond MUN, I am often found performatively studying in cafes and going on long walks. I love Webtoons and reading, and am always down for lengthy discussions about conspiracy theories.

Introduction to the Committee

The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), formally known as the United Nations General Assembly First Committee, addresses global challenges to peace and security, focusing on disarmament, arms control, and international security issues (United Nations 2020). Unlike the UN Security Council, DISEC includes all 193 Member States and provides a forum for inclusive debate, consensus-building, and norm-setting. Its resolutions are non-binding, but they help establish international standards, encourage cooperation, and shape the development of treaties and agreements.

As a committee of the General Assembly, DISEC's mandate emphasizes dialogue and collaboration. It does not have enforcement powers, but its recommendations guide global discussions on conflict prevention, arms reduction, and cooperative security (UNODA 2016). By providing a platform for inclusive negotiation, DISEC reinforces the UN's mission of maintaining international peace and stability.

History of the Committee

Established in 1945 as one of the six main General Assembly committees, DISEC emerged in response to the devastation of World War II and the need to prevent future conflicts. It played a formative role in UN history by adopting the very first General Assembly resolution in 1946, which addressed the regulation of atomic energy (United Nations 2024).

Over the decades, DISEC has been central to landmark agreements, including the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) (United Nations, n.d.), the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) (United Nations n.d.), and the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBTO 2023). During the Cold War, it served as a vital channel for dialogue between East and West, helping manage tensions through arms control negotiations (UNODA 2016).

Figure 1: An image depicting the First Session of the General Assembly, Methodist Central Hall, London, 1946 (UN Photo 2025)

In more recent years, DISEC has broadened its agenda beyond nuclear and conventional disarmament to address new threats such as the arms trade, cyber warfare, and the militarization of outer space (UNODA 2016). This adaptability reflects its continuing relevance in the evolving international security landscape.

The committee is currently focused on:

1. Peaceful uses of Nuclear Energy and the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons;
2. Regional Security in Africa, the Indian Ocean, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East, specifically including the Establishment of Nuclear Free Conflict Zones;
3. Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space;
4. Reduction of Military Budgets;
5. The Role of Science and Technology in International Security and Disarmament;
6. General and Complete Disarmament.

(United Nations Association UK 2025) (Un.org, 2025)

Structure and Function of the Committee

DISEC convenes annually at UN Headquarters in New York during the General Assembly session beginning in September. Its work is supported through the UN's regular budget, funded by assessed contributions from Member States. Each session is organized by an elected Bureau, which includes a Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons, and a Rapporteur (United Nations General Assembly 2024).

The Committee works in close coordination with specialized bodies such as the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the Conference on Disarmament (CD). UNODA, established in 1982, supports DISEC with research, policy analysis, and strategic guidance on issues including nuclear disarmament, conventional weapons, and emerging threats (UNODA n.d.).

The Conference on Disarmament, based in Geneva, is recognized as the international community's main multilateral forum for negotiating disarmament agreements. While not formally part of the UN, it operates in close relationship with the General Assembly, which can recommend agenda items for negotiation. The CD reports annually to the Assembly, making it an essential partner in DISEC's broader efforts (UNODA n.d.).

Mandate of DISEC

The work carried out by DISEC falls broadly under seven thematic clusters:

1. Nuclear Weapons;
2. Other Weapons of Mass Destruction;
3. Outer Space (disarmament aspects);
4. Conventional Weapons;
5. Regional Disarmament and Security;
6. Other Disarmament Measures and International Security;

7. Disarmament Machinery.

(United Nations Association UK 2025) (Un.org, 2025)

DISEC's powers are advisory, not executive. It cannot enforce decisions, but it plays a key role in agenda setting and policy shaping in disarmament and global security issues (Un.org 2025). DISEC is able to discuss and make recommendations on the above thematic clusters, and draft and adopt resolutions that recommend action to other UN committees and bodies, as well as member states. It can also establish subsidiary bodies, including panels and working groups to study specific issues, such as nuclear weapons or WMDs (United Nations, 2022). DISEC can also promote multilateral treaties on the global stage.

It is important to note for resolution drafting during the conference that DISEC cannot enforce sanctions on non-compliant states, authorise the use of force or intervention, or compel states to follow its recommendations. All resolutions written over the weekend must follow suit, and acknowledge the non-binding nature of DISEC resolutions.

Topic Introduction

Figure 2: An image of weaponry prohibited under international law, (Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor 2025)

The development and use of biological and chemical weapons have long been regarded as among the most inhumane practices in warfare, posing grave risks not only to soldiers and combatants but also to civilians and to the environment. In response to the devastating potential of these types of weapons, the international community has sought to establish comprehensive frameworks to prohibit their development, production and use. Two cornerstone agreements form the legal and normative backbone of global efforts to eliminate these categories of weapons of mass destruction: the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) (UNODA 2025) and the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) (OPCW 2025).

The BWC was the first multilateral treaty to ban an entire class of weapons, reflecting a growing recognition that biological agents could cause catastrophic harm if weaponised. However, it lacks a formal verification mechanism, raising persistent concerns about compliance of states who are parties to the BWC.

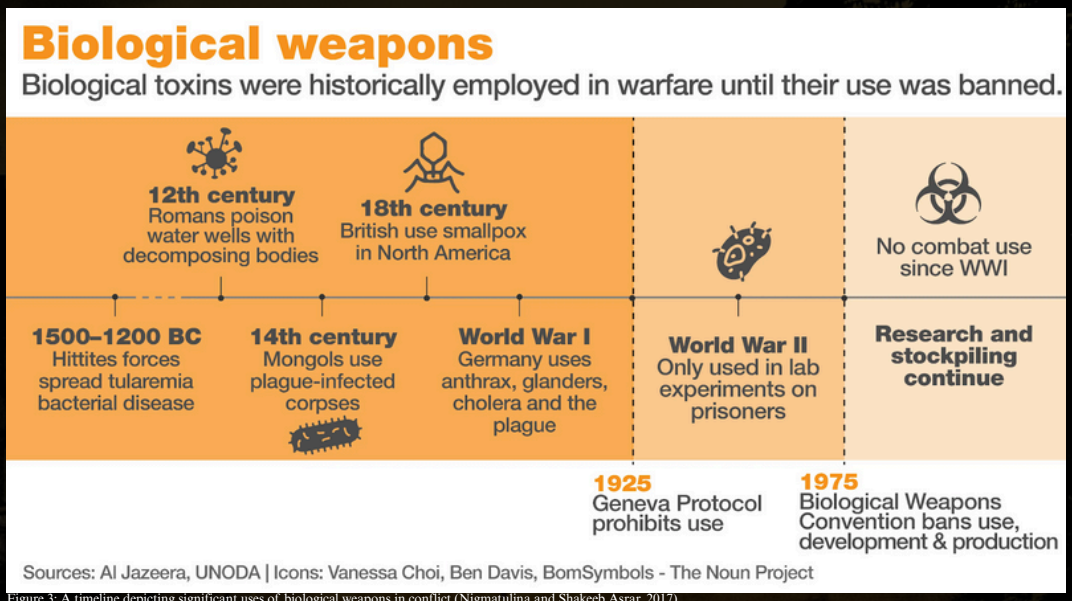


Figure 3: A timeline depicting significant uses of biological weapons in conflict (Nigmatulina and Shakeeb Asrar, 2017)

The CWC, by contrast, established a robust system of monitoring and enforcement through the Organisation of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) which has overseen large stockpile destruction and played a central role in investigating chemical weapons use in recent conflicts. Since the CWC entered into force, the OPCW has verified the destruction of 72,304.34 metric tonnes of stockpiled chemical weapons across the world (Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons 2023).

Despite these achievements, both conventions face significant challenges. Questions remain about universality, enforcement, and the ability of these frameworks to keep pace with rapid scientific and technological advances. The deliberate use of chemical weapons in Syria, allegations of clandestine biological research, and the dual use potential of biotechnology highlight ongoing vulnerabilities within the international regime.

Evaluating the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions therefore requires a critical examination of their limitations, the inadequacies in enforcement, and the evolving nature of security threats. Analysing these elements is essential for understanding how these treaties can continue to function as effective tools of disarmament and global security in the 21st century.

Key Definitions

Biological Weapons

Microorganisms or toxic substances produced by living organisms, that are deliberately released to cause disease and death in flora and fauna (World Health Organisation 2025).

Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)

Prohibits the development, production, use, and any other logistical transfer/acquisition of biological and toxic weapons. Officially began being used on 26th March 1975. It was the first multilateral disarmament treaty that banned an entire category of weapons of mass destruction (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs 2025).

Chemical Weapons

The use of the toxicity of chemicals to intentionally cause death or serious harm; includes any equipment that is‘directly in connection to any chemical weapon (OPCW nd).

Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)

Aims to eliminate the entire category of WMD, prohibits all logistical use of chemical weapons. Effective 29th April 1997. (GOV.UK 2025)

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)

Weapons with significant destructive ability to health and the environment e.g. radioactive materials, lethal chemical and biological weapons etc.(UNRCPD 1997)

Atomic Energy

Energy derived from the nuclear transformation of atoms (UNESCWA).

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

Established on 29th April 1997, alongside CWC, it functions as a reinforcement tool for the CWC. It is a confidence-building measure and prevents illegal use of chemical weapons by non-state actors (OPCW)

Verification Mechanism

A process that ensures compliance to treaty obligations. It is built into the treaty itself and thus offers a mechanism that detects non-compliance through inspections (UNIDIR 2016)

Dual-Use Research

Also known as the dual-use research of concern (DURC) refers to research that provides clear benefits, but also can be easily misused to do harm (WHO 2020) It also refers to research that has both civilian use and military use.

Non-State Actors

Organisations or individuals that are not aligned with, or controlled by the government; but have significant political influence in public and private settings e.g. NGOs and charities. (EBSCO 2025)

Proliferation

Rapid increase of/in something, in international relations refers commonly to weapons of mass destruction. (Oxford Bibliographies 2011)

Confidence-Building Measures

Actions that are publicly displayed and aim to reduce conflicts between states, they build trust and assure each party that there are no planned hostilities (UNODA).

Timeline

1946 - First General Assembly Resolution

DISEC played a large role in the adoption of GA Resolution 1(I), which addresses the regulation of atomic energy and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, laying the foundation for later work on chemical and biological weapons. (A/RES/1(1) 1946)

1966 - GA Resolution 2162B (XXI)

The General Assembly, through DISEC, calls for negotiations on a convention banning the development and stockpiling of biological and chemical weapons. This marks the first concentrated effort by the international community to address both categories together. (UN.org 1966)

1971 - GA Resolution 2826 (XXVI)

Following DISEC discussions, the General Assembly welcomes the conclusion of negotiations on the Biological Weapons Convention and endorses it. The treaty was opened for signature in 1972. (UN General Assembly 1971)

1980- GA Resolution 35/144

DISEC highlights concerns about chemical weapons, urging states to pursue negotiations for a comprehensive ban. This resolution intensifies momentum toward what later becomes the Chemical Weapons Convention. (Un.org 1980)

1992- GA Resolution 47/39

DISEC reviews progress on negotiations and reaffirms the importance of eliminating chemical weapons. This leads directly to the adoption of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993, which is later enforced by the OPCW. (Un.org 1992)

2001- GA Resolution 56/24 T

DISEC responds to the collapse of negotiations for a legally binding Biological Weapons Convention verification protocol. The resolution affirms Member States' commitment to the BWC while urging further confidence building measures. (Un.org 2025)

2012 - GA Resolution 67/33
Following the increased risk of chemical weapons use in the Syrian Civil War, DISEC expresses concern and emphasises the importance of universal adherence to the CWC. (Un.org 2012)

2018 - GA Resolution 73/40
After confirmed chemical weapons attacks in Syria, DISEC disapproves of the violations of international norms, reinforces support for the OPCW, and calls for accountability to the conventions. (Un.org 2018)

2022 - GA Resolution 77/39
On the 50th anniversary of the Biological Weapons Convention, DISEC stresses the importance of strengthening the convention in light of rapid developments in biotechnology and global health security. (Un.org 2022)

Previous Diplomatic Action

The most consequential General Assembly actions in this timeline are the foundational 1946 resolution (A/RES/1(I)), the shift in international norms throughout the 1960s which led to Biological and Chemical Weapons being at the forefront of the diplomatic agenda, the 1971 endorsement of the Biological Weapons Convention (A/RES/2826 (XXVI)), and the 1992 commending and signature process for the Chemical Weapons Convention (A/RES/47/39). Together these measures moved the international community from fragmented legal prohibitions, such as the 1925 Geneva Protocol, to comprehensive treaty based regimes, such as the BWC and CWC.

- A/RES/1 (I) created the institutional momentum to treat atomic and other Weapons of Mass Destruction as issues requiring multilateral governance rather than exclusively national prerogatives. (Arms Control Association 2021).
- A/RES/2826 played a pivotal legitimising role for the BWC by formally welcoming the negotiated text and prompting signature and ratification processes (United Nations Legal Affairs 2021)..
- A/RES/47/39 both commended the CWC and enabled the organisation building needed to make the treaty effective.

Security Council and Other UN bodies

While the Assembly and First Committee (DISEC) set political and normative direction, operational enforcement and investigation have involved other UN organs: the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) became the key technical and verification body for the CWC, cooperating with the UN on Syria related chemical weapons investigations and responses (OPCW 2000).

UNODA (the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs) has tracked treaty implementation, supported confidence-building and assistance measures, and hosted BWC capacity-building efforts. The Security Council has occasionally taken more coercive or investigatory actions when chemical or biological use was alleged (authorising investigations, sanctions talk, or related measures), but council action has varied by geopolitics and veto dynamics.

NGOs, Think-tanks and Civil Society Lobbying

Civil society actors (ICRC, Reaching Critical Will, the Nuclear Threat Initiative, etc.) have consistently lobbied for stronger verification, more rigorous investigations, transparency, and assistance mechanisms. The ICRC and humanitarian NGOs pressed for accountability and legal protection frameworks (International Committee of the Red Cross 2014); disarmament NGOs have provided monitoring and explanatory briefings that often informed First Committee negotiations. In regards to the BWC, civil society and scientific networks have also urged measures to respond to emerging biotechnology risks (such as science policy dialogues, assistance and response mechanisms, and proposals for strengthened verification).

Current Situation

Even with its importance, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention have not achieved full universality. Whilst most countries have supported both agreements, several states remain outside of their frameworks. These absences highlight how achieving international cooperation still remains a challenge, either due to the inability to adapt to certain standards of the BWC and CWC or due to suspicion of non-compliant countries. Whilst there is no formal monitoring of country compliance, members should act in accordance with specific measures implemented at various conferences (NTI 2025). The treaties also stipulate that in case of suspicion of another country's violation of the treaty, any country can submit a complaint to the United Nations Security Council Resolution (NTI 2025).

The last countries to adhere to the BWC were **Kiribati and Comoros**, which joined in 2025 (European Union External Action 2025). Followed is a list of countries that have not signed the treaties and of countries that have signed but not ratified. **All other UN recognised countries not mentioned in the list have both signed and ratified both treaties.**

Country	Biological Weapon Convention (BWC)	Chemical Weapon Convention (CWC)
Egypt	Signed, not ratified	Not signed
Haiti	Signed, not ratified	Signed
Somalia	Signed, not ratified	Signed
Syria	Signed, not ratified	Signed
Chad	Not signed	Signed
Djibouti	Not signed	Signed

Country	Biological Weapon Convention (BWC)	Chemical Weapon Convention (CWC)
Eritrea	Not signed	Signed
Israel	Not signed	Signed, not ratified
North Korea	Signed	Not signed
South Sudan	Signed	Not signed

(NTI 2025) and (Arms Control Association 2024)

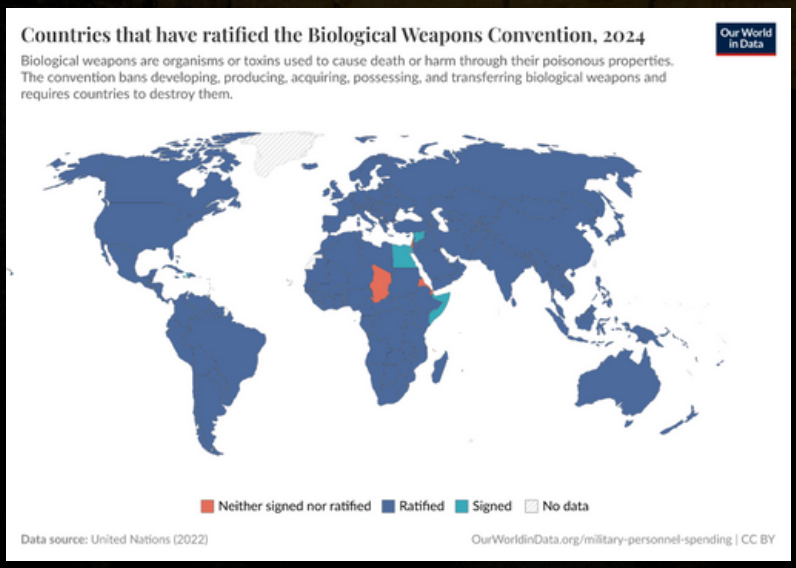


Figure 4: An image depicting the various participation in the Biological Weapons Convention (Our World in Data 2024)

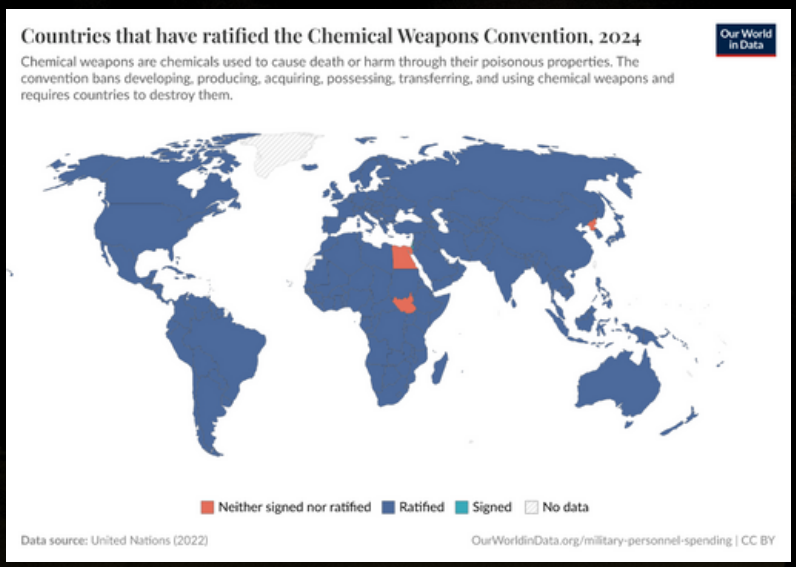


Figure 5: An image depicting the various participation in the Chemical Weapons Convention (Our World in Data, 2024)

Case Studies

Syrian Civil War (2011-2024)

Chemical weapons have made frequent appearances in the Syrian civil war; they were employed for use mostly by the Syrian regime for use against citizens, despite their accession to the CWC in 2013. This accession occurred following the sarin gas attack in Ghouta that killed over 1000 people, including more than 400 children (AlJazeera 2017). The attack led to the UNSC resolution 2118, which mandated the elimination of all stockpiles and use of chemical weapons in Syria under the OPCW (United Nations Security Council 2013). Nearly 1,300 tonnes of sarin nerve gas and similar chemical weapons were seized from the Syrian regime.

However, investigations made by the Human Rights Watch confirmed repeated contraventions in the following years, most notably through the production and use of chlorine gas— which has now been recognised as the most used chemical weapon in the war at 91.5% (GPPI 2019). During the battle for Aleppo in late winter 2016, the Syrian regime made use of chlorine gas in at least 8 instances, resulting in a myriad of deaths and around 200 injuries. Syria's clear violation of the CWC constitutes these attacks as war crimes; such blatant violations led to fears surrounding the undermining of the CWC alongside the potential indication to other nations that thresholds surrounding the convention have been lowered (AlJazeera, 2017).

Amerithrax 2001

In 2001, following 9/11, 5 Americans were killed through a biological attack using anthrax, alongside 17 injured. Biological warfare has increasingly been making its way into public life, yet remains unregulated. Anthrax is a bacterial disease that causes a fatal buildup of fluid around the lungs, and skin lesions over the body (Baylor College of Medicine nd). Deliberately spread using the US postal service, the disease resulted in the evacuation of significant locations such as the Supreme Court.

Moreover, it is important to note that anthrax bacteria are a known agent for use in bioterrorism; however due to its classification as a Category A agent, its use and acquisition is highly controlled. The BWC, penned in 1972, clearly highlights rules on biological weapons and how they are produced and stored— as such when in 2001 Amerithrax occurred, there were numerous discussions on an international level concerning the level of security around biological weapons and biological warfare (Meng 2017). Despite such attention surrounding this case, it was only 7 years later that FBI investigations concluded the case; after their sole suspect committed suicide (Baylor College of Medicine nd). This suspect was an Army microbiologist, which naturally raises the question, of who exactly is capable enough to handle such agents? Agents can be useful for research, but can become dangerous weapons in the wrong hands.

Whilst the BWC is signed upon by almost all countries, its strict rules seem to be impossible to abide by. Consider, if the BWC prohibits the development and production of biological weapons, how was a member of the US army able to commit such a crime?

Novichok (2018 and 2020)

In 2018, Russia was accused of attempting to assassinate a former intelligence officer Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia Skripal through Novichok, a nerve agent created by the Soviet Union in the 1980s and later banned under the CWC (National Library of Medicine 2019). Due to fast medical intervention both managed to survive, as did a police officer who was also exposed. Russia, however, has denied responsibility for the attack and argued that it would only cooperate with the CWC'S ban on chemical weapons if the United Kingdom did the same (The Guardian, 2018).

Two years later, in 2020, opposition leader Alexey Navalny was also a victim of a Novichok agent attack. While Russian doctors who investigated the case reported that no poison was found in the analysis, tests in Germany determined it as the nerve agent (Aljazeera 2020). These incidents demonstrated how the Convention lacked verification and accountability and in response to both attempts, the CWC declared for a strengthening of its frameworks by expanding its schedule and including all four groups of Novichok agents that State-Parties should declare and destroy (CWC 2021).

Points of Discussion & Guiding Questions

Strengthening Universal Ratification and Compliance

- What measures can be taken to ensure all UN Member States ratify and comply with the BWC and CWC?
- How can international organisations and regional blocs incentivise accession for states that have not yet joined these treaties?
- What role can capacity building and technical assistance play in helping developing nations meet compliance obligations?

Verification and Enforcement Mechanisms

- Should the BWC adopt a verification regime similar to the OPCW's under the CWC?
- To what lengths should verification be allowed, particularly concerning state sovereignty and industrial confidentiality?
- Should sanctions be recommended to countries who have deployed biological or chemical weapons, or show the potential to in the future?

Addressing Non-State Actors and Emerging Threats

- How can the conventions adapt to the threat of non-state actors and terrorist groups obtaining or using biological/chemical weapons?
- What international frameworks can strengthen intelligence sharing and border control to prevent illicit transfers

Science, Ethics and Regulation

- How should international law address the fact that biotechnology and chemistry have both peaceful and harmful applications?
- How can academic and industrial research be regulated without stifling innovation and scientific cooperation?

International Security and Deterrence

- How can countries protect themselves against countries that do not comply with the BWC and the CWC?
- How can regional security organisations support enforcement without overstepping UN mandates?
- What confidence building/arms control measures could reduce mistrust between rival states?

The Future of Disarmament Diplomacy

- How can the UN promote greater cooperation between scientific, military and diplomatic communities in managing biological and chemical weapon risks?
- Should the international community consider merging or coordinating the BWC and CWC frameworks under a broader "Weapons of Mass Destruction" governance mechanism?

Key Stakeholders and Blocs

Pro Verification - The Global North

Pro-verification countries expect to develop a system where compliance with the obligations of the conventions can be systematically monitored and where suspicions of non-compliance can open investigations (UNIDIR 2023). Verification is, then, important because it ensures that armaments have been destroyed and will not be deployed, while also overseeing that no further development or production of weapons, equipment and infrastructure is taking place (Zanders 2012). With this system, intervention would occur when indicators of non-compliance arise, such as the continued possession of weapons, the training of their use, of secretive military, the existence of secretive military or civil biological facilities or the lack of transparency regarding such institutions.

The **European Union** has been a consistent supporter of the development of a structure for verification for the accords of the BWC (EEAS 2023), alongside the **United Kingdom**, that believes in the creation of mechanisms to detect and deter proliferators and the **United States**, which defends that verification systems must adapt to new threats (UN 1996). **Canada** demands a strengthening of the BWC, and whilst **Japan** complies with the BWC and also agrees with the verification of non-compliant states, it also sees this verification as a threat to ingrowing biotechnology industries (ibid).

Middle Powers in Conflict-prone Regions

The BWC and the CWC remain extremely important in conflict prone areas due to regional instability.

Countries such as **Egypt**, **Iraq**, **Iran** and other countries in these regions have called for specific alterations to the conventions, highlighting that issues of regional security and integration must be addressed for these agreements to be fully effective. This approach focuses on recognising regional specific threats and how to tackle them, along with the involvement of civil society activists in these conflict areas, as well as religious leaders, who can support with fostering compliance measures (Middle East Treaty Organisation 2023).

Iraq provides a clear example of this complex relationship with the conventions. Although Iraq has violated the commitments of the BWC during the Persian Gulf War, it later joined the treaty and it has since advocated for the convention, pressing non-parties such as Israel to join and disarm (UNIDIR 2021). Meanwhile, Egypt has demanded stronger enforcement of verification mechanisms to ensure state compliance, while also highlighting that nuclear, chemical and biological materials should only be allowed for peaceful purposes (Arab Republic of Egypt 2022).

Major Powers with Historical Programs and Stockpiles

Major powers are widely recognised for having developed biological and chemical weapons programs in the past, and whilst some have declared and dismantled their infrastructures, some remain under suspicion of non compliance with the conventions by retaining and continuing activities.

China claims to never have possessed any biological stockpiles or programs and affirms that it complies with both the BWC and the CWC. However, the **United States** has alleged that activities continued after China joined the BWC. Similarly, the **Soviet Union** claimed to have destroyed all its biological weapons used during the 1970s and 1980s yet the United States has concluded that Russia maintains a biological weapons program. **Russia** has faced accusations by both the United States and the **United Kingdom** of using chemical weapons in assassination attempts (Arms Control Association 2024).

The United States itself has acknowledged possession of chemical weapons after their entry into the CWC and was granted an extended deadline, alongside Russia, until 2012, to destroy all remaining weapons. At the same time, Russia has accused the United States of non compliance with the CWC during the Iraq War (ibid).

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a Eurasian alliance that seeks to strengthen regional stability and promote strength against the Western worldview. Its most prominent members include **China**, **Russia**, **Pakistan**, **India**, and **Iran**— all of which are parties of the BWC and CWC. Including these, many central Asian countries are also involved.

Central Asian countries played a significant role in the development of WMD (NTI 2002), the world's largest BW fabrication facility was located in Stepnogorsk, Kazakhstan, to produce anthrax. Along with this, under Soviet rule (as the rest of the Central Asian incidents occur), Uzbekistan had stores of highly enriched Uranium fuel (HEU fuel), enough to create an estimated 25 nuclear weapons (ibid).

Following independence in the early 1990s, these Central Asian states were left with the duty of handling the WMD legacy left behind by the Soviet Union. Much of the funding for this came from the USA's Cooperative Threat Reduction force, they accomplished much of their goal to disarm post soviet nations from WMD, such as the dismantling and destruction of Kazakhstan's anthrax facility (ibid). Under the 2002 March agreement between Russia, the US, and Uzbekistan— HEA fuel was all shipped back to Russia. However, as mentioned in the previous case study, whether Russia maintains its claims to uphold its promises is disputed.

Global South

The Global South largely refers to nations with low development indexes, countries that share struggles in economical, political, and social circles.

Whilst the term does not strictly confine itself to geographical limits, most countries in the Global South are within Africa, Asia, and South America. The divide between this group and its counterpart, the Global North, is stark. From winning wars with hidden agendas to aid with attached strings; the Global North seems to wield power and hypocrisy in the same hand. This stands true in relation to regulations surrounding the use of biological and chemical weapons.

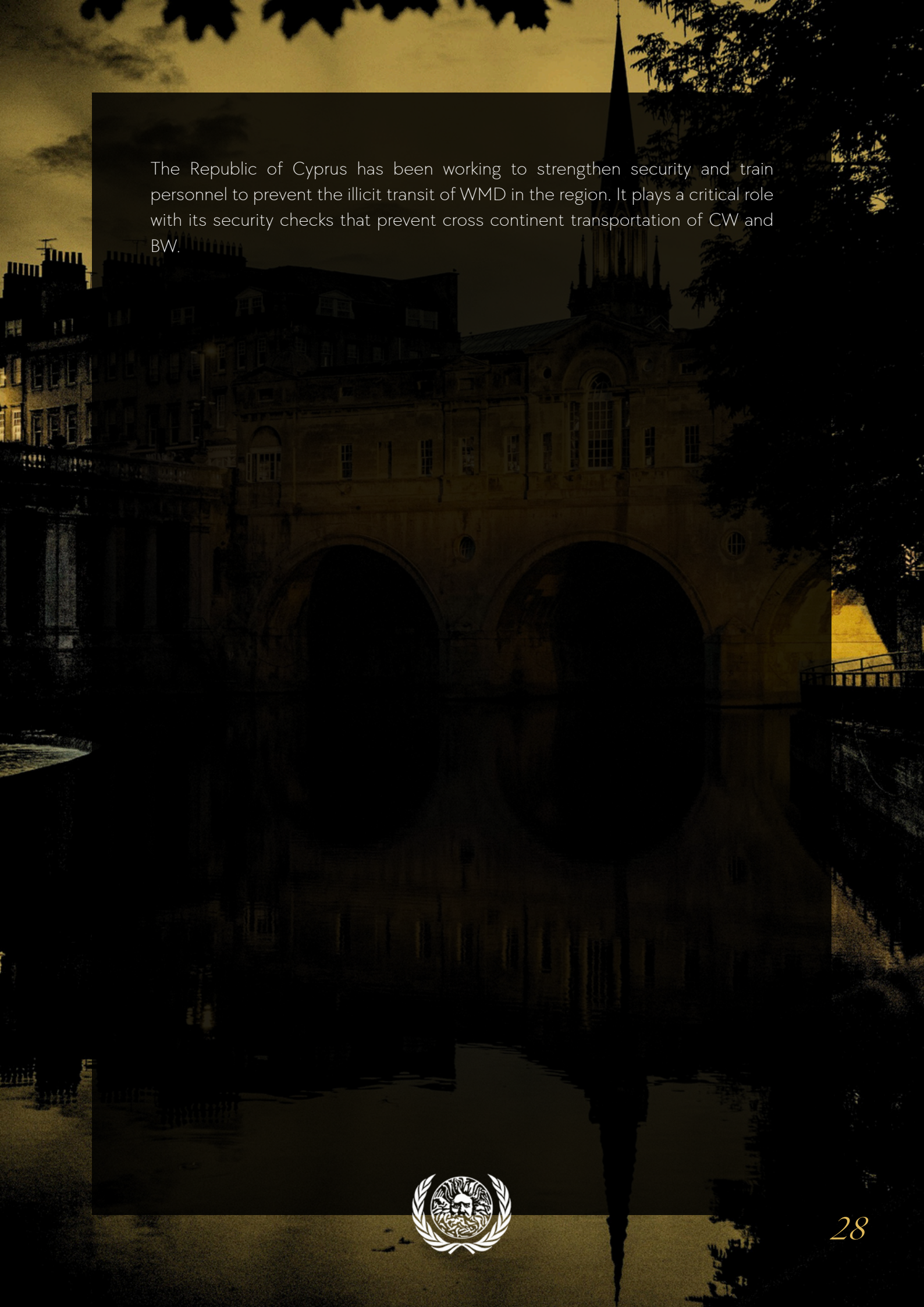
Amongst countless other remedies to control CW and BW use, in June 2025, a workshop with Central Asian countries, plus Pakistan and Türkiye, was held to address critical gaps in chemical security implementation. Under a case study presented by the Georgian state prosecutor, states were discussing and giving advice on how chemical security legislations can be implemented (OPCW 2025) — aligning national laws with international obligations. This workshop ultimately aimed to strengthen national authorities capabilities to investigate, prosecute, and respond to chemical security offences (ibid).

Regional Security

Regional security is an important part of maintaining a country's sovereignty. According to the UN Charter, Article 51, states have the right to use force to repel attacks— in proportion to the attack's nature. As such it can be argued that under an opponent's violation of the BWC/CWC, a nation must then have the right to use such weapons in retaliation. This statement is, of course, disputed and invites much discussion.

In 2025, the 5th Plenary Meeting of the Global Congress on chemical security and emerging threats took place in Amman, Jordan. With the intention to boost global action against CW security threats, they concluded that this is no longer a regional or national responsibility, but a global point of concern that requires significant cooperation (Interpol 2025). In the current point of time, finding solutions through the combined efforts of nations is a priority; rather than facing ongoing conflicts in war, it is naturally most suitable to prevent conflict in the first place and maintain peace.

An example of this is seen in Cyprus, in a geographically strategic location, it is a critical hub for countering the distribution of WMD (AInvest 2024).



The Republic of Cyprus has been working to strengthen security and train personnel to prevent the illicit transit of WMD in the region. It plays a critical role with its security checks that prevent cross continent transportation of CW and BW.

Additional Resources and Further Reading

https://unidir.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/UNIDIR_Verifying_BWC_Primer.pdf - This UNIDIR report is a primer for the consideration of verification in the context of the BWC. Including tools, approaches, what the programmes might look like.

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3067204 - paper on historical significance of BWC, also discusses why many countries sign BWC then break its rules.

https://www.britannica.com/event/Iran-Iraq-War - The Iran-Iraq war was a conflict between both countries that happened during the 1980s that resulted in an estimated 500 thousand deaths. Both sides resorted to the use of chemical weapons during the conflict, despite international prohibition.

https://unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/publication/doc/un_pga_new_handbook_0.pdf - The General Assembly Handbook

Use of Chemical, Biological Weapons Unacceptable in Any Context, Delegates Stress, as First Committee Continues General Debate
https://press.un.org/en/2021/gadis3666.doc.htm
This is a meeting coverage produced by the United Nations, which summarises a wide range of country/delegate positions. This may be useful to find additional information on your country's specific position.

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