

IAEA Background Guide

AMSIMUN'26

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Dear Delegates,

We are honored to welcome you to AMSIMUN 2026 as chairs of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It is a privilege to moderate this committee and lead you through one of the most politically charged issues in international security.

The International Atomic Energy Agency was founded in 1957 with a clear dual mandate: to facilitate the use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes and to prevent nuclear proliferation. The IAEA has been the world's leading nuclear watchdog since its founding. It has been responsible for conducting nuclear inspections, verifying compliance with nuclear safeguard agreements, and providing unbiased reports without any political undertones.

Nuclear threat allegations have been raised against several countries in the past. However, in some cases, this has been misused as a political tool to impose sanctions, invade countries, and compromise sovereignty—despite finding that there were no such programs.

As your chairs, we want to make it clear that this background guide is just that—background information. It is important that you research this topic independently to get information about your country's historical position, voting record, alliances, and nuclear policy. Your research will determine the quality of debate.

We look forward to seeing you this year and seeing the level of research you bring to this committee.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Your Chairs,

Mohammad Al Zubaidi & Karim Yakoub

Topic: Revisiting Iraq 2003 and Greenland: When Nuclear “Threat” Claims Are Used to Pressure Sovereignty — Trusting IAEA Inspections or Forcing Control

The use of nuclear threat allegations has historically justified extraordinary political and military measures. The 2003 invasion of Iraq was largely framed around claims that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. Yet post-war investigations and IAEA reports concluded that Iraq did not possess an active nuclear weapons program at the time of the invasion.

Similarly, renewed geopolitical interest in Greenland — due to its strategic Arctic location and rare earth mineral deposits essential for nuclear and advanced energy technologies — has raised concerns about sovereignty being influenced by security narratives.

This topic asks whether the international community should rely exclusively on IAEA inspections and multilateral verification mechanisms, or whether states are justified in using unilateral measures when nuclear proliferation is suspected.

The application of nuclear threat allegations has always served as a justification for extraordinary political and military actions. The 2003 invasion of Iraq was primarily justified on the basis of allegations that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. However, post-invasion analysis and reports by the IAEA determined that Iraq did not have an active nuclear weapons program at the time of the invasion.

Similarly, the current geopolitical revival of interest in Greenland, because of its Arctic location and deposits of rare earth minerals that are critical for the development of nuclear and advanced energy technologies, has raised questions about the sovereignty of Greenland being affected by security considerations.

This question asks whether the international community should be dependent solely on IAEA inspections and multilateral verification processes or whether countries have a right to act unilaterally in situations where nuclear proliferation is suspected.

History

The IAEA was established in the aftermath of U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" speech in 1953, which called for international cooperation in managing nuclear technology. In 1968, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) established the international non-proliferation regime, with the IAEA at its verification core.

A major milestone followed with the adoption of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968, which entered into force in 1970. The NPT created a three-pillar framework: non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful use of nuclear energy. The IAEA was tasked with implementing safeguards to verify that non-nuclear-weapon states comply with their obligations.

Over time, gaps in verification became evident. The discovery of Iraq's clandestine nuclear program after the 1991 Gulf War highlighted weaknesses in traditional safeguards. In response, the IAEA introduced the Additional Protocol in 1997, granting inspectors expanded access to information and sites. Despite these reforms, challenges remain in ensuring universal adoption and consistent enforcement.

The early 2000s marked a critical turning point. The 2003 invasion of Iraq, justified in part by allegations of weapons of mass destruction, occurred despite ongoing IAEA inspections that had not confirmed the existence of an active nuclear weapons program. This event significantly affected global trust in intelligence-based justifications for unilateral action and raised questions about the role of multilateral verification mechanisms.

In recent years, attention has shifted toward emerging geopolitical regions such as the Arctic. Greenland's strategic importance, due to its location and resource wealth, has introduced new dimensions to discussions on nuclear governance, resource security, and sovereignty.

Analysis

The central issue before the committee is the balance between state sovereignty and collective security in nuclear governance. This raises the question of whether states should rely on multilateral verification or retain the right to act independently when threats are suspected.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is built on impartiality and technical verification, aiming to provide objective assessments of nuclear activity. Compliance with its findings strengthens international trust, while ignoring them undermines multilateral institutions.

However, limitations exist. Inspections depend on state cooperation and access, and the discovery of Iraq's undeclared activities after the Gulf War showed that hidden programs may go undetected.

The 2003 invasion of Iraq highlights this divide: despite inconclusive IAEA findings, military action was taken based on intelligence later questioned, weakening trust in both unilateral and multilateral approaches. In contrast, Greenland reflects how nuclear-related concerns can extend to strategic resources and geopolitical influence, even without active weapons programs.

These cases illustrate the tension between multilateral legitimacy and unilateral action. The challenge for the committee is to ensure effective verification while preventing the misuse of nuclear threat claims for political purposes.

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Questions to be answered in your resolutions:

- *Should IAEA inspection reports be considered legally binding before any military or coercive action is taken?*
- *How can the independence of IAEA verification processes be protected from political manipulation?*
- *Under what circumstances, if any, is unilateral action justified when nuclear proliferation is suspected?*

- *How can sovereignty be protected while maintaining strong non-proliferation enforcement?*
- *What reforms could strengthen the Additional Protocol and global safeguards system?*
- *How can the international community prevent the misuse of nuclear threat claims for geopolitical gain?*



Country Matrix

USA – France – Russian Federation – North Korea – Iran – China – Pakistan – India – Kazakhstan – Egypt – Canada – United Kingdom – Japan – Germany – Italy – Belgium – Argentina – Syria – Iraq – Sweden – UAE – Ukraine – Finland – Brazil – Spain

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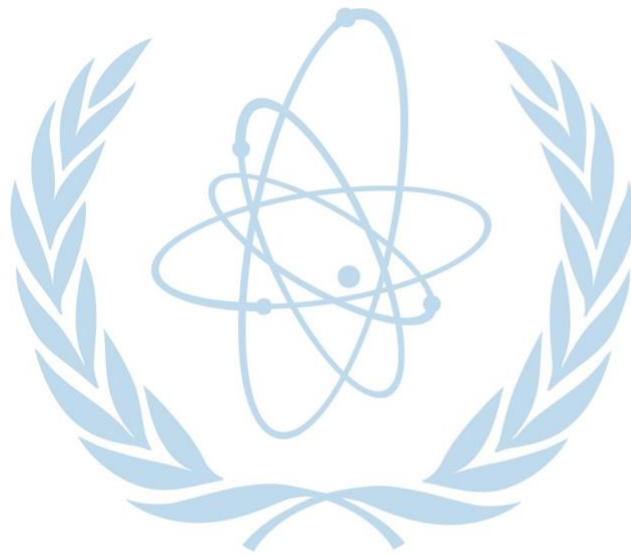
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