

<b>Forum:</b>	Disarmament Commission
<b>Issue:</b>	Combatting proliferation of chemical and biological weapons with emphasis on the risk of acquisition by the non-state actors
<b>Student Officer:</b>	Aalia Labrador
<b>Position:</b>	Chair of Disarmament Commission

---

## Introduction

With technology being on the rise in the recent years, chemical and biological weapons have been on the rise. These weapons are at risk of being acquired and used by non-state actors. Biological weapons are now available to non-state actors who can harm many civilians using these. Biological weapons are weapons that use harmful biological agents in order to cause death or disease to humans. In the future, taking into account the advancement of technology, bioterrorism poses a major threat especially in the hands of non-state actors. Biological weapons such as weaponized smallpox could possibly harm millions of civilians if they are exposed to these weapons.

Chemical weapons also pose a serious threat in the world today. Terrorist groups such as ISIS and its affiliates have shown the intent to both develop and continue using chemical weapons. Chemical weapons are weapons that use chemicals formulated to result in death or harm to humans. It is easier for non-state actors to gain access and create these weapons themselves, therefore creating a bigger risk towards civilians.

Overall, one of the main problems governments have when controlling the development of said weapons of mass destruction is that it is hard to detect their production. Cost wise, chemical and biological weapons are less expensive to produce and can be produced without the need of large infrastructures, making it easier to hide. Even though these types of weapons are banned internationally, some countries such as Syria still continue to produce chemical and suspected biological weapons. Although more effort is being put into combatting the proliferation of these weapons, some non-member states still produce them, increasing the risk of biological warfare. If not controlled properly, the use of chemical and biological weapons in warfare can lead to disastrous outcomes.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Proliferation

A rapid and often excessive spread or increase of new parts. For example, the proliferation of biological weapons would be the rapid spread of biological weapons.

### Non-State Actors

Individuals or organizations that have significant political influence but is not allied to any particular country or state.

### Chemical Weapons

Ammunition that use chemicals formulated to result in death or harm on humans. Some examples of modern chemical weapons are tear gas and nerve gas.

### Biological Weapons

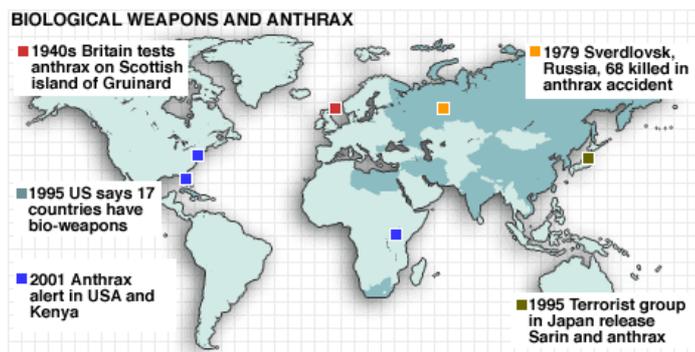
Harmful biological agents that are used as weapons. These weapons are generally used on a large scale and cause death or disease to humans.

### Cyber Attacks

When hackers try to destroy a computer network or system.

## General Overview

### Biological Weaponry



*A diagram made by BBC News in order to illustrate biological weapons attacks.*

By definition, biological weapons are harmful biological agents that are used as weapons. Weapons that fall under this category are usually used on a large scale in order to cause death or disease to a certain population. In recent years, biological threats have increased and posed a great threat to our increasingly

interconnected world. Biotechnology has also increased, causing a greater risk of bioterrorism. More countries and organizations are able to make these weapons due to the fact that they are much cheaper and easier to make than other weapons.

In the 20th century, different techniques such as bacteriological and biological techniques enabled the production of weaponized bio-agents. These include bacterial agents (Anthrax, Brucella, Tularemia, and more), viral agents (Smallpox, viral hemorrhagic fevers, and more), and toxins (Botulinum, Ricin, and more). During World War I, Germany attempted at conducting anti-agricultural biological warfare. Saboteurs were sent into the Russian Duchy of Finland and into neutral countries such as Romania, United States and Argentina. At this time, most of the biological weapons were used to attack agriculture. During World War II, countries such as Japan started using biological weapons to attack people instead of agriculture. Some bombs carried the plague, which resulted in thousands of deaths in different countries.

In 2001, several letters, which contained anthrax spore, were sent to members of the US congress. This led to at least 22 people getting sick and 5 dying. Although treaties have been signed and actions have been taken to ban the weaponization of biological weapons, they are still being used today. By 2011, 165 countries had joined the Biological Weapons Convention.

### Chemical Weaponry



*An ISIS member wearing a gas mask in order to protect themselves against chemical attacks during conflict.*

Chemical weaponry and warfare involves the use of toxic properties of chemical substances as weapons. During the Civil War in America, the idea of using chlorine gas as a bomb was proposed. Although this plan never went through, the concern over the use of poisonous gasses as weapons increased. In 1899, a proposal at The Hague Conference was passed, prohibiting the use of shells filled with asphyxiating gas.

During World War 2, Nazi Germany killed millions of Jews by gassing them with carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanide. These are known as the deadliest uses of gas in human history. Most of the time, Germans used chemicals for weapons in concentration camps during the holocaust.

Treaties have been signed such as the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and the Bacteriological Methods of Warfare (Geneva Protocol) in order to prohibit the use of chemical and biological weapons in warfare. The Chemical Weapons Convention also outlaws the production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons.

### Non-State Actors

Non-State actors are groups or organizations that participate in international relations and have sufficient power to cause a change without being related to an established institution of a state. Some examples are NGOs, MNCs and VNSAs. Regarding the use of biological and chemical weapons, VNSAs (Violent non-state actors) are the most dangerous. Groups such as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) and drug cartels fall into this category. As the government does not have much control over the actions of these groups, the acquisition of such weapons by them can be deadly. If terrorist attacks involve biological and chemical weapons, without the right control of the government, more and more people can be killed. Like mentioned earlier, biological and chemical weapons are cheap and easy to make. This means that it is easier for potential, dangerous, non-state actors to hide the fact that they are manufacturing these weapons for an attack.

### Acts of Biological/Chemical Warfare by Non-State Actors

Aum Shinrikyo is a Japanese doomsday cult that is recognized as a terrorist organization by several countries. In the past, the cult has committed acts of terrorism against civilians by using chemical agents. On June 27, 1994, the terrorist group released sarin gas in Matsumoto. This attack killed eight people and harmed 200 other civilians. On March 20, 1995, the terrorist group attacked the Tokyo subway by releasing sarin into different trains. This attack killed twelve people and injured about 5000 more. These attacks are notable because the group had been using gas produced in its own facilities. After investigation, police found explosives and chemicals that could be used to produce enough sarin to kill millions of people in the cult's headquarters.

The Islamic State (IS) is believed to have gained access to chemical weapons left over from undeclared Syrian stockpiles. Furthermore, it has been reported that the group may have formed a unit specifically assigned to chemical weapons research and manufacture. This has allowed them to obtain chlorine and sulfur mustard. Since 2014, the IS has used chemical weapons for at least 52 attacks in Iraq and Syria. In

2015, IS fired chemical weapons at Kurdish YPG positions and in other areas during a battle. 35 Kurdish fighters were wounded in another chemical attack while fighting IS terrorists. In 2016, IS attacked the town of Taza using chemical weapons, wounding 600 people. As of January 2016, the US has been targeting the terrorist group's chemical weapons base with air strikes and raids.

## UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

### The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)

In 1972, the UN created the [Biological Weapons Convention](#), which “prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons.” Since then, this Convention meets every five years to remain effective and relevant in their efforts. If nation state actors acquire, develop or deploy said weapons, it may also be considered bioterrorism. Parties who have signed the treaty agree to only using biotechnology for peaceful agreements. Currently, the Biological Weapons Convention still meets in order to keep up with biotechnology and discuss means to keep the use of these weapons limited to peaceful usage.

Key provisions include:

1. “Never under any circumstances to acquire or retain biological weapons.
2. To destroy or divert to peaceful purposes biological weapons and associated resources prior to joining.
3. Not to transfer, or in any way assist, encourage or induce anyone else to acquire or retain biological weapons.
4. To take any national measures necessary to implement the provisions of the BWC domestically.
5. To consult bilaterally and multilaterally to solve any problems with the implementation of the BWC.
6. To request the UN Security Council to investigate alleged breaches of the BWC and to comply with its subsequent decisions.
7. To assist States which have been exposed to a danger as a result of a violation of the BWC.
8. To do all of the above in a way that encourages the peaceful uses of biological science and technology.”

### The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)

The [Chemical Weapons Convention](#) first entered into effect on April 29, 1997. This convention aims to “exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons, through the implementation of the

provisions of this Convention, thereby complementing the obligations assumed under the Geneva Protocol of 1925,” while keeping in mind that, “that achievements in the field of chemistry should be used exclusively for the benefit of mankind.” Key provisions include, but aren’t limited to:

1. “Requires each State Party to submit declarations to the OPCW within 30 days after the Convention enters into force for that particular State Party;
2. “[Requires] States Parties to destroy their chemical weapons;
3. “[Requires] States Parties to destroy and/or convert their Chemical Weapons Production Facilities (CWPFs);
4. “Requires each State Party to enact implementing legislation at the national level;
5. “Establishes the OPCW as the implementing body of the Convention.”



*A picture taken during the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the chemical weapons convention.*

## Relevant Resolutions

- [Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction](#)

## Timeline of Events

**Date**    **Description of event**

- 1914-1918 50,965 tons of chemical weapons were used in WWI by both sides
- 1925 The Geneva Protocol, officially known as *the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare*, was signed at Geneva, prohibiting the use of chemical and biological weapons.
- 1928 Geneva Protocol enters into force
- 1939-1945 Chemical weapons are extensively used by the Axis, and biological weapons saw heavy research and weaponization, but were used in limited numbers.
- 1969 The UK and the Warsaw Pact, separately, introduced proposals to the UN to ban biological weapons.
- 1972 The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention was signed by the US, UK, USSR and other nations, as a ban on "development, production and stockpiling of microbes or their poisonous products except in amounts necessary for protective and peaceful research"
- June 1 1990 Presidents George H.W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev signed the bilateral U.S.–Soviet Chemical Weapons Accord.
- 1993 The Chemical Weapons Convention is the latest arms control agreement, that outlaws the production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons
- 2013 The Syrian government signs several agreements for the destruction of its chemical weapons
- December 2014 The United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab
- August 2015 The UNHRC commission published a report accusing the Syrian government of using chemical weapons
- 2015 The United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2235, which aimed to establish a

Joint Investigation mechanism, which would investigate the people responsible for the chemical attacks.

## Possible Solutions

Recent advances in the scientific community have led to a greater understanding of biochemistry and genetics. Such information is invaluable in the modern age, yet violent non-state actors may use this for the development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Seeing as preventing the spread of information would not only be difficult but would also hinder the progress of society as a whole, it is more important that member states ensure the strict control of potentially hazardous materials through increased security at local and international levels, taking into account methods of production, storage and transportation. The means of which information could be stored could be more secure by enforcing teams of people specialized to keep this information safe. When a new scientific advancement is made, this information can be monitored constantly in order to ensure that non-state actors do not get a hold of it. When it comes to transporting information, a solution to the spread and misuse of this information could be assigning a security force specially assigned to pieces of hazardous materials being transported. Although teams like this exist already, extra security screenings and checks could be applied to ensure the security of the item.

More rapid research into opportunities for biological and chemical warfare through international cooperation would also help the scientific community efficiently determine methods of prevention. Collaboration is key: for solutions to be effective, member states must coordinate their efforts and remove loopholes to leave little opportunity for the development of such dangerous weapons, lest we face their consequences. More conventions could be held in order to discuss means of keeping biological and chemical weapons away from non-state actors. The more countries collaborate with each other to ensure the security of hazardous materials and preventing the spread of harmful information, the easier it would be to increase security. Conventions and meetings could focus on the identification of non-state actors using weapons of mass destruction and preventing them from acquiring more.

## Bibliography

“The Biological Weapons Convention – UNODA.” *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/disarmament/geneva/bwc/](http://www.un.org/disarmament/geneva/bwc/).

“Biological warfare.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 16 Nov. 2017, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biological\\_warfare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biological_warfare).

“1990 Chemical Weapons Accord.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 8 Oct. 2017, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1990\\_Chemical\\_Weapons\\_Accord](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1990_Chemical_Weapons_Accord).

“Chemical Weapons – UNODA.” *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/chemical/](http://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/chemical/).  
*Chemical Weapons Convention*, [www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/](http://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/).

“United Nations Official Document.” *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A%2FRES%2F71%2F69](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A%2FRES%2F71%2F69).

“History of biological warfare.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 4 Nov. 2017, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_biological\\_warfare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_biological_warfare).

“Role of Non-State Actors in International Relations.” *Your Article Library*, 7 Apr. 2015, [www.yourarticlelibrary.com/international-politics/role-of-non-state-actors-in-international-relations/48520](http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/international-politics/role-of-non-state-actors-in-international-relations/48520).

Graham-Harrison, Emma. “Syria chemical weapons attack: what we know about deadly air raid.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 5 Apr. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/05/syria-chemical-weapons-attack-what-we-know-khan-sheikhun](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/05/syria-chemical-weapons-attack-what-we-know-khan-sheikhun).