



Unconventional warfare and State Sovereignty





Unconventional Warfare

Statement of the Issue

Since Mustard Gas was first used as an agent of warfare during World War I, the landscape surrounding combat tactics has been drastically different. It is no longer the realm of superior weaponry and vehicular tactics that a nation relies on, but rather the technological prowess of a country that determines its military clout. Political disputes often arise from advances in technology much like Iran's pursuit of chemical weapons in the late-20th century or its modern acquisition of nuclear facilities. Israel's nuclear capacity has often been a source of discontent in the Arab world and a deterrent for political and military action by Middle Eastern nations in recent years.

In fact, Israel's nuclear program is again at the forefront of the Arab agenda. Secretary General of the League of Arab States Amr Moussa recently sent a letter to the President of the European Union as well as all 26 other members urging support for an Arab-backed piece of legislation to be presented at the International Atomic Energy Association's (IAEA) upcoming session. The push by the Arab world for Israel's adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has been gaining support recently in the European Union especially among developing nations (Washington Post).

Chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons have only recently infiltrated international and internal politics and have played a significant part in the development of policy in the Middle East. Shrouded by a cloak of mystery, the impacts of

technological innovations is often incomprehensible and devastate armed forces and civilian populations when deployed.

Biological Weapons

The earliest recordable incident involving biological warfare was in 1340, in the northern region of France where combat practices included lobbing dead horses and other animals at the enemy with the intent of spreading disease. This strategy was echoed at Caffé in the Crimea six years later when corpses which had perished from the plague were hurled at the enemy to transmit disease. Manure and other disease-carrying articles were used in other instances in early Europe.

Biological weapons were employed during American westward expansion in the 19th century through the use of smallpox-infected blankets given to Native Americans; a similar technique was used on tribes in the Amazon by Brazilian authorities. In fact, the technological capability of a nation largely determines the success of its colonial ventures.

Germany launched a determined effort to infect livestock destined for Allied nations from neutral countries with Glanders and Anthrax during World War I. Romania and the United States initiated plans to employ the same technique though the plans were never carried out substantially. Only Germany executed their plans though the effects are unknown and therefore assumed insubstantial.





The only confirmed post-WWI case of biological weapons occurred in Japan's attacks on China during World War II. The Japanese campaign included "contaminating wells with intestinal pathogens, distribution of microbe-laced foods, air drops of plague-infected fleas"(Wheelis) as well as alleged aerial spraying of pathogens. Several thousand casualties are said to have occurred in China as a result of this campaign, though Japanese officers in charge of the plan were granted pardons in war crimes trials by the United States.

The modern state of biological warfare is mostly nonexistent and theoretical. It is actively assumed that a number of states are pursuing biological weapons though their usage and possession is prohibited by a number of international treaties. Treaties tend to be disregarded by their offenders, however, as in the case of Iraq's creation of biological weapons using anthrax, botulinum toxin, and aflatoxin during the Gulf War. Iraq was a signatory to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) during the Gulf War and was only pressured into ratification following the war's conclusion (Wheelis).

Instances such as this bring the uncertainty of the current state of biological weapons into question; the lack of biological weapons usage does not necessarily negate their existence and past effectiveness may provide rogue regimes with a reason for production despite the universality of the BTWC.

Chemical Weapons

The umbrella document dictating the modern state of chemical weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), "prohibits the development, production, stockpiling, and use of chemical weapons (CW)." (United States). The CWC is adhered to by over 160 states with Angola, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, North Korea, Somalia, and Syria as the only non-signatories. Many precursors to the CWC have existed and the topic of Chemical Weapons has been at the forefront of many international summits. Chemical weapons' international debut was in 1899 at the International Peace Conference at The Hague where signatories agreed to prohibit asphyxiating gases and poison during war.

Following the estimated 91,000 casualties attributed to the use of chemical weapons by the German army in World War I, a diplomatic conference in Geneva was called and the 1925 Geneva Protocol drafted (CWC). Said protocol only banned the use of chemical and biological weapons and did not prohibit "the development, production, stockpiling, or transfer of such weapons" (Schneider) or prohibit the retaliation against one state if attacked with chemical weapons by another.

Shortly after Mikhail Gorbachev's inauguration as General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1985, both the United States and the Soviet Union decided to reduce stockpiles on both sides by 5,000 tons of chemical agents. This came shortly after a cooling of Cold War tensions that had stalled any significant movement toward the abolition of chemical weapons. Shortly





after the fall of the Soviet Union, the CWC treaty was adopted by the UN Conference on Disarmament and remains the controlling document of all chemical weapon discussion.

Nuclear Weapons

The first successful detonation of an atomic weapon occurred in July of 1945 following the surrender of the German army in World War II and the completion of the goals of the United States' 'Manhattan Project.' Following this test was the implementation of nuclear weaponry in the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan to end World War II. This possession of force by a single nation spurred the drive of not only the Soviet Union but also many other nations to possess the power that complemented nuclear technology, a struggle that continues to the present day—most notably in Iran.

The effects of nuclear detonation linger far after the initial explosion has occurred, namely in the form of radiation. Genetic defects often occur, hindering the repopulation of nations devastated by nuclear weapons. Much of the remaining radiation hazard occurs within the first 5 years following an attack though hazards depend on the types of particles present. Strontium 90 slowly accumulates in the bones and has a half-life of 28 years, causing tumors, leukemia, and other abnormalities to those affected. Ingestion of Iodine 131 can destroy the thyroid though particle decay rather quickly, only possessing a half-life of 8.1 days. The most damaging particle, however, is Plutonium 239 which has a half-life of 24,400

years, of which ingestion of as little as 1 microgram can cause the formation of bone and lung tumors (Atomic Archive).

The devastating effects of nuclear weapons make them a powerful component of a nation's foreign policy objectives; they have the ability to propel a nation to the forefront of international politics and exponentially increase its global influence. The Middle East continues to struggle with nuclear expansion and is weary of the weapon-wielding Israel's power and alliance with the West.

Case Study: Egypt

Egypt has long been a regional champion through both its repeated calls for an African Union structured similarly to the European Union as well as its moves for a nuclear-free Middle East. What began as a call for a nuclear-free Middle East became a push for a "weapons of mass destruction free region" in 1990 which broadened the scope of the initiative. This push has been affirmed by all other 22 member states of the League as well as Secretary General Amre Moussa. A recent strengthening of the pledge has resulted from Iran's recent nuclear ambitions, hoping that a peaceful, non-nuclear Arab world will deter an attack.

While one may consider deterrence the ultimate goal in the Middle East's recent political moves, Egypt has recently rejected an offer of a "U.S. nuclear umbrella" which is currently in effect for the defense of many non-nuclear nations





such as South Korea, Japan, Australia, etc. Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak's rationale for the rejection was that an acceptance of such a policy "would imply accepting foreign troops and experts on our land -- and we do not accept that" (In-Depth News).

Egypt adamantly recalls the findings of Japanese Ambassador Yukiya Amano, Director of the IAEA, who has stated that there is "[no] hard evidence of Iran trying to gain the capability to develop nuclear arms" and that policy toward Iran should reflect these findings. Egypt continually notes the double standard by western nations evoked through the tacit acceptance of the Israeli nuclear program and their continued deprecation of Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Case Study: Israel

What began in the mid-1960s as a modest effort to gain political influence in a stark and cold political landscape, Israel's nuclear program is now the sixth-largest in the world following only the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (U.S., U.K., China, Russia, and France). The Western world estimates the number of functional Israeli nuclear weapons is between 75 and 200 while Egypt continually places the number between 230 and 250. Israel has never denied these claims.

The Arab League continues to push for Israel's adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), one of the few world powers that has refused to do so.

Israel has recently used its own political might to attempt to hinder Iran's rise as a political factor in the Middle East, possibly in response to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's repeated calls for the dissolution of the Israeli state. Israel has recently concluded talks with a resurgent Russia, which is in the process of supplying air-defense systems to protect Iranian nuclear sites. These surface-to-air missiles would act as a deterrent to Western influence in the country, something that elicits mixed emotions from the Arab League; while a nuclear-free Iran would advance the League's call for a Middle East "free of weapons of mass destruction," it would be at the expense of western influence and Israeli progression in its pursuit of regional influence.

Political Factions and State Sovereignty

Background of the Situation

In October of 2005, League General Secretary Amr Moussa drew criticism when he announced during a visit to the northern region of Iraq and stated,

"I would like to say that Iraqi Kurdistan is an important part of not only Iraq, but also the Arab world and the Middle East region."

This called into question the modern operation of the League which generally does not accept or support non-Arab (i.e. Kurdish) states. The League is also vehemently against federalism and





stated its opposition to “ethnic federalism” in post-Saddam Hussein Iraq in December of 2003. This situation poses an interesting dilemma for the Iraqis who, under much pressure from the West, have been somewhat pushed into a democracy which does not warrant the perquisite of membership in the League of Arab States. Oddly enough, the diverse population of Syria is treated with a “hands-off” approach by the League seemingly implementing a double standard.

The ethnic issue also causes wariness in population groups outside of the reach of Sunni-Arabs. Kurds and Shiites are wary of League action for this very reason.

A Political History of the Middle East

A history of the modern Middle East can find its roots in the latter half of the sixteenth century, to the formation and rise of the Ottoman Empire. The Empire united most of the Middle East under one banner but nonetheless plagued by a small, central government that lacked control over much of its territory.

Following the Ottoman Empire’s defeat in the Great War it eventually dissolved and colonial rule ensued by the major European powers. Britain and France divided the Arab world into zones of influence with further subdivisions into areas of direct and indirect control. The southeast portion of the Arab world stretching from Kuwait to Amman was placed under British control and the northwest portion under French control.

Economic devastation in Europe following the Second World War spurred decolonization in the Middle East and the emergence of the Era of Nationalism. This history of the Arab World will focus henceforth on the development of national identities and their underlying qualities, as it is the major driving force behind modern Arab politics.

Mehran Kamrava writes that nationalism is an “attachment on a national scale to a piece of territory, reinforced by language, folklore, and whatever else creates a sense of commonality”(The Modern Middle East). This sense of commonality must be invoked, however, when it is not necessarily organic. In the Middle East this was commonly conceived when colonial powers were expelled. A common enemy (the West) and a uniting identity brought rise to a sense of nationalism where in many cases the population within a region had no previous ties.

Though this history is intended to focus on the Arab world, the most stunning example of nationalism can be found within the Zionist movement which culminated in the establishment of the state of Israel. Theodore Herzl is widely revered as the father of the Zionist movement and published a novel by the title *The Jewish State* which denounced assimilation into modern societies and urged the return of followers of Judaism to the biblical homeland. At the end of the Second World War, Jews comprised nearly 33% of the Palestinian population, a population which was still under indirect British Rule. In a frenzy to withdraw from Palestine and focus efforts on rebuilding at home, Britain turned rule of Palestine over to the United Nations. This





transition of power brought about the United Nations' partition plan which greatly disadvantaged the Arab population; the proposed Palestinian state was composed of mostly non-arable land and a small foreign population while the proposed Israeli state would have rule over a sizeable Palestinian population. The ensuing rejection by Palestine of the plan was labeled as aggression toward Jewish people and was the catalyst which brought Israel to wage a full scale war against the Palestinians. By May of 1948 Palestine ceased to exist in the Middle East and the only portions of the former Arab state under Arab rule were the former portions of Arab Jerusalem and the West Bank by Jordan as well as Egypt's rule over the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was the only remaining semblance of Palestine and is now referred to as the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

State Conflicts

Kamrava writes in *The Modern Middle East* that the lack of peace in the Middle East "results from the region's main political dilemma, namely the absence of democratic political institutions ... war has been waged by Middle Eastern states, and these states have in turn been shaped by war (Kamrava 283)." The absence of democracy throughout the Middle East has, from a Western point of view, hindered the transition of power and the metamorphosis of nations with changing ideologies.

Political landscapes throughout the Middle East vary greatly depending on wealth, history,

demography, and socio-economic distribution. Much of the Middle East is naturally endowed with vast amounts of oil and other valuable natural resources giving rise to perpetual monarchies in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Ruled by a sultan, these nations are relatively wealthy and thus without much internal conflict. Jordan and Morocco are ruled by a sultan as well but without much oil. Repression by the ruling class is the means by which regimes in Algeria and Sudan keep power; Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen also employ this technique though with much less military might. The only states that can be loosely described as democracies are Israel, Lebanon, Turkey, PNA, and Libya.

Islamic political parties exist in virtually every Middle Eastern nation though the extent of which they are dealt with by each respective state varies greatly. Most Islamist groups downplay the importance of Islam in the roots of their organizations and turn to a more secular platform for support. Islamic parties are often not as violent as the headlining Hezbollah or Hamas but still influence Arab as well as global politics.

Case Study: Yemen

Yemen, located on the Southwestern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, is a nation cooperative with the West and also a member of the League of Arab States. A relatively peaceful nation, Yemen has strongly established ties with many members of the Middle-Eastern community including Iran whose





Islamic government poses an ideological issue with the Sunni-Arab government of Yemen.

Islamic group Al-Houthi plays a large role in Yemeni politics and has recently caused a resurgence of intra-state violence in the northern Saada region. Mostly mountainous, a renewed campaign by Al-Houthi has been waged with ambiguous aims, which some speculate is an embryonic attempt to overthrow the Sunni-Arab government and restore the Shia Imamate that ruled the northern section of Yemen until 1962. The population still remains split as to whether the renewed violence will begin a campaign to stage a coup d'état or whether it is part of the normal cycle of Islamic extremism.

Al-Houthi has a group of followers called the "Youthful Believers" and is named for cleric Hussein al-Houthi who died during a campaign in 2004. The group rejects the current President Saleh's cooperation with the United States in its "War on Terror" though oddly enough refuses to have any association with Al-Qaeda, a Sunni extremist group. The nature of the conflict at the time that this is being written is uncertain though a continuation of violence is unfortunately certain (BBC).

Points to Consider

- To what extent would a coup d'état by a non-Sunni Arab faction have on the ability of a nation to remain a member in the League of Arab States?
- What impact would a nuclear-weapon-wielding Iran have on the stability of the Middle East? What effect would acquisition of nuclear weapons by a state within the League have on inter-regional politics?
- Damages caused by chemical and biological terrorism can often be devastating to a city or even a region—what steps can be taken to prevent such an attack?
- What effect would an aggressive move by Israel have on the stability in the Middle East as a whole?
- Civil war and ethnic conflicts like those in the Darfur region of Sudan often ravage the nation in which they occur—how can the League of Arab States prevent or mediate such conflicts?





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