

# The biological weapons convention essay sample



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The threat of biological weapons to any given nation has been a perpetual danger since its creation in the early 20th Century. Though it has not been used in either of the world wars or in any reported event thus far, nations' stockpiles continue to remain being a needless unconstructive deterrent by threat of use, even if unspoken. Biological weapons have never been used in wars due to its nature of being such a devastating and unselective weapon in its targets to be of any real military value.

Taking into consideration how ineffectual and inadequate this type of weaponry is for military utilization, many nations still feel a necessity to obtain or create their own stockpiles. This need only exists because nations feel they must match the threats other countries pose. If no nation were to comprise this class of weapon of mass destruction, the threat would dissipate, thus eliminating existence or fear of any biological or toxin weapon utilization between nations or terrorist groups within nations.

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) does without a doubt represent one of the most important concepts institutionalized into document form, but it does not comprise any mechanism of enforcement. The document provides a structure with an agreement of commitment by countries to eliminate all biological weapons, including an initiative to promote the exchange of information through the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations. Regrettably, it lacks a means for the United Nations to properly smooth the progress of such an exchange.

Therein lies the problem: a need for a plausible solution for the development of an enforcement protocol. A prerequisite for any progress would require

member nations of the BWC to develop a proposal that will best work in respecting sovereignty, while ensuring the end of biological and toxin weapon possessions and threats. Since President Nixon renounced biological weapons during his administration, there has been bipartisan support for the Biological Weapons Convention among U. S. politics, and every president since has been in palpable support for strengthening it.

The United States has a clear interest in putting an end to the proliferation of biological and toxin weapons. This stance is clearly supported by all Americans aside from politicians and political elites in light that all or most Americans feel that they would be a prime target if these weapons were to be used strategically by terrorist groups or nations. Even without use, mere existence of this type of weapon burrows terrorism into Americans in that the risk of its use is practical, and thorough prevention of such warfare is bleak.

The policy goal of the United States regarding preventative measures in proliferation of biological and toxin weapons is in absolute correlation with that of the other members of the BWC, though the United States' current priorities do differ from that of other member states. Members of the BWC are devoted in great efforts to research and develop an effective compliance regime.

European and other allies of the United States believe that although the U. S. has so far concentrated on preparations for how to deal with the aftermath of a biological attack, it would be foolish to ignore the "more important" goal of cutting off the source by preventing the proliferation of biological

weapons. This is where the United States' policy differs from that of others; current policy is more focused on sustainability of health and security for the result of a possible attack, rather than directing all of its efforts in putting an end to proliferation of biological and toxin weapons.

Defense of this stance is the belief that proliferation will not immediately dispel the threat or risk of terrorist use, and the U. S. must therefore prepare first for a strategic method to react to and retaliate on any such attack that could possibly take place in the near future. Unfortunately, there has been a stalemate in negotiations in the interagency process throughout the past six years preventing the U. S. from being able to make any drastic modifications. In addition, no other nation has had the interest and power to make any first step because the interests of all the other member states revolve around protecting their own land.

As the hegemon, only the United States has the power to override these obstacles and make a serious breakthrough in the protocol development, but is apparently not ready to do so. There are no threats to this U. S. interest, though other nations have become fairly agitated by the United States not taking any initiative. Thus far, member states have aided the United Kingdom in drafting a document that could potentially be a tremendous step in international prevention.

The United States turned down recognition of this document originally by reason that it was centering the protocol on the declaration of Biological Defense facilities, but has evolved into an issue of the declaration of non-

governmental production facilities altogether because when enforced in the U. S. , citizens' Fourth and Fifth Amendment rights would be violated.

Following this act by the United States, consensus for the document by other members dissolved. Also, upon acceptance of the incorporation of U. S. compromises, the document weakened severely by having to be renegotiated and altered by other member states. As a result, the best to-date document for an enforcement protocol to ban proliferation of biological weapons has been diminished by the single U. S. decision to alter a document. Furthermore, the negotiators are close to the end of their patience and member states see no point in continuing to dispute unproductively with the U. S.

The United Nations is most definitely within reach of its goal, but if no compromise can be made by minor alterations for U. S. approval, political will to strengthen the BWC will dissolve, showing nations and terrorist groups that the world is not yet ready to deal with biological weapons of mass destruction. Considering the foreign policy aspect of American politics, the United States was acting appropriately in regards to its own interests, but the question is whether the U. S. acted appropriately in handling the matter in consideration of making progress in the effort for developing an international enforcement protocol.

When the protocol was introduced, U. S. representatives strongly rejected the proposals of the document deeming it in violation of the U. S. Constitution Amendments Four and Five. The representatives declared that no covenant could be made with the United States unless it conformed to the

drastic changes that would make it acceptable to the United States. The changes that would have to be made clearly could not be because it would weaken the document to the point of futility.

Following this event, a domino effect ensued among other member states. Almost immediately, other nations began speaking for compromises to be made to conform to the interest of other member states of the BWC. Consensus for the protocol nearly collapsed when several other nations followed in suit, demanding that compromises be made. Currently, the next BWC conference is very likely to suffer a lack of agreement on what to do next, with certainty that the U. S. will receive most of the blame.

With the manner in which the U. S. responded to the terms of the protocol, a considerable dilemma arose, but fortunately, reaching a solution and developing a plausible enforcement protocol is not out of reach. Had the U. S. handled the matter differently, a solution may have already been reached by now. The representatives who handled the matter definitely had a better alternative that would have allowed the protocol to resume its progress while at the same time upholding a consensus among the other member states of the BWC. One alternative approach in which the representatives could possibly have handled the matter is quite possibly the most practical.

When reviewing the document and coming to the realization that the searches for biological weapons which the enforcement detail revolved around would violate the constitutional rights of American citizens and businesses, the U. S. representatives should not have declared it a deal-breaker outright. Rather, they should have suggested an alternative plan, or

if one was not formulated at that current juncture, the representatives should have declared the need for time to evaluate the proposal.

With this, the United States would be getting the same control over the matter, but the power the U. S. exercised would not have spread like wildfire throughout nearly every other representative of the other member states. Also, so much time would not have been wasted because the protocol development would not have come to such a deadlock. There is no accusation that the U. S. handled this situation arrogantly or absolutely wrong, but rather makes notice that a superior method of foreign policy would be to act more respectfully and in consideration of the issue at hand before declaring such a noncompliant stance of an issue.