

## Impact of the weapons of mass destruction in asymmetric warfare

LÁSZLÓ FÖLDI<sup>a</sup>, IMRE MADAR<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of NBC Defence, Disaster Relief and Security Management,  
National Defence University Miklós Zrínyi, Budapest, Hungary

<sup>b</sup> Department for Planning and Coordination Ministry of Defence, Budapest, Hungary

*The national security strategies of different countries, including Hungary, consider terrorism and proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction as one of the most dangerous challenges of modern societies. Could the use of these weapons be a different threat from that of during the Cold War, if they were used by terrorist groups or so called rogue states? Are there any important differences in their impact on the components of the conventional war and those of the asymmetric warfare? Do the new nuclear weapons that are supposed to deal with the new threat have another threshold of use? The answers may be yes, and analysing the past experience of asymmetric warfare we could manage to avoid doing the same mistakes.*

### Introduction

The Charter of the United Nations (Article 2, point 4) says “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”

Do the countries have the right for pre-emptive strikes, which appeared in many doctrines? The very concept of geo-politics should be revisited, insisting on the importance of factors as geo-economical and religious, as key dimensions of geo-politics. The Middle-East is becoming the world's most important geostrategic area. Weapons of mass destruction, (WMD) which at the end of the Cold War were the weapons of deterrence nowadays again have a very high impact on the politics and our everyday life. During the Olympic Games 2004 several security measures were taken to ensure the safety of the games. Terrorism and the easy access to the WMD in par with the willingness of different groups and rogue states to use them have initiated an important change in security policies in different states. Some of them have nuclear weapons and those changes are seen in their nuclear doctrines, as well. The NATO-member states approved the Prague Capabilities Commitment as part of the continuing

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*Address for correspondence:*

LÁSZLÓ FÖLDI

Miklós Zrínyi National Defence University

H-1581 Budapest, P.O. Box 15, Hungary

E-mail: foldi.laszlo@zmne.hu

Alliance effort to improve and develop new military capabilities for modern warfare in an extremely threatening environment. Individual Allies have made firm and specific political commitments to improve their capabilities in the areas of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defence. As the new security environment has a dangerous impact on the homeland of the member states, even more on their troops, the states are committed in cooperation with their partners to fully implement the Civil Emergency Planning Action Plan for the improvement of civil preparedness for possible attacks against the civilian population with chemical, biological or radiological agents. To understand the necessity of these steps we shall analyse the main characteristics of the asymmetric warfare.

### **The main characteristics of the enemy in the asymmetric warfare**

Which non-traditional, guerrilla styled conflict may be defined as asymmetric warfare?

The definition “asymmetric warfare” is still a matter of discussion. Some authors suggest that asymmetric warfare is “threatening or actually attacking a civilian population or infrastructure”.<sup>1</sup>

Others say “fourth-generation warfare is in a sense an asymmetric conflict pushed to its limits”.<sup>2</sup>

As our aim is not to give a proper definition for asymmetric warfare, but to analyse the impact of the WMD in such a conflict. That is why for us it is more important to know the main characteristics of an asymmetric conflict. Ivan Safranchuk, who is the director of the Moscow office of the Center for Defense Information defined the main characteristics based on the Russian Chechen conflict, but not limited on it, which are the following:<sup>3</sup>

- The enemy is a quasi state (regime) in formation.
- The enemy army consist of a combination of regular units and militiamen.
- The enemy is not adhering to the traditional rules of war.
- The enemy is supported or at least not internally opposed by the indigenous population.
- The enemy is a quasi state (regime) has better knowledge of local traditions, area roots.
- The enemy has international contacts and some international support.

Using these characteristics we can say that the Iraqi conflict seems to be an asymmetric conflict. And any new conflict against a rogue state would be asymmetric. Iran stated if it were attacked by the U. S. or Israel, the Iranian Forces would strike back, where the strike would be the most painful. Analysing the components of the asymmetric warfare we will have the opportunity to determine the impact of the WMD in it.

### **The components of the asymmetric warfare**

The WMD may have impacts on the different components of the asymmetric warfare, but these impacts do not have the same influence on the events. Bearing in mind that economic questions are also very important for analysing any crises, we will focus our attention on the three main components of the asymmetric warfare, which were determined by Ivan Safranchuk, and are the following:<sup>3</sup>

- Military;
- Security;
- Political.

The military component may be divided into two missions:

- Field operations;
- Control of infrastructure and territory

Having the best equipped and trained troops we can say that the use of chemical, biological agents or radiological dispersal devices will not have decisive influence on field operations and the control of infrastructure and territory by NATO troops.

The security components also should be divided in two areas:

- The homeland defence;
- Conflict area security.

In the conflict area, the coalition forces in Iraq tried to do everything possible to avoid damage to the supposed sites with WMD. Unfortunately, they had some casualties during the reconnaissance of the sites, which were suspected to store WMD, but the reasons were conventional detonations, may have been caused by the lowered capabilities because of individual self protection equipment.

The WMD have enormous effect on the security of homeland.

Before the Iraq War NATO member-states offered different capabilities for Turkey in order to ensure the security of its citizens. Bearing in mind, the goal of the terrorist groups to spread fear among the citizens of the coalition forces not only in the neighbouring countries should be prepared. And this threat has not ended until now.

“The Four Faces of Nuclear Terrorism”, a new book from the Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS),<sup>4</sup> warns that substandard security at nuclear facilities in Europe, Central Asia, Russia, and Pakistan increases the risk of terrorists seizing highly enriched uranium to make crude, but devastating, nuclear explosives., A team of researchers, led by CNS Director William Potter and CNS Scientist-in-Residence Charles Ferguson, including Leonard Spector, Amy Sands, and Fred Wehling, conducted a two-year study of the motivations and capabilities of terrorist organizations

to carry out attacks using stolen nuclear weapons, to construct and detonate crude nuclear weapons known as improvised nuclear devices, to strike nuclear power plants and other nuclear facilities, and to build and use radiological weapons or “dirty bombs.”

The book also stresses the need of education the public on the real risks of radiation exposure and radioactive contamination to help psychologically immunize citizens against the fear of radiological attacks, which the researchers have concluded, are all but inevitable in the coming years.

Potter and Ferguson maintain that there is a greater likelihood today than any time in the past three decades that nuclear weapons will actually be used. This stark assessment is based upon two premises: the first is that non-state actors have emerged who seek nuclear weapons in order to use them, and the second is that crude but real nuclear weapons, as distinct from radiological dispersal devices, are well within the technical reach of some terrorist organizations.

The book strongly urges the United States and international partners to work immediately to reduce the probability of nuclear terror acts with the highest consequences and mitigate the consequences of the nuclear terror acts that are the most probable.

The book’s highest priority recommendations include:

- The United States must dramatically revise U.S. efforts to protect fissile materials abroad so as to make securing, consolidating, and eliminating highly enriched uranium.
- Reduce Nuclear Risks in South and Central Asia. The United States and its allies must recognize that for the moment, the locus of greatest nuclear terror danger is South and Central Asia, a zone where Islamic militant terrorist groups are very active and where the risk of their gaining access to nuclear materials - especially from unreliable elements within the Pakistan establishment or from certain vulnerable sites in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan - is highest.
- Secure Vulnerable Russian Nuclear Weapons. The United States and Russia must secure Russia's most vulnerable nuclear weapons, in particular those tactical nuclear weapons that are forward-deployed and portable and that may lack internal locks, known as permissive action links.
- Prepare for Radiological Attack. The use of radioactive materials to cause massive disruption and economic loss is by far the most likely nuclear terror act. Although loss of life and destruction of property would not begin to rival that from a nuclear detonation, the harm caused would be grievous, particularly if radiological attacks were launched in multiple locations. Therefore even as the United States pursues measures to reduce the availability of radioactive materials, it should greatly increase its preparations for a radiological terror event.

To assist public officials in responding to the detonation of a “dirty bomb” or radiological dispersal device the Department of Homeland Security (U.S.) early in 2005 is expected to release much needed guidelines. In asymmetric warfare the security topics have a very strong connection with, and depend on the political questions. Sometimes it seems to be very easy to ensure the security but the proposed solutions may be politically unacceptable.

The political component of the asymmetric warfare includes:

- Conflict area;
- Internal affairs;
- International affairs.

The biggest impact WMD have on the international affairs. While the earlier mentioned defence of the citizens of Turkey was a security question, the successful defence of Israel against the missiles of Iraq was a very important political question. Many Arab countries were neutral, if Israel entered the conflict they might change their position.

An attack with WMD does have such a big political influence because of its high likelihood to occur in a heavily populated area, where the effectiveness of the decontamination effort will have to be balanced with a community’s need to access the affected zone. One of the highest challenges is the need for minimizing the impact of the attack in the face of intense public fear about exposure to even extremely low levels, or concentrations.

“The Pentagon in general and the office of the secretary of Defence in particular now believe we need to focus more on non-traditional threats,” said Clark Murdock, a defence strategy expert at the Center for Strategic Studies in Washington. “This is part of an effort to provide greater focus and greater specificity on how you respond to these new challenges.”<sup>5</sup>

U.S. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld wanted a new policy and planning goals to prepare U.S. forces better for a wider range of challenges, including irregular, catastrophic and disruptive threats. The results are expected not only to shake up the portfolio of weapons and technology, but also to spur new doctrine concepts for using military force, and yield concrete and operational targets for military planners. Rumsfeld has directed Cristopher Henry, principal undersecretary of defence for policy, to draft the new objectives, which likely will influence the 2005 Quadrennial Defence Review.

A June 2004 Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Preventing and Defending Against Clandestine Nuclear Attack, which was made available on 15 September 2004 underlined a clandestine nuclear attack and defence against it “should be treated as an emerging aspect of strategic warfare and should warrant national and

Defence Department attention that is as serious as that devoted to missile defence.”<sup>6</sup> Some of the tasks could be shared with the civilian agencies, mostly in protecting the U.S. Homeland. But there are a couple of missions that are exclusive to the military. Those include conducting counter nuclear military operations to find and deal with hidden nuclear weapons and materials outside U.S., and protecting military installations.

It is clear for everybody that active and passive defences could not be perfect. However, by denying or reducing the effectiveness of limited attacks, defences can discourage attacks, provide new capabilities for managing crises, and provide insurance against the failure of traditional deterrence.

Terrorists or rogue states armed with WMD will likely test America’s security commitments to its allies and friends. A broader array of capabilities is needed to dissuade states from undertaking political, military or technical courses of action that would threaten U. S. and allied security. U. S. forces must pose a credible deterrent to potential adversaries who have access to modern military technology, including NBC weapons and the means to deliver them over long distances. U. S. strategic forces need to provide the president with a range of options to defeat any aggressor.<sup>7</sup>

The United States’ pre-emptive war against Iraq, while controversial, was not unprecedented. In 1981, Israel launched a pre-emptive military strike against Iraq’s unfinished nuclear reactor at Osirak. This attack by Israel indicated a willingness of its leaders to take matters into their own hands when diplomatic efforts were not trusted.

But as it has been made painfully obvious by the war in Iraq, simply having the latest military hardware and the will to use them does not mean that your pre-emptive strike will have the desired effect. Experience in Iraq shows, that good intelligence on WMD it is difficult to be collected. It was clear that Iraq had some of the chemical agents before the war.<sup>8</sup> But the regime did not have the capability to use that agents within 45 minutes, which argument was the main reason for western citizens to support the war against Iraq. In real case many suspected targets would be attacked for every one that actually contained CBW. According to a report to U. S. congress on hard and deeply buried targets, “more than 10 000 underground targets exist worldwide, with more than 1 400 known or suspected to be sheltering WMD, ballistic missiles or other military command facilities.”<sup>9</sup>

Before the Iraq war hundreds of sites were suspected of hiding CBW. It turned out that none of them did.

The case is even more difficult with Iran. Iran’s nuclear facilities are strewn about a very large country and, if the intelligence is not solid, Israel may only land a glancing blow. In the process of doing so, Israel stands a very good chance of triggering a damaging military response from Iran. What’s more, other countries in the region may

be convinced to join the fray, either because they have long seethed that Israel alone in the Middle East is tacitly allowed to have a nuclear programme, or because of resentment built up from the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Can we use the threat of nuclear retaliation to deter CBW attack on military forces or NATO countries' territory. Nuclear weapons would be enormously destructive whether used against civilian or military targets. Chemical and biological weapons, in contrast, could be devastating if used against civilians but would not be particularly useful against a well-prepared military force.

From political point of view the main question about nuclear weapons is not their effectiveness, but how useful they are compared to alternatives and what are the consequences of their development, deployment and use?

### **Proposed missions for nuclear weapons**

The Federation of American Scientists asked a distinguished group of experts to provide advice and comments on the missions for Nuclear Weapons after the Cold War. The experts proposed 15 missions, that are the following:

- Survive and fire back after nuclear attack against homeland
- Survive and fire back after nuclear attack against allies
- Survive and fire back after chemical/biological attack against homeland
- Survive and fire back after chemical/biological attack against allies
- Survive and fire back after CBW use in military theatre
- Deploying nuclear weapons to attack enemy nuclear weapons to increase their vulnerability, decreasing their value
- Deploying nuclear weapons to attack enemy chemical/biological weapons to increase their vulnerability, decreasing their value
- Damage limitation attacks against nuclear weapons in military theatre
- Damage limitation attacks against CB weapons in military theatre
- Damage limitation attacks against Russian/Chinese central systems
- Ready to inflict damage after regional conventional attacks
- Overawe potential rivals
- Provide virtual power
- Fight regional wars
- Apply shock to terminate a regional conventional war

At least 10 out of 15 missions have connection with the asymmetric warfare. Do we need any new nuclear capabilities to carry out some of the missions, different from those of the Cold War?

### **A new nuclear weapon may be needed**

Would it be easier if we could use low-yield nuclear weapons. At the first sight yes, the radioactive fallout would be smaller, and the collateral damage lower.

But if we had such weapons, would we use them when the exact location of targets in a coming conflict was not as clear as it was for a precise strike weapon.

The White House has made it clear that Iran will be a focus of U.S. foreign policy in President Bush's second term. In his State of the Union speech early this year, the president identified Iran as "the world's primary state sponsor of terror, pursuing nuclear weapons while depriving its people of the freedom they seek and deserve."

During the 1991 Persian Gulf War, U. S. President George Bush threatened to use nuclear arms if Iraq used chemical or biological weapons against U. S. troops. At that time it was a successful deterrent. But according to Iran and North Korea "how does one persuade or compel a country to cease its activities?" "How credible is any implied action against North Korea? So far not very", said retired U. S. Air Force General Larry Welch.<sup>10</sup> Built to counter the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the U. S. nuclear arsenal is already proving less than ideal for deterring some of today's threats. To pose a credible threat, the United States would have to be able to conduct a "small-yield, clean, very precise" strike, Welch said. Opponents argue that low-yield weapons are less destructive, thus more likely to be used. But we know both U.S. and Russia had thousands of small warheads, but have never used them.

But we shall remember that the challenges of the Cold War were totally different. A conventional weapon attack of an underground weapons of mass destruction facility runs a high risk of dispersing the agents, stored in the facility, perhaps causing a large amount of collateral damage as well. Because of its potential military capability, a Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator also could serve as an effective deterrent. Adversaries also may be dissuaded from hiding WMD, since the U. S. could threaten any buried target. The whole value of the WMD could be questioned.

To effectively deter, one should be able to threaten something the enemy values. In asymmetric warfare its is even more important as for terrorists their lives are not very important. It is more important to have something to hit the homeland of the enemy. But the nuclear weapon should not be the only solution. The report "Reforging the Sword: U. S. Forces for a 21st Century Strategy" is relevant to asymmetric warfare and counter-terrorism. It provides another solution too. "In the unlikely event that is well known where and how a weapon of mass destruction attack against the United States is being prepared in a foreign country, U. S. forces can of course conduct pre-emptive attacks. U. S. military strategy should ensure that Special Operations and other forces



have a capability for long-range raids to attack weapon development, or launch sites and command structures if necessary to prevent weapons of mass destruction attacks.”<sup>11</sup>

The Senate Intelligence Committee has launched what its chairman called a “pre-emptive” examination of U.S. intelligence on Iran as part of an effort to avoid the problems that plagued America’s prewar assessments on Iraq.

Senator Pat Roberts, said in an interview that he had sought the unusual review because the erroneous prewar claims about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction had made lawmakers wary of the CIA’s current assessments on Iran. “We have to be more pre-emptive on this committee to try to look ahead and determine our capabilities so that you don’t get stuck with a situation like you did with Iraq,”<sup>12</sup> said Roberts, who also voiced concern about current intelligence on the insurgency in Iraq.

Officials with the U.S. Joint Chiefs of staff are putting the finishing touches on a new National Military Strategy to help prioritise how the services will wage the global war on terror.

The joint staff’s chief of strategic plans and policy, Lt. Gen. Walter Sharp, described the new strategy as “proactive.” He said one of its biggest priorities would be to stem the tide of terrorist dogma and reward those who teach against Islamic extremism.

The new strategy will also outline the roles and missions of the different services in fighting the global war on terrorism and assigns certain tasks to the U.S. Special Operations Command, Sharp said.

The strategy lays out four goals for the war on terror:

- Protect the homeland.
- Defeat terrorist cells worldwide.
- Deny terrorists weapons of mass destruction.
- Establish a global environment that does not condone terrorism.

The picture can not be clear without the short overview of the Russian nuclear doctrine. Statements about Russia’s increased reliance on nuclear weapons have become commonplace since 1993, when Moscow formally dropped the Soviet no-first-use policy. In reality, nuclear doctrine changed more slowly, and almost the entire 1990s was spent on debates, most of them behind closed doors. Only in 1999 did a new, post-Soviet nuclear doctrine take shape. Analysis of official documents, as well as official and unofficial statements, suggests that the main innovation was a new mission assigned to nuclear weapons that of deterring limited conventional wars.

Available evidence suggests that there were two key variables that affected the emergence of the new nuclear doctrine. First, there was a perception of an acute external threat (especially in the mid-1990s and in 1999, when Russia anticipated that NATO might threaten to use force on a limited scale to achieve limited political goals in

a manner similar to the wars in the Balkans). Second, there was an acute sense of the weakness of Russia's conventional forces vis-à-vis the prospect of a limited conventional war, especially a limited war with both numerically and qualitatively superior NATO forces. From the perspective of the Russian military, reliance on nuclear weapons was a logical response to the glaring inadequacy of conventional forces premised on the idea that nuclear weapons had greater utility than simply to deter a large-scale nuclear attack. Official documents suggest, however, that reliance on nuclear weapons is seen as a temporary "fix" intended to provide for security until conventional forces are sufficiently modernized and strengthened.

Following the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001, the perceived tension in U.S.-Russian relations diminished; both governments have proclaimed that they are allies in the fight against international terrorism.

"Russia on December 2, 2004 said it was prepared to launch cruise missile attacks against suspected terrorist bases outside its borders. "We will use long-range precision cruise missiles and bombs if we get such an order." "We will use everything that is at our disposal",<sup>13</sup> said Russian Air Force chief Vladimir Mikhailov. This is a dangerous situation, because in case one country declares right for a pre-emptive strike, he would lose the right to oppose such a strike planned or carried out by another country.

### **Conclusion**

The main aim for the western countries is to transform the Middle-East region from a source to a barrier to traditional and non traditional threats to peace.

The main actors currently involved in the area, NATO, EU and Russia have the mission to find the optimal ways of dealing with the region, aiming at minimizing its problems and maximizing its potential. The countries should focus on increased cooperation rather than destructive competition. The previous enemies shall put together their efforts in order to ensure the global security. Without understanding the roots of the problem it may happen again that a country that was supported by one of the states in a short time may turn to be the biggest enemy of that country.

Non-state actors and post-modern terrorists, with their apocalyptic visions and belief that they are acting on behalf of some higher power, are likely to use WMD to maximize their kill ratios and send a larger and more fearsome message to their perceived enemies.<sup>14</sup> That is why we should not only have the proper doctrines to prevent such actions, but we also have to have the guidelines and capabilities to deal with the consequences of such actions in case they occur. The most important is to remember it does not matter what a good doctrine and strategy we have, the military

solution must be the last one. And the more international our solutions are the better they serve peace. Libya is a very good example of that fact, that countries in case they act together they may without using their military capabilities force a country to give up its WMD program.

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