

# The 55th Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs

**60 Years After Hiroshima and Nagasaki**  
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**Working Group 3 Report**  
**Terrorism, Human Rights and International Security**  
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## Terrorism Overview

Terrorism of the present covers a wide geographic scope, and uses both simple and sophisticated means of destruction. As a result, there is an unprecedented threat to personal safety, security of states and the world economy. Terrorism has yet to be defined under international law. The international criminal court has not designated terrorism as a war crime, even though it may occur in war as in peace. Kofi Annan's High Level Panel has proposed a definition involving any actions intended to cause harm to civilians or non-combatants. The roots of terrorism are many, and are frequently site-specific. In addition to historic conflict, poverty and under-development are factors. Deprivation and insults to human dignity make entire social groups feel oppressed. Political incapacity is a most significant factor, not only in failed and fragile states, as expected, but in the United States, where the response to terrorism and the threat of terrorism has been misconceived.

Many, but not all, terrorist acts have roots in extreme interpretations of Islam, backed by the apparent religious authority of fighting "for the name of God", with violence. The impact is operational and ideological, and has a global reach. It can be very efficient, on both the macro and individual level. For example, anti-West radical Islamic ideas have prevailed in Egypt, in less than 15 years. The organization is not hierarchical; its networks are increasing in number, are difficult to detect, to predict and to arrest.

Terrorists try to divide society, and don't want democracy. Acts of terrorism, it is believed by some, could be better handled as a complex criminal and sociological problem, with a global scope. It is not hard to understand that we all identify with people who think like ourselves. In an environment where Western ways and ideals are the norm, outsiders experience alienation, arising from the feeling that the group is under attack. Oversimplifying this phenomenon as an "us" and "them" situation demonizes the other side. Instead, the idea was expressed that we must win hearts and minds, and to "remember your humanity", we have to humanize even the terrorist, while protesting to the utmost our opposition to their acts.

## **Role of the United States**

In this Working Group, many expressed an aversion to the Bush administration terminology "war on terror". Because of their violent and military response to terrorism, there has been creation of more enemies than the "war" has destroyed. This, in turn, is thought to have increased the number of active participants in terrorist activity, and, in parallel, increased the number of supporting non-participants. Many persons feel that the actions of the United States in its "war on terror" may have created a self-fulfilling prophecy. The U.S. policy on terrorism was formed under the Clinton administration, who were well aware of al Qaeda as a potentially deadly enemy, set-up a counter-terrorism group, and made many attempts to thwart it. The Bush administration perceives that the threat is from militant Islam, labelling it the "global radical Islamist threat", which is understood to be most dangerous when backed by resources of a state. Because the threat is intolerable, with no end in sight, all means are seen to be justified.

## **Regional Security**

Many states, and whole regions, have faced terrorism and continue to be challenged. The intent of the terrorist is to create instability, and their acts are planned to rivet the attention of all, so that the political impact will be maximized. Fear and panic are their tools; destruction of civilian's lives is intentional. These are common factors, but each has its own particular circumstances, and should be addressed individually. The interpretation of religious extremism does not fit all, and also often disguises an essentially economic protest. Extremists who claim association with religion have, in some twisted way, a goal of publicity (which should be denied where possible).

The most frequent occurrences of terrorist activity are local or regional, rather than global. Specific situations in the Middle East, Africa, Iraq/Iran, Egypt and Thailand are reviewed here as examples (there are, unfortunately, many regions that have experienced terrorism). It is almost universally true that there is a historical antecedent to every struggle, and the terrorist act is seen after a long buildup, with rationale rooted in old conflict. .

The Palestine problem is said to exist as a result of collective acts of injustice in its formation. Both sides of the conflict have inflicted grave harm on civilians who are non-combatants. Israel has occupied Palestinian territory, and has used measures that one would classify as state-led terrorism. Palestinian terrorism has taken the form of suicide bombings in Israel. Recently, Israel decided that its best recourse to protect its citizens against suicide bombing was to build a wall. The wall goes beyond protection and has become a new instrument for repression, separating neighbours from each other, holding up normal flow at checkpoints, and causing economic stress and humiliation to citizens on a daily basis. The entire Palestinian population is affected, but continues to hope that Israel can abide by the

International Court of Justice advisory ruling to the UN. Israel hopes for normal access to the neighbouring Arab world. In the present situation of escalating instability, not only are both sides disadvantaged, but the security of the entire region is threatened.

Egypt, Thailand and others have indigenous terrorists, some of whom espouse religious views. However, their motivation is not believed to be religious in nature; instead these individuals and groups are actually seeking influence and local importance. In the ethnic conflict in the South of Thailand, violence on the part of security forces begets more violence. Egypt has had the experience of bringing a terrorist group under control, but has now seen it rise again, this time with more fanaticism and the probable external high-level influence of al Qaeda.

It was thought that Saddam Hussein might align himself with hostile Islam, and this is the background of the American obsession with Iraq and the parallel obsession with Iran, an Islamic state. The opinion was expressed that terrorist activity in Iraq is not the result of U. S. occupation, but instead it is a type of military action against the eventual establishment of a stable democratic government, where militants cannot thrive. It may be that the Bush administration is mis-using the argument that its presence is required for security in Iraq to establish its global dominance. Democratizing the Middle East, including Syria, is part of the overall American plan.

External influence is widely accepted to be behind the terror attacks in Iraq. Old-regime personnel are also involved in Iraq's ongoing terrorism. The host of unemployed men, most of whom have no motivation except to collect their pay, makes it easy to execute a car bombing. Reconstruction and the resulting improvement in employment prospects is thought to be able to bring with it relief from the bulk of the terrorism. The present situation of Iraq is caused by the current war and occupation, as expected, but a component of it would be greatly relieved if the economy was not in a shambles. **It is strongly recommended that reconstruction be supported and begin immediately.**

The memories of the Iraq-Iran war of the 90s are still very clear, and although post-Saddam Iraq will certainly be different, it will be hard for Iraq to enter into a different relationship with Iran. Iran, it is proposed, should now get markets, and influence in Iraq, and could seek a new level of relationship. One reason advanced is that it should be recognized that the majority in both countries are Shiite Muslims, constituting a natural alliance. Iraq is, however, wary of interference from Iran in Iraq politics, while Iran is afraid of the U.S. presence there. Over the long term, the two countries will work out a new balance of power.

In Africa, long standing ethnic conflicts are at work, with not much evidence of religious motivation, even though different religious factions are in conflict. Colonial wrongs in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, and in the Congo were at the

root of the conflicts in the 90s. Here again is an example of insecurity that is regional. In 1972 there was killing and terrorism carried out by Tutsis against the Hutus. In Rwanda's bordering country Burundi, the first Hutu president was installed- he was assassinated by the Tutsi minority. Rwanda felt the pressure of lack of land for its agriculturally based economy. Many sources of conflict existed and the Rwandan crisis need not have been a surprise for the international community.

Although the UK had previously experienced the IRA bombings, a "regional" insecurity only occurred with recent terrorist attacks, in London and Madrid. Here the "region" was the countries of the EU. The 9/11 terrorists attacks in New York have caused a regional insecurity in North America. To report on the status of terrorism in 2005, it must be stated that terrorism now has a broad spectrum of causes and a global scope.

### **Nuclear terrorism**

Because terrorism arising from extreme interpretations of Islam aims at mass killing, panic, and major political impact, the preferred choice could be a nuclear bomb. Possibilities for nuclear terrorism are not only a nuclear bomb in a city, but also occupation of a nuclear power station, or a nuclear missile site.

The nuclear weapons materials in the nuclear weapons states are not fully secured against access by terrorists. The sheer quantity of the large nuclear arsenals of the US and Russia increases the chance of a breach of security; international black markets do exist. Research reactors used for development of new weapons are not well secured. The hawkish stance of the US spurs proliferation, and produces more potential access points to the terrorist groups. Security of weapons grade material in new nuclear weapons states is likely to be unsatisfactory as a barrier to terrorist access. In addition energy is a necessity for all nations and to satisfy this need, many nuclear power plants will be built, thus generating more access points for weapons materials. These factors combine to increase the probability of success in nuclear terrorism.

**The international community must come together and cooperate on preventing nuclear terrorism.** This would enable a network of information to be established, better success at cutoff of money flow, analysis of why terrorist attacks are increasing and thus should provide a better chance of a workable global strategy. Through the UN, the international community should move forward on disarmament, and local and regional Nuclear Weapons Free zones could cover a much wider geography.

Plans are needed for protection of cities, and large cities particularly. Use of civilian rather than military means offers major benefits, because protection can be achieved without destruction. An extensive development of sensors technology

(now at the prototype stage) has been proposed for both biological and nuclear materials detection. To install a complete system for such devices, for example, at all US ports would take \$10 billion annually, but such "insurance" is not more expensive than a single failure to protect by military-type methodology. It was proposed that this means of protection should be installed until a period when denial of access to nuclear material is assured.

The true protection against nuclear terrorism is through denial of the key component - the fissile material. Plutonium could be used, but the technical implementation is complex. Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) can be assembled into a nuclear bomb with materials and complete specifications that are readily available. Therefore, control of HEU would reduce the probability of constructing a bomb to practically zero. (A remaining threat is that a terrorist group could access under-secured, incomplete bombs in Russia. )

An agreement between US and Russia, with a small contributions from the UK and others, has set up a system for de-enriching HEU, for subsequent use as nuclear fuel. However, a serious strategic error on the part of the U.S. has allowed the entire scheme to be privatized. Commercial constraints mean that Russia's HEU will take 20 years to be de-enriched. Meanwhile, this huge Russian stockpile is vulnerable, as it would, for example, only take corruption of a few workers to enable transfer to terrorist hands. Many in the WG expressed astonishment that the U.S. could be so short sighted in this matter, while, at the same time, issuing statements that WMD terrorism is the greatest threat faced by the United States.

Some Pugwash members have met with American leaders to explain this very dangerous situation but it has fallen on deaf ears - **this WG would encourage extreme persistence by Pugwash on the HEU issue until there is action.** Relatively, the cost is bearable, and the alternative to inaction could well be a city destroyed by an in-situ nuclear bomb.

The question was asked regarding how the NPT commitment that every country has a right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy would be kept. The plan put forward by the IAEA<sup>1</sup> is that, for all countries newly installing a nuclear power plant, HEU would be produced at a central secure location and a supply of nuclear fuel would be guaranteed. While this would go a long way toward resolving the crisis in Iran, but would imply some loss of sovereignty, so achieving take-up of this plan would not be straightforward

It was pointed out that agreement to take on the protections of the NPT was achieved over many years and at first only a few signed. Over the years, however, it has been signed by all but three nations. A similar pattern may be possible with the Nuclear Fuel Cycle program, and so nuclear material from power generation could be secured and made inaccessible to terrorists. One of the participants

suggested that new nuclear energy use should be delayed until we know how to properly safeguard it.

## **The Effects of Globalization**

With globalization, the Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) have increased their influence and power, but generally are non-participants in global security matters. Since all of society is affected by terrorism, all must participate in alleviating it, including MNEs. Over the years, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) movement has taken hold, because it is in the interest of corporate shareholders. Now is the time for MNEs to recognize that their self interest lies in augmenting their famous triple bottom line, so that it becomes the quadrupule bottom line - Economic, Environment, Social and Security.

MNEs can have a positive effect on the local social and economic environment for a relatively small expenditure, and thus decrease local impoverishment. That then decreases the probability of a silent support base for acts of terrorism in that place and possibly against the MNE's property. In Palestine, one large MNE is a source of scholarships, environmental and social benefits. When MNE operations do not benefit the people, there is no relief from motivation for terrorism. Revenues paid to the government for mining operations must be seen to benefit the people. Tourism revenues must benefit not only the MNE/operator but must be seen to spread through the local economy. In Egypt, for example, terrorism led to closure of chain restaurants, loss of jobs - a visible lesson to local terrorist sympathizers. Would these MNEs have been spared if they sponsored social programs?

Multilateral dialogue can easily deteriorate to fixed "national interest" positions. One route to open a dialogue that leads to improved human security would be a people-to-people approach because they see issues in relation to their own interests. If true dialogue is facilitated between persons of different cultures and religions, there is a belief that differences can be accepted and respected. This would be a gradual process, a path to improved human security, and a means of setting an example. Such efforts could be valuable in the developing world where globalization tends to dilute or even destroy local cultures. As people of many cultures migrate to the developed world, a multicultural society is seen to exist. Too often, these separate but accepted cultures become isolated, and espouse radical ideas. There is a belief that such disconnection of people from both their cultural roots and the mainstream culture was a factor in the recent London bombings. As well as a positive role, dialogue may have a negative effect as a distraction from ongoing oppressive actions occurring in parallel to the dialogue between the conflicting parties.

On an international level, the economic destruction that would result from nuclear terrorism should be of immediate concern to the multinational enterprises. They should work through and enlarge organizational means such as the UN Global

Compact to strengthen the global treaty system, fully support the IAEA and secure nuclear power plants, ports and border checkpoints.

On a global scale, the UN is the obvious facilitator of monitoring, and of dialogue. Soft power in the hands of the UN, for comprehensive verification as well as monitoring, would add to security. The UN system has produced some relative failures at the local level, because of corruption. In the Congo, for example, the people are said to hate the UN mission, some of whose members violate the rights of local people. In the Great Lakes region of Africa, it was said that the UN mission had data on movement of people, access to information on water and, generally had means of intervening at a stage before conflict became serious. **Greater analysis of UN information and use of UN facilitation is recommended.**

## **Hope for the Future**

It was generally agreed that the only true way out of terrorism is through the law. No country or group must be above the law. Replacing injustice with justice is essential, and over time, injustice will ease.

There is already religious tolerance amongst Christians, Muslims and Jews. It is counterproductive and inflammatory to use terms like "Islamic terrorist", and it is strongly recommended that this be avoided

Where there is mistrust, we need more transparency, and where there is cultural separateness to the degree that there is widespread misinformation, we need integration of communities, not separate cultures under the apparently tolerant umbrella of multiculturalism.

To have hope for the future, it is essential that we believe that terrorism is temporary, working within each region, case by case to understand the problem and apply an appropriate remedy.

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## **SUMMARY**

Terrorism, as practised in 2005, has a broad spectrum of causes and a global scope. Prevention of nuclear terrorism is a priority, and a co-operative international effort would improve the chances of success. Immediate, rather than gradual, de-enrichment of HEU is a priority, so that the chain of supply of potential bomb material can be broken. The so-called "war on terror" has been misconceived, and over-reaction of the U.S. has created new enemies and more terrorist supporters. The terminology "Islamic terrorist" is an inflammatory and counter-productive terminology because it labels a diverse community of 1.5 billion Muslims. More

resources should be supplied to alleviate the impoverishment and insults to human dignity that characterize terrorism in failed or fragile states. Justice must replace injustice. All sources of influence and power, including states, NGOs, multinational enterprises and individuals have a responsibility to participate in these efforts. Since terrorists in developed countries have been displaced from their cultural roots and not integrated into society's mainstream, their mistrust must be replaced by understanding through integration of multicultural communities. To have hope for the future, it is essential to believe that terrorism is temporary, working case by case to understand the problem and apply an appropriate remedy.

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1. [\[back\]](#) IAEA - International Atomic Energy Agency. IAEA has proposed a methodology known as the Nuclear Fuel Cycle.