

## **Weapons of Mass Destruction – The Role of the United States**

Throughout history, the advantages yielded by advances in weapons technology are rapidly dissipated as adversaries adopt and improve each innovation. No advance in weapons technology has ever been long monopolized by one country, group or individual. Every advance is eventually available to any entity which can pay for it. Imagine an Osama bin Laden with a nuclear device or a 1918-1919 type influenza virus. Now the power of new weapons is so great as to threaten entire cities and possibly the entire human race. It seems transparently obvious that access to these weapons has to be limited and controlled.

How is this to be done and can it be accomplished? It isn't at all certain that we can achieve this control, but the alternative is just not acceptable. And there isn't a lot of time left. It is a world problem, not just a U.S. problem. Like most problems, it is complex and it is probably most productive to be working concurrently on numerous possible solutions. Reasonable people will disagree on the best approach but very few will doubt that the problem is real and immediate.

I don't think that the U.S. can "go it alone." I think the U.S. can define the problem and bring all of the major industrial and post industrial nations to the table. The first group of nations should include, at least, the US, Japan, China, Germany, the UK, India, France, and Russia. Together, they will have to hammer out an immediate response to the problem. Major elements of a plan will include agreement as to the serious nature of the problem and an understanding that the boundaries of a Nation State are no longer sacrosanct and that various activities including weapons of mass destruction (WMD) acquisition and development, harboring terrorists, and genocide will not be tolerated. It would be useful if the UN could be restructured so that it can be an integral part of the response. Present WMD capabilities will need to be frozen or reduced or eliminated. Such a plan will have to include the right to inspect and the ability to apply and coordinate overwhelming multilateral force when needed. No country, including the U.S., can be immune from inspection. As soon as a response to the problem has been outlined, the rest of the world's nations should be invited and encouraged to participate.

A means will have to be devised to coordinate the intelligence, police and legal functions of all nations involved. Conventional military forces will be important, but they will probably be secondary to the sharing of information. Of course no plan will work without the backing of a very strong and ready military capability. Some of the necessary structure is already in place in the UN, The UN sponsored International Atomic Energy Agency, NATO, G8, Interpol, and other groupings. Such a plan will involve tracking the movements of people, companies, money and goods and it will necessitate controlling access to nuclear and biologic materials. It will take wisdom to do as little damage as possible to

sovereignty and to individual liberties. To many people across the world, this will be an unwelcome extension of the already overwhelming power of the richer nations.

The complex political, cultural, economic and ideological obstacles to implementing such a covenant may be insurmountable. It seems obvious that the U.S. will be the source of much of the power in such an alliance and is also likely to be the biggest impediment to such a plan. It also seems unlikely that we can bring about such a major change in world alignment alone and, anyway, our taxpayers wouldn't pay for it. Without broad international cooperation, we cannot effectively identify, track and control or eliminate emerging violations of this new covenant. The more inclusive the group which participates in this covenant, the greater the likelihood of success.

If this problem is as serious as I think it is, and if there really isn't an acceptable alternative to mandatory controls, then how do we mobilize this country and its leadership to accept the role which seems to be thrust upon it?

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