

## Global Security Environment: Challenges and Prospects

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The real challenge before the international community has been to contain the proliferation of WMD. The rise of non-state actors and their networks worldwide has made the current international security situation worst. It is generally believed that the non-state actors might have been trying to acquire any one or all the components of WMD or might have already acquired it.

There seems to be a consensus worldwide among the members of the strategic and academic community that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) has been the greatest danger to the global security. The nuclear, biological and chemical weapons are commonly characterised as the WMD. The real challenge before the international community has been to contain the proliferation of WMD. The rise of non-state actors and their networks worldwide has made the current international security situation worst. It is generally believed that the non-state actors might have been trying to acquire any one or all the components of WMD or might have already acquired it. The assertion that such things are not possible or difficult to acquire may not be true. The possibility of acquisition of WMD by terrorist group more particularly by the Al Qaeda networks can not be ruled out.

*The report of the commission on the prevention of WMD proliferation and terrorism: **WORLD AT RISK** was released on December 2, 2008. The US intelligence reported on global trends that the use of nuclear weapons will grow increasingly likely by 2025. It has been clearly highlighted by the US intelligence that such possibility exists because of the growing persistence of the terrorist groups and rogue states. The “World at Risk” report has added a different dimension to the US intelligence report on global trends. It has highlighted that the terrorists are likely to use nuclear or biological weapons in the next five years. The time span mentioned in the report that the use of nuclear or biological weapon is most likely in the next five years by the terrorist groups in particular has once again reinvigorated the ongoing debate on the global security environment.*

This is a product of the bi-partisan commission appointed by the American Congress in 2007 chaired by Bob Graham with Graham Allison, Robin Cleveland, Steve Rademaker, Tim Roemer, Wendey Sherman, Henry Sokolsky and Rich Verma as members. The greatest dangers highlighted by the commission on the prevention of weapons of mass destruction proliferation and terrorism are the rapid proliferation of nuclear technology in countries such as Pakistan, North Korea and Iran. The current proliferation of biotech industries worldwide has also become a major source of concern for the international community because of the lack of adequate security

in this sector. The existing poor security in the biotech industries has increased the vulnerability and the terrorist groups might like to exploit this situation and get hold of some of the biological agents, which can be used as a silent killer of the human beings. It has been accepted by the bi-partisan commission that Pakistan has emerged as the weakest link in world security.

So far, Pakistan has been a close US ally but unfortunately it has emerged as an epicenter of terrorism and finds place in all the discussions on terrorism worldwide. Pakistan's inability to contain and eradicate terrorist links and networks has made the whole globe a dangerous place for the humanity. The report clearly has highlighted the degree of vulnerability emerging from Pakistan and to quote from the report, "were one to map terrorism and weapons of mass destruction today, all roads would intersect in Pakistan". Hence, it is a well accepted fact and the inference drawn from the bi-partisan commission that Pakistan has been supporting the terrorist networks and the United States itself might become a victim one day. The commission report has highlighted that the terrorists are more likely to be able to obtain biological than nuclear weapons, with anthrax as the primary mode.

It is a well known fact that the terrorists have already tried chemical and biological weapons – nerve gas in the Tokyo subway, anthrax mailed to US public figures. So far, the nuclear weapons and materials have been left out. However, it is believed that the Al Qaeda group and other terrorist's network must be trying to procure and obtain such nuclear materials. They have definitely expertise available with them to build atleast a crude nuclear device or may like to use radiological material in the form of the so called dirty bombs. The most difficult step in making a nuclear bomb is obtaining the fissile materials either plutonium or highly enriched uranium. There may be several routes for the terrorists' group to acquire nuclear weapons and nuclear materials. The first option might be to make an attempt in stealing one from the stockpile of a country possessing such weapons in nexus with the security. The second

option would be to buy from a country if that country is in dire crisis and overtly supporting terrorism. The other route would be to buy or steal from some other subnational group that had obtained it by one of the above mentioned ways.

If the terrorists are successful in obtaining and acquiring fissile material, it would be much easier for them to transport and detonate it. Hence, the need of the hour would be to prevent the theft or illegal purchase of fissile materials because stopping terrorists from transporting and detonating a bomb would be a tough proposition. It is, therefore, most important to control and contain at the source itself. Unfortunately, there have been a number of documented cases of real theft of kilogram quantities of real weapons usable nuclear material. It is again well known that the International Atomic Energy Agency has a database that includes 18 incidents involving seizure of stolen highly enriched uranium or plutonium that have been confirmed by the relevant states.

Comes of the greatest threats to peace now come from terrorist groups. The major recommendations made by the commission to the new US administration are mostly related to the safeguarding of uranium and plutonium stockpiles. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, the United States has been spending billions of dollars for securing and maintaining nuclear weapons, materials, and technology in erstwhile Soviet Union. The other recommendation made in the report is to strengthen the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The US in particular and the other nuclear weapon states (UK, Russia, China and France) in general according to the NPT definition have so far absolutely failed to meet their legal obligations enshrined in the Article VI of the NPT, which talks about nuclear disarmament. In many ways, the US nuclear doctrine itself has weakened the NPT regime. Instead of showing genuine commitment towards achieving a nuclear weapon free world, the US has been talking about its reliable replacement warhead (RRW) programme where it has been intended that the US would be putting primacy to the nuclear

weapons and keep refining its stockpiles of nuclear weapons. The US in the current global security environment should set an example by showing and signaling to the world that it is interested in the elimination of nuclear weapons. By doing so, it can only prevent new countries including Iran and North Korea from possessing uranium enrichment or plutonium reprocessing capabilities. The US would require to find ways for making the role of nuclear weapons decimated. The estimated yield from all the nuclear weapons in the world today is 5,000 megatons—the equivalent of 2,500 World War IIs.

From a bioterrorism perspective the bi-partisan commission report has cautioned the US in particular and the international community in general that the possibility of getting hold of biological weapons and its use by the terrorist group will always be high. Biological weapons employ viruses, bacteria and other germs to produce diseases, which kill people in large numbers and do not destroy the infrastructure. The serious concerns relating to biological weapons use have been reflected in the report. The US and Russia possess almost the entire worldwide stockpile of biological and chemical weapons, which is approximately 60,000 metric tons. It can wipe out 60 billion people. The world currently comprises of about 6.5 billion people. Anthrax spores occur naturally around the world in soil and certain animals and they can be easily used for biological warfare. The need of the hour is to urgently tighten security in domestic bio-sphere institutes and laboratories. The mushrooming of biotechnology sector across the world has made this area highly vulnerable.

It must be reiterated here that the bi-partisan commission report has mentioned Pakistan a number of times and few recommendations made in the report have been related to the need for securing and protecting nuclear and biological materials in Pakistan. The whole world is worried about Pakistan's nuclear weapons and nuclear materials. There is a growing concern among the members of international community that the WMD materials might fall in the wrong hands and that can easily create havoc globally. The report

clearly has mentioned that parts of Pakistan's territory are currently a safe haven for Al Qaeda and other terrorists. It is reiterated again in the report that in term of the nexus of proliferation and terrorism, Pakistan must figure on the top of the agenda for the next President and Congress.

After 26/11 incident at Mumbai in India, there has been a great deal of mounting international pressure on Pakistan to act and dismantle all the terrorist networks functioning from Pakistani soil. India was able to build international consensus and mobilize international opinion against Pakistan after collecting and analyzing a number of evidences gathered during the 48 hours operation during the attacks on India's iconic hotel Taj and Trident in Mumbai. The release of the report of the bi-partisan commission just after a week of Mumbai attack and the concerns and reflections made in the report validated India's claims. Pakistan on January 15, 2009 has declared that it has shut down five training camps of the outlawed *Jamaat-ud-Dawa* outfit. With this, Pakistan has admitted for the first time of the presence of terror facilities on its soil. It was possible only because of the international pressure built this time against Pakistan.

Undoubtedly, the current global security environment warrants the international community to forge an international consensus and a coalition to secure weapons of mass destruction. The commission report is very timely and relevant and it is anticipated that the recommendations made in the report would be taken seriously by the new administration in the US. Such detailed account would certainly help in understanding the complexities involved with the larger framework of the current international security calculus.

## References:

- 1 <http://www.preventwmd.gov/report/>
- 2 [http://www.preventwmd.gov/static/docs/report/worldatrisk\\_full.pdf](http://www.preventwmd.gov/static/docs/report/worldatrisk_full.pdf)