

Committee: DISEC 2

Topic: The question of implementing measures to ensure elimination of all chemical weapons

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Summary

Chemical weapons, along with other specialist weaponry, contribute greatly to conflict between nations. The control and subsequent elimination of chemical weapons is a key part of the United Nations' aim of fostering peace between member nations. For decades, the exploitation of chemical weapons by military and rebel groups has led to innumerable tragedies, despite their prohibition by the UN.

By focussing on previous mistakes made in the proliferation of chemical weapons, it is pertinent to explore possible avenues to creating a chemical weapon-free world. The implementation of solutions that eliminate the threat of chemical weapons must be carefully addressed, as a lack of control to proliferation may render member nations vulnerable.

Solutions to the chemical weapons problem should bear in mind that provision should be made for nations unwilling to admit their use of chemical weapons, or those unwilling to relinquish them, as well as member nations diametrically opposed to their use.

Definition of Key Terms

Chemical weapons= Chemical weapon. The general definition of a chemical weapon is a toxic chemical contained in a weapons delivery system, such as a bomb or artillery shell.

Disarmament= Disarmament is the body of international law that prohibits or regulates the production, stockpiling, and/or transfer of weapons.

Method of warfare= The term method of warfare generally describes the way in which weapons are used by parties to an armed conflict in the conduct of hostilities.

Proportionality in attacks= The international humanitarian law rule of proportionality in attacks holds that in the conduct of hostilities during an armed conflict parties to the conflict must not launch an attack against lawful military objectives if the attack 'may be expected' to result in excessive civilian harm compared to the 'concrete and direct military advantage anticipated'. If conducted internationally a disproportionate attack may constitute a war crime.

Riot control agents= Chemical irritants, or riot control agents (RCA's) as they are known under international law, such as tear gas or pepper spray, are used around the world by a range of different actors for both personal protection and 'crowd management'.

Toxic remnants of war= The term toxic remnants of war (TRW) is not defined under international law. It generally refers to toxic or radiological substances released as a result of military activities and which raise environmental or health concerns.

Nerve agents= Generally considered the deadliest of the different categories of chemical weapons, nerve agents can be inhaled or absorbed through the skin. Nerve agents inhibit the body's respiratory and cardiovascular capability by causing severe damage to the central nervous system, and can result in death. The most common nerve agents include Sarin, Soman and VX.

Blister agents= blister agents can come in forms of gas, aerosol, or liquid and cause severe burns and blistering of the skin. They can also cause complications to the respiratory system. Common forms of blister agents include sulphur mustard, nitrogen mustard, lewisite and phosgene oximine.

Choking agents= choking agents are chemical toxins that directly attack the body's respiratory system when inhaled and cause respiratory failure. Common forms of choking agents include phosgene, chlorine and chloropicrin.

Blood agents= blood agents interfere with the body's ability to use and transfer oxygen through the blood stream. Blood agents are generally inhaled and then absorbed into the blood stream. Common forms of blood agents include hydrogen chloride and cyanogen chloride.

Background Information

Chemical weapons were first majorly used in World War I by Germany releasing chlorine gas, at Ypres, Belgium in 1915. Manufactured as a weapon in the late 19th century, chemical and biological weapons began to be the focus of many nations in protecting and, most importantly, attacking enemy states. Chemical weapons over the centuries they have been active have caused arguably the most atrocious tragedies that modern history has to offer us.

Chlorine gas and sulphur mustard dominated genocides in many African countries during numerous civil wars. The atrocity of the Holocaust, is probably the most memorable case of chemical weapon use, and a more recent high-profile case is the alleged use of tear gas and other detrimental chemical weapons against civilians in Syria.

The use of chemical weapons by the military is prohibited by the UN, aside from independent governments being permitted to use minor blistering agents such as tear gas in order to control riots. These riot controlling agents are the most common, but it's the continued use of more major nerve agents that make this issue paramount in modern warfare.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Syria: The Syrian government is alleged to have used fatal nerve agents in their ongoing civil war, in which millions of civilian deaths are considered to be a result of chemical weapon use.

Japan: The use of chemical weapons was largely evident against China in WWII, most notably the atrocities that occurred on the 4th of October 1940, when Japan dropped plague-infected fleas into a small village in China, killing more than 2,000 residents in the first year of the plague infecting people in China. This is just one example of how Japan crucially developed chemical and biological warfare weapons.

Germany: Germany have a long-standing history of use of chemical and biological weapons, most notably fatal gas chambers used in WWII concentration camps introduced an example of mass genocide through the use of chemical weapons which was effective and an efficient weapon of war that would carry on being used throughout many historical wars.

Islamic State: Noted as one of the most recent terrorist groups to utilise chemical weapons as a key component to civil warfare in Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

North Korea: Information surrounding scientific development of chemical weapons within North Korea is difficult to access, therefore there is limited knowledge. Western countries only know exposed and public events from North Korea involving chemical weapons, alongside nuclear weapons North Korea has been known to develop and use chemical or biological weapons in order to maintain the level of societal control and intimidation among the citizens of North Korea.

Russia: Most memorable for citizens of the United Kingdom is the recent chemical weapon attack on ex-Soviet spy in Salisbury in England. Sergei Skripal and his daughter were murdered by the chemical weapon known as OPCW. This is a fatal example of Russia's capabilities to use these weapons abroad.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description
<u>April 1915</u>	Germany released Chlorine Gas from compressed cylinders at Ypres, Belgium during World War I. In conjunction with the increased use of Mustard Gas in World War I it is estimated that chemical weapons injured one million and killed 100,000 soldiers.
<u>Yemen War 1963-1967</u>	Egypt bombed the Yemeni villages killing 1,500 people
<u>Vietnam War 1960's</u>	The USA used major herbicides, such as Agent Orange and tear gas
<u>June 1994</u>	Japanese terrorist group Aum Shinrikyo used deadly Sarin in a terrorist attack in Matsumoto
<u>20th March 1995</u>	Tokyo Subway System terrorist attack killed 19 people and injured some 5,000
<u>2012-2018</u>	Syria, Assad regime, most notably the August 2013 attack in Ghouta killed more than 1,400 people. The Syrian government have been found responsible for numerous chemical weapons attacks including: April 2014, March 2015, March 2016, April 2017, IS also responsible for attacks in August 2015, September 2016.
<u>March 2018</u>	The UK accused Russia of using a Novichok agent to assassinate a former Russian agent, Sergei Skripal, and his daughter Yulia in the UK.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

Organisation for the prohibition of chemical weapons (OPCW)

United Nations office for disarmament affairs (UNODA)

University of Peace (UPEACE)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The first ever attempt to suppress the use of chemical weapons was in the 1899 Hague Peace Conference Declaration, which banned “the use of projectiles the sole object of which is the diffusion of asphyxiating or deleterious gases.”

1925 Geneva Protocol- Signed in 1925, at the conference for the supervision of the international trade in arms and ammunition. This declaration prohibits the use of chemical and biological weapons in the field of conflict. However, this protocol does not regulate the production of chemical weapons, instead just prohibiting the use. It therefore allows nations to reserve the right to retaliate with chemical weapons, it also does not regulate chemical weapons within internal conflicts.

Chemical Weapons Convention, bans the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, transfer and use of chemical weapons. It also calls for all possessor states to destroy their stockpiles safely. This declaration entered into force on the 29th April 1997 and has 193 members; there are only three nations that have not signed- Egypt, North Korea and South Sudan.

Possible Solutions

There are two key solutions to look at when understanding and writing a resolution on this issue:

1. The need to control the ingredients
2. Improve ethical standards in the chemical profession

Complete bans of chemicals are impossible due to the individual benefits of these chemicals in isolation. Cleaning products, food preservation and beauty products all use chemicals that go into chemical weapons.

Tightening security around articular commercial chemicals is a great place to start when looking for solutions. Surveillance and inspections of the producers and distributors of those chemicals that can be made into nerve agents are also a possibility.

Awareness of the misuse of chemicals is also vital in both chemical industry and academia. Ways of implementing this would be manuals and information booklets for stores selling sensitive chemicals, and more rigorous training for students of university laboratories that will experiment with these chemicals in order to prevent mistakes and broaden students' knowledge.

The key declaration of the Geneva protocol and the chemical weapons convention could be updated, and the mandate itself extended in order to cover all industrial parts of the chemical weapon formation and use. This could include: nations' research, stockpiling and the safe destroying of chemical weapons, which is already happening, but could be improved by regulation and greater transparency of states with what chemical weapons they have. This would enable better equipped nations to aid in safe disposal/ regulation of chemical weapons.

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