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Biological Warfare as Psychological Warfare

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Title: Biological Warfare as Psychological Warfare

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Abstract. This article describes the psychological benefits of an offensive biological warfare program.

Offensive biological warfare (BW) assets--as with all military assets--are intended to help achieve political objectives. This is the case whether the assets comprise research and development technologies for BW agents and delivery mechanisms, the stockpiling and/or deployment of agents and delivery mechanisms, operational BW planning capabilities, or the employment of BW agents. Irrespective of the physical consequences of BW agent employment, an offensive BW program--defined as engaging in any combination of the above--may be considered a variant of psychological warfare with the following benefits for its purveyor--whether nation-state or other political entity.

(1) A political entity can upgrade its comparative political power through an offensive BW program. Merely through others' knowledge of the program's existence, political objectives may be more easily obtained. (The same, of course, is the case for terrorism, other weapons of mass destruction, and significant amounts of exploitable natural resources from strategic minerals to agricultural commodities.) (2) A political entity may engage in negotiations to receive grants, loans, credits, and non-BW materiel in exchange for promising the termination of its offensive BW program. The entity may also agree to inspections varying in degree of comprehensiveness, obtrusiveness, and reactivity. Given the extreme difficulty in verifying the absence of an offensive BW program, the entity may end up with the best of both worlds: aid and a program. (3) The very threat of possible BW employment can have significant adverse effects on a potential military adversary that otherwise seems militarily superior. These effects include the (a) expense of research, development, purchasing, and fielding defensive BW immunizations, antidotes, protective equipment, and operational procedures; (b) the performance decrements caused by defensive BW practices when attempting to carry out necessary duties; and (c) stress, social cohesion, and moral shortfalls related to the idiosyncratic meanings that military personnel ascribe to BW--especially related to narcissistic wounding and psychological boundaries between self and other. (4) The threat of BW employment against an adversary's civilians and "home turf" can also foster the costs described in (3) as well as a myriad of decrements to a population's preferred life style, law and order, gross national product, and political stability. (5) An offensive BW program can serve as a significant deterrent against an adversary's military intervention. (6) A political entity may not possess any BW assets but may engage in disinformation programs to garner the benefits of being perceived to possess such assets.

There is a seventh and especially salient psychological benefit. Increasing globalization is facilitating the invasion of traditional cultures and values with mass commercialism and crass materialism and is easing the transport of products across borders. These two phenomena make BW an ever more attractive weapon against those perceived to represent the destroyers of one's psychological--viz., religious and ideological, integrity. The apocalyptic and eschatological notion of ending life as we know it with agents of life is one that the technology and progress enamored may find difficult to apperceive--as long as they're alive. (See Altman, L.K. (March 11, 1998). Smallpox vaccine urged to prepare for terrorist attacks. *The New York Times*, (<http://www.nytimes.com>); Preston, R. (March 9, 1998.) *Annals of warfare: The*

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bioweaponeers. *The New Yorker*, pp. 52-65; Rhode, E. (1997). Does mind have boundaries in the way that body does? *Journal of Melanie Klein and Object Relations*, 15, 77-89.) (Keywords: Biological Warfare, Psychological Warfare.)