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# Bioterrorism as a New Form of Global Threat: COVID19- Case

Dr. Samar Khamlichi



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 Eipss.EG  Eis\_EG

TURKEY- ISTANBUL

Bahçelievler, Yenibosna Mh 29 Ekim Cad. No: 7 A2 Blok 3. Plaza D: 64  
Tel/Fax: +90 212 227 2262 E-Mail: [info@eis-eg.org](mailto:info@eis-eg.org)

## Bioterrorism as a New Form of Global Threat: COVID-19 Case

Dr. Samar Khamlichi

### Abstract

Bioterrorism can be defined as a set of deliberate release of biological agents or toxins in order to harm or cause death to people, animals, or plants, with the intention of intimidating a government or a civilian population or to compel them to serve political or social objectives. A concept that is not new in the history of international relations, it returns today as a subject of debate with the appearance in early December 2019 in Wuhan, China, of a virus called COVID-19 (Coronavirus). The assumption that the virus was made in laboratories is possible, but remains unconfirmed in the absence of scientific basis. However, it is clear that the economic and political interests generated by this global crisis exist. In any event, whether manufactured or not, the Coronavirus constitutes a new form of terrorism, given the terror that this virus causes on the population and the consequences for the economic development of the affected States.

### Keywords:

Bioterrorism; COVID-19; world order; interests; political; social; economic; China; coronavirus; Wuhan; terror; laboratories; manufacturing; biological weapon; war; history.

### Introduction

With the same purpose as the ideology of terrorism, that of causing terror and assassination, bioterrorism is defined as being a set of biological agents dissemination or toxins in order to harm people, animals or plants or cause their death, with the intention of intimidating a government or a civilian population or of forcing them to serve political or social objectives. There is a multiplicity of overlapping definitions in terms of means and intent to provoke terrorism. However, we consider that the existence of the element "intention" is not necessarily obligatory to qualify an act of bioterrorism. Our hypothesis rests rather on the result which is in our opinion linked to terror. Indeed, whether it is a simple innocent or accidental transmission of the virus, or a desired manufacturing and propagation, this operation is the subject of bioterrorism, insofar as it generates terror in the population and the affected States.

From this assumption, we consider that there is a new form of terrorist threat that the world community must face, with the appearance of a virus called COVID-19 in Wuhan in China, in December 2019. This virus has spread around the world quickly and worryingly. Without scientific basis, no one can confirm that the virus is manufactured in laboratories to be diffused thereafter everywhere in the world, but what is a certainty is the terror caused.

The objective of this work is to try to understand how the spread of COVID-19 can be a new form of global terrorist threat, what we can learn from history of bioterrorism, what the different hypotheses about COVID-19 are, and finally, why it should be considered as human, social and economic terror.

## I. History of bioterrorism: Two significant periods

Bioterrorism is not a recent phenomenon, but it has been used frequently by the great powers. Two historical stages mark the history of bioterrorism, namely: the period before Jesus Christ in the 18th Century **(1)**; and the era from the 18th to the 20th Century **(2)**. Biological wars during these periods were very frequent through pollution by biological agents or by the use of infectious diseases. Indeed, the absence of international law and therefore of rules and principles of ethics in international relations have caused these powers to have resorted to these biological wars.

### 1. Before Jesus Christ until the 18th Century: toxic weapons and water pollution

Before Jesus Christ, the use of poison arrows in soaking rotten corpses was a well-known practice in wars at the time. Another tactic practiced by the Greeks was the pollution of the wells of enemy lands with the corpses of animals. It was then re-employed by General Johnson during the American Civil War of 1863 called "the American Civil War". Added to this is a turning to wine, when Spanish soldiers poisoned French soldiers with wine contaminated with the blood of lepers.

### 2. From the 18th to the 20th Century: a turning point towards the enlargement of usable agents

Since the development of bacteriology in the 18th century, there has been a turning point towards the spread of infectious diseases to achieve political goals. We can cite the following historical events:

In 1763, blankets infected with the smallpox virus were distributed against the North American Indians under the orders of the English commander of the armed forces in Pennsylvania.

In 1915, during the First World War, the Italians accused Germany of having used and spread cholera in Italy.

In 1929, the Soviet Union established a research center related to biological weapons. Two years later, the Japanese military also established three biological warfare centers.

From 1940 to 1944, Japan launched in 11 Chinese cities cluster bombs and porcelain filled with plague virus, but also fleas and rice seeds infected with the virus to facilitate the spread via rodents.

From 1941 to 1942, at the time of the second world war, after having created centers of research in biological weapons, Great Britain tried the dispersion of the anthrax disease on the island of Gruinard in the northwest of Scotland, this island remained in quarantine until the year 1986, it is since disinfected.

In 1952, the United States was accused of having spread the cholera disease during the Korean War (between North Korea and South Korea).

In the United States, in the 1950s and 1960s, and in cooperation with Canada and the United Kingdom, scientists from the Fort Detrick biological weapons program conducted a series of tests to determine how easy it would be exposing large numbers of people to deadly bacteria. According to the Department of Homeland Security, containers of non-toxic bacteria were planted on the New York subway, bacteria were secretly pumped into the Pentagon's ventilation system, and clouds of bacteria were released in San Francisco. And the germs were intended to infect but not to kill humans; they were tested on conscientious objectors in the army.

## II. COVID-19: biological agent with terrorist threat

### Synthetic scheme\*



\*Author's diagram.

Since its appearance in the city of Wuhan, capital of Hubei province in December 2019, COVID-19 remains a mysterious virus that even the World Health Organization could not give exact information on its origin and its modes propagation, with sometimes contradictory advice, such as wearing a protective mask. Indeed, in addition to biologists and virologists, researchers in international relations, political sciences and social sciences have been challenged on this biological agent, which in our opinion is characterized by ambiguity, speed of transmission, and diversity hypotheses about its origins.

### 1. Ambiguity and speed of transmission

Since its discovery, COVID-19 has been considered as an ambiguous virus for researchers of all disciplines, WHO and governments. Indeed, we have noticed that there is a lot of controversy on the transmission mode of the virus between different European, American, Canadian, Chinese virologists and biologists; but also controversies over the treatments to adopt, the time of spread of the virus in the world and the possibility of developing a vaccine. Best laboratories from developed countries in scientific, technological, and industrial research, are unable to unify their opinions on the most mysterious virus of the 21st century!

In addition to its ambiguity, COVID-19 is a virus that spreads very quickly. As of April 18, 2020, it has resulted in a total of 146,088 deaths worldwide, with 2,160,207 confirmed cases. Consequently, the risk of mortality is serious especially since the virus does not have a vaccine nor yet effective treatments at 100% and the regions most affected with very increased mortality rates are Europe and America, in comparison with other regions of the planet (see table below).

#### Spread of COVID-19 by region\*

Regions	Confirmed cases	Death
EUROPE	1 086 889	97 201
AMERICAS	784 272	35 742
WESTERN PACIFIC	129 256	5598

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN	120 683	5784
SOUTH EAST ASIA	25 291	1134
AFRICA	13 104	616

\*WHO, 18-04-2020.

Hence, we notice that the virus has spread fairly quickly all over the world and this can be explained by the international mobility of goods and people, especially by air and sea, and despite the cancellation of flights in a good number of countries, the virus continues to be transmitted with an inflection towards the local population.

## 2. Diversity of hypotheses

Besides the ambiguity of the Corona virus, the speed of its transmission, the hypotheses about its origins are diverse and controversial. We deduce the following hypotheses:

- Someone on the Huanan seafood market in Wuhan was infected with a virus from an animal (bat, pangolin, or snake) (official statement by China);
- The virus accidentally spread from a virology laboratory in Wuhan;
- The virus was allegedly introduced into China by the US military (conspiracy theory);
- The virus was created by Chinese researchers (conspiracy theory).

### Transmitted by an animal

According to this hypothesis, the virus was transmitted from an animal to humans, whether it is a bat, pangolin, or snake, international researchers consider this hypothesis to be plausible. Investigations have shown that bats and pangolins are the only animal species that can harbor coronaviruses that are close to Sars-Cov2, however, the chain of transmission has yet to be determined. This hypothesis therefore remains relative, which still lacks scientific verification.

### Accidentally released from a P4 laboratory

An American hypothesis considers COVID-19 to be a virus accidentally released from a P4 laboratory in Wuhan. It should be remembered that this laboratory was created in 2015 by the institute of virology administered by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, it is among the best P4 laboratories in the world and collaborates with France, but also with the American laboratory of the 'University of Texas. The goal of its creation is to better understand and control pandemics and epidemics. However, investigations by the French and American intelligence services revealed that China has not built a single P4 laboratory as it had promised to the Americans and the French, this lack of transparency according to their claims has raised doubts on the China's intention to create biological weapons. This hypothesis is possible but with no concrete elements and no scientific basis, especially since relations between the United States and China have recently been strained (economic cold war), ditto for France panicked by the economic boom of Chinese dragon.

### Introduced to China by the US military (conspiracy theory)

This is a hypothesis from a Chinese diplomat in March 2020, in full tension between the United States and China. Diplomat Zhao Lijian tweeted that the Coronavirus was introduced to China by the US military with the intention of spreading it around the country. This hypothesis like the previous one remains without scientific basis and without any concrete proof.

### Created by Chinese researchers (conspiracy theory)

According to the professor of international law at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Francis Boyle, specialist in questions of terrorism and biological warfare, he affirmed in an interview given on January 30, 2020 to Geopolitics & Empire, that the COVID-19 is a biological weapon created by China and that the World Health Organization is aware of! Professor Boyle also discusses the exclusive Great Game India report on the Coronavirus. The report discussed how Chinese biological control officers working at the Canadian laboratory in Winnipeg were involved in smuggling Coronavirus to the laboratory in Wuhan from where it was allegedly leaked. Moreover, it should be noted that China has been criticized more particularly by the United States for delay and lack of sufficient information on the modalities of transmission and the measures to be taken to fight against this virus. The hypothesis that the coronavirus was created by China and the suspicions raised above are still to be investigated

in particular by the specialized agencies of the United Nations, given their neutrality around the question, in order to be able to assert or refute these claims.

### III. Economic, human and social terror

Since the spread of the virus around the world, the world's population has suddenly faced an enigma. A virus that nobody knows the origin; scientific researchers with controversial statements; job loss and a large number of deaths. As for governments, the world's major powers have shown their weakness in fighting the virus. There was therefore a choice for them between the evolution of their economies based on heavy industry and total containment to protect the population. Italy was alone in the face of the virus with thousands of deaths and without any mode of urgent support from the European Union. A return to favoring the nation state is a milestone in contemporary history. As for the United States, COVID-19 marked the weakness of the health system and their weakness in the face of the thousands of deaths per day, which is of course explained by the choice to protect the national economy at the expense of the people, given the measures very small catch by President Trump. This pandemic should change the world order, it should be remembered that in 1315, the plague put an end to the feudal system in Great Britain. COVID-19 is a virus which has therefore created psychological and social terror in the world population, and economic terror in States anticipating a new economic and financial crisis on a global scale.

### Conclusion

To conclude, we can deduce that the history of bioterrorism is not recent, but began before the period of Jesus Christ. In addition, a first remark stands out that bioterrorism manifested itself clearly during wars, through the spread of infectious diseases from the 18th century. These practices were finally denounced by the international community by the adoption and entry into force in 1928 of the Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, usually called the Geneva Protocol, this protocol makes part of customary international law. However, the shortcomings of the protocol and the desire to also prohibit the production and stockpiling of biological weapons, led States to sign in 1972, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction, usually referred to as the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). The protocol and the convention explain the will of contemporary states to prohibit the use

of biological agents in terrorism. However, today we are witnessing the reappearance of a bioterrorist enemy in the 21st century, given its ambiguity, its speed of transmission all over the world and its various hypotheses around its origins. COVID-19 remains a virus of unknown origin, with adverse economic, social, and human consequences. Without confirming the hypotheses mentioned, it is for us a biological agent with a "terrorist" threat because it has terrorized most states and populations around the world with lasting consequences. The bioterrorist threat started by the Coronavirus constitutes a new form of international terrorism which the world community should face. Under the aegis of the United Nations, in particular, the United Nations control of virology laboratories should be strengthened. At the national level, States should take more effective measures to better control scientific laboratories to avoid any attempt to transfer biological agents to terrorist organizations. It should be recalled that in 1989, the American intelligence services estimated that for a large-scale approach on a civilian population, it is necessary to spend \$2,000 per km<sup>2</sup> on the use of conventional weapons, \$800 with nuclear weapons, \$600 with chemical weapons and '01 dollar' for the use of biological weapons!

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