



WMD Proliferation: Reforming the Security Sector to Meet the Threat

By Fred Schreier

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Reviewed by

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Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) remains a critical consideration in the security strategies of many countries. Once the property of only a few large states, the reality of WMD today is that some small countries and non-state actors seek them to bolster their influence and perceived credibility, possibly by committing horrific acts with them.

In his preface, Fred Schreier states a relevant and timely thesis focused on how a state's security sector should reform "to counter the preeminent threats posed by the unholy trinity of proliferation of WMD, terrorism, and organized crime." Schreier, a consultant of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, has both the academic background and practical defense-related experience to examine this challenge. He tackles his thesis by organizing his book into two parts: Part I, "The WMD

Threat," and Part II, "Reforming the Security Sector." Schreier is successful in describing the threat within the context of his proposed "unholy trinity," especially in conveying the complexity of the international security environment. He is less successful in offering solutions that are unique to WMD proliferation, and while he advocates logical approaches, his recommendations lean more toward business as usual rather than true reform.

Part I provides appropriate background on the various forms and technical nature of WMD, with chapters on nuclear, chemical, biological, and radiological weapons. Schreier argues that the goal of "new terrorists" is to pursue maximum damage and casualties, something avoided in the past to prevent negative international backlash. He connects this new paradigm to the ability, motivation, and willingness of international organized crime to facilitate the proliferation of WMD, thus providing persuasive evidence of his unholy trinity. Part I both describes specific WMD threats and touches on some of the dilemmas governments face in protecting citizens from attack, accurately attributing attacks, controlling dual-use technologies (such as medical radiology), and disarming the WMD of traditional military powers. The concise presentation of these subjects serves as a broad primer for the novice or as a quick review for readers already familiar with WMD. In either case, the endnotes offer a wealth of details and sources for further research.

Schreier dedicates most of Part II to addressing security measures required to meet the threat he describes. He notes that the intricate nature of less predictable menaces has forced states to shift their strategy from risk avoidance to risk management. He examines the National Security Council and its support-

ing committees as an example of an appropriate strategic decisionmaking construct. He then analyzes how the intelligence services should transform to meet the new threat, characterized by its clandestine nature, privatization of violence, exploitation of asymmetry, and transnational reach and impact. During the Cold War, intelligence services focused on solving puzzles—pursuing certain answers—but now the focus must be on solving mysteries—pursuing uncertain or changing answers. Parts of these answers are often embodied in resolutions and treaties; Schreier discusses how countries' legislative bodies in turn should translate such international agreements into domestic law. To be fully effective, all this must be in concert with national interests and policy; he outlines a structure with four strategy pillars—defeat, deter, diminish, and defend.

Turning to the modern security sector writ large, the author effectively imparts its intricacy to the reader, but diverges in his discussion on law enforcement, border management, and criminal activity without explicit connection to the WMD theme. In a chapter on homeland defense, he advocates approaches that leverage systems analysis and integration as well as private-public partnership, but unfortunately provides limited details that do not address WMD-unique issues. Schreier's final discourse analyzes five obstacles to international and interagency collaboration and advocates methods to overcome them, including a move from bilateral to multilateral intelligence-sharing. While he provides supporting facts, they are limited to applications in well-established fora in Western Europe (such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and European Union) and do not address the crucial issue of how to balance collaboration with

sovereignty. A complete approach to the unholy trinity threat must include partnerships with countries on all continents.

In summary, Part II makes a good case for holistic approaches to security challenges, emphasizing collaboration at all levels to identify and address multifaceted threats such as WMD proliferation. However, the recommendations are largely generic with few specific WMD implications, and they do not address the full scope of the problem—such as what resources are available, what other security issues are competing for them, and how these needs are balanced and prioritized. At times, the text is difficult to read due to choppy organization and peripheral themes that detract from the content. The experienced security professional may want to skim these chapters and read the notes and bibliography in detail.

A reader who expects this book to reveal radically new methods for the international security sector to meet the threat of WMD proliferation will be disappointed. True reform suggests a different way of doing things, perhaps focused on the way the threat has evolved. This book offers mostly traditional bureaucratic "top down/bottom up" solutions that may work given unlimited time, resources, and a cooperative foe. However, the details provided may be useful for a reader who desires to gain an appreciation for the complexity of such challenges, or requires a contextual foundation to guide and inspire brainstorming toward new approaches to address WMD proliferation or similar security quandaries. Schreier's book may hold considerable merit for such an audience.

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