



## Discarding the Cold War WMD Construct

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More than a decade ago, the Bush administration released a *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction* that detailed how the U.S. Government would protect the United States, U.S. forces, and allies from adversarial nations' and sub-state groups' use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). This strategy was the culmination of several policy initiatives. These initiatives included the Defense Counterproliferation Initiative, started in 1993 to develop military concepts to counter non-nuclear weapon states who might use chemical or biological weapons against U.S. forces; Department of Defense (DoD) programs to respond to terrorist use of WMD within the United States, initiated after the Nunn-Lugar-Domenici "Defense Against WMD Act" of 1996; and U.S. homeland security efforts developed in response to the 9/11 attack and anthrax-filled letters in 2001.

This strategy represented the first national-level "post-Cold War" policy document that identified the U.S. Government's ways and means toward protecting U.S. security interests from adversaries using nuclear, biological, or chemical (NBC) weapons. During most of the Cold War, WMD concerns focused around the potential conflict between the United States and the former Soviet Union, where it was expected that NBC weapons would be a feature of European, Middle Eastern, and North-East Asian theaters. Following the end of the Cold War, increasing proliferation of NBC weapons by other nations required a review of how the United States would deter and respond to threats of use against U.S. security interests.

The 1990s also featured growing concern over the threat of sub-state groups using NBC weapons against U.S. cities. In 1995, Aum Shinrikyo's use of sarin nerve agent in the Tokyo subway gave rise to a Presidential Decision Directive on Counterterrorism that would define federal responsibilities to manage the consequences of a domestic terrorist incident using NBC weapons.<sup>1</sup> In response to questioning at his confirmation hearing in 1997, Defense Secretary William Cohen stated that he believed "the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction present[ed] the gravest threat that the world has ever known."<sup>2</sup> In 2002, President George W. Bush warned about the need to con-

front the threat of "terror cells and outlaw regimes building weapons of mass destruction."<sup>3</sup> In 2009, President Barack Obama called nuclear terrorism "the most immediate and extreme threat to global security."<sup>4</sup> There was a palpable, if not clearly evidenced, concern that WMD was an increasing global threat within a multi-polar international system.

The term *WMD* in and of itself is a complex and sensitive political construct, in that during the Cold War, it had a precise meaning that allowed for a technical community to discuss how nations should view a particular set of armaments (that is to say, to relegate arms control activities). Over the past 15 years, various other policy agents have deliberately expanded the term to address other threat-actors and hazards for the purpose of addressing issues other than arms control. This trend has resulted in increasingly vague and broad statements about the U.S. Government's position on countering WMD threats and a corresponding lack of clarity on the ways and means by which the U.S. Government pursues its policy objectives. Developing a new national strategy – or national military strategy – on countering WMD will not aid in clarifying this position.

### — Perspectives on WMD —

In 1948, the United Nations defined WMD as "atomic explosive weapons, radioactive material weapons, lethal chemical and biological weapons, and any weapons ... comparable in destructive effect."<sup>5</sup> It was necessary to define these weapons as unconventional so as to distinguish them in the laws of war from conventional munitions, thus allowing one to correctly evaluate the actions of nations on the field of combat. Throughout most of the twentieth century, the primary security concern was that the larger nations would use these munitions to cause mass casualties in major population centers – thus the attempts to control the number, type, and use of these munitions to reduce the possibility of such an occurrence. The term *WMD* was properly an arms control term used by diplomats and the non-proliferation community, not an operational term of art used by military leaders and defense strategists, and not a term used by counter-terrorist analysts.

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Prior to 2001, there was an opportunity to pull back from the reflexive term *WMD terrorism* when the Gilmore Commission suggested, in its first report on homeland security, that it was more correct to use the term *CBRN terrorism* than the “more commonly used, yet potentially misleading term” *WMD*.<sup>6</sup> The Commission was rightly concerned that the over-exaggeration of the threat might lead to poor policy implementation. This caution was promptly ignored after 9/11 and the subsequent mailing of anthrax-filled letters to members of Congress and the media, which gave rise to images of Al Qaeda attacking U.S. cities with NBC weapons. When the Bush administration inflated the threat of WMD in its justification for invading Iraq in 2003, the rhetorical statement that “it was only a question of when, not if” a sub-state group would use WMD became firmly fixed into political wisdom. Although sub-state groups cannot hope to match nations when it comes to developing WMD capabilities, people who should know better do not seem to differentiate between the two security threats.

Dr. Seth Carus identified six different categories of WMD definitions in his seminal monograph,<sup>7</sup> tracing its start in arms control lexicon, evolution into defense terminology, and eventual adoption by law enforcement. His analysis suggested that, for the most part, there was a common core understanding between the military and diplomatic definitions of WMD. The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 added high-yield explosives to the definition and removed any distinction between industrial chemicals and chemical warfare agents and between biological organisms and biological warfare agents. Additionally, quantity (one gram or 50 kilograms) is not considered in defining a WMD. Although this usage is primarily limited to the Department of Justice, it makes it more difficult to have a common lexicon and fruitful interagency discussions.

In a recent article in *Security Studies*, Michelle Bentley identifies multiple instances during the Cold War where people have deliberately defined WMD with certain political ambitions in mind – notably, for the purposes of arms control, either to constrain other nations or to reduce the potential suffering of noncombatants being attacked. The grouping of nuclear weapons with “other WMD” was deliberate, despite contemporary arguments that chemical and biological warfare agents are not sufficiently destructive to be called WMD.<sup>8</sup> One cannot address nuclear weapons irrespective of other weapons – what good is it to restrict nuclear weapons if that measure might allow nations to develop other mass casualty weapons? Of course, nuclear weapons remain the primary concern to national security interests because of their unique and significant weapons effects, but the overall desire of the arms control community was to restrict, and eventually to eliminate, all forms of unconventional weapons from future conflicts. Thus the term *WMD* to address a nation’s NBC weapon programs made sense.

Bentley argues that fixation on a narrow definition of WMD within the original context of the 1948 UN definition is an error. She suggests that the security context has changed over time, due to the increased concerns over radiological weapons (largely ignored throughout the Cold War), political use of the term prior to and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and the deliberate inclusion of conventional explosives (CBRNE). Given a lack of consensus over its past definition, she believes that we

should accept this practice, that conceptual change is necessary to better national security discourse. She does admit that arms control advocates require precise definitions if one is to be successful in exploiting strategic discussions, but there are now more extensive questions within the broader range of security studies.<sup>9</sup>

As for future perspectives on warfare, there are several reports that attempt to identify what WMD challenges U.S. forces may face. In 1997, the Defense Science Board (DSB) called for a change in U.S. strategic deterrence policy from one of deterrence of attack to one of managing “the proliferation and possible use of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction” by “rogue states.”<sup>10</sup> A DSB report predicted that competitors in 2010-2020 would exploit WMD technology to develop capabilities that would neutralize forward ports, bases, and prepositioned assets, in addition to causing heavy casualties. The report also warned against the ease of infiltration of “terrorist cells armed with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons” into the homeland, requiring the need to manage the consequences of a CBRN incident.

The 2008 Joint Operating Environment (JOE) report, developed by U.S. Joint Forces Command, discusses a “second nuclear age” where multiple nuclear-weapon states have or are developing the capability to project nuclear weapons far beyond the borders of their immediate neighbors. The JOE warns about the potential use of biological weapons by nations or sub-state groups, noting that “such weapons are becoming easier to fabricate – certainly easier than nuclear weapons – and under the right conditions, they could produce mass casualties, economic disruption, and terror on the scale of a nuclear strike.” Information to develop biological weapons “is widely available, and the costs for their production remain modest, easily within reach of small groups or even individuals.”<sup>11</sup> The JOE is silent about the threat of chemical weapons.

The National Intelligence Council’s *Global Trends 2030: Alternate Worlds* report, released in December 2012, mirrors the JOE’s projection of an increasingly multipolar international system wracked by demographic challenges, economic crises, critical resource shortfalls, regional instability, and intra-state conflicts. It views only nuclear weapons as the potential game-changer, where Russia, Pakistan, Iran, and North Korea seek out nuclear weapons to compensate for political and security weaknesses. The report’s authors see the chance of non-state actors using WMD as increasing over time, but do not address biological or chemical weapons.<sup>12</sup>

These reports<sup>13</sup> fail to offer insightful and practical analysis on the future of unconventional weapons. Instead of realistically considering how state leaders and sub-state groups might consider the use of unconventional weapons in this future world, the reports lapse back into Cold War stereotypes of nuclear deterrence and vague concerns about nuclear terrorism. Given the discussion on technology advances and the challenges facing emerging states, these reports should have emphasized the increasing affordability of conventional munitions, to include remote piloted drones, cruise missiles, heavy weapons, miniaturized electronics and power sources, precision-guided munitions, and advanced explosives.<sup>14</sup> One can already see examples of “hybrid warfare” in the Middle East and Africa, where irregular forces have obtained standard military gear to combat

conventional forces. They are not, however, trying to develop or acquire NBC weapons.

### — Too Many Strategies —

One can assume that the U.S. Government does desire a common understanding of what WMD are, given that they are identified by nearly every president's administration since the Cold War began as a strategic threat to U.S. security interests. If one believes that sub-state groups are seeking access to WMD capabilities, then the involvement of executive agencies other than the DoD in the discussion should be anticipated. One can also assume that DoD and the State Department will have the preponderance of interest in WMD, given the historical use (or threatened use) of NBC weapons on the battlefield and its place in arms control negotiations. The expansion of homeland security concerns about WMD terrorism has displaced the traditional emphasis on WMD use in major combat operations, resulting in the development of new guidance, directives, and lexicon being imposed on the traditional WMD technical specialists, who are ill-prepared to address such topics. The inability of the interagency community to agree on a standard WMD definition, for instance, has resulted in multiple national strategies to guide how the United States addresses the challenges of unconventional weapons, all using the same term "WMD" but meaning different things to different agencies. As a result, there are conflicting views and unclear concepts on how the interagency, and DoD in particular, is expected to address WMD challenges to U.S. security interests.

Both Bentley and Carus accurately note that the original 1948 definition of WMD has been changed in context of the current national security discourse. The 2002 *National Strategy to Combat WMD* and the 2006 *National Military Strategy to Combat WMD* failed to offer clarification or guidance as to this broader context. The 2002 *National Strategy* had its roots in the 2001 *Counterproliferation Strategy*, released by the Joint Staff to outline how military forces would protect themselves from adversarial nations who had chemical and biological weapons. As the *Counterproliferation Strategy* was being drafted, the DoD was examining ways to support federal, state, and local responses to domestic CBRN terrorism, and added that policy objective to the strategy without much regard for potential resource implications. The DoD champion of the *National Military Strategy* is the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Security Affairs.

The *National Strategy* and *National Military Strategy* both took a bad misstep by adding homeland security to the counterproliferation concept, due to concerns fueled by 9/11 and the remote possibility of Al Qaeda attacking the United States with unconventional weapons. The Defense Science Board and others have appropriately criticized the strategies for attempting to use nonproliferation and counterproliferation concepts to address homeland security challenges. A concept intended to protect U.S. forces operating against a known adversarial nation during wartime will not work for U.S. forces supporting a federal agency's response to a domestic CBRN incident. The focus on the weapon system and weapon effects without context of the actual operational use was (and remains) a significant flaw.

The proliferation of national strategies since 2002 has not improved the discourse. The 2007 *National Strategy for Homeland Security* directs efforts to prevent WMD terrorism by denying terrorists and terrorist-related weapons and materials entry in the country and across international borders. The Department of Justice uses US Code Title 18 to define WMD as "any amount and any type of CBR material or explosive used to threaten or harm a person." The 2013 *DoD Strategy for Homeland Defense and Defense Support of Civil Authorities* draws its authorities from Presidential Decision Directive 8 (PPD-8) *National Preparedness*, and is championed by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs. It focuses on supporting law enforcement to prevent terrorist CBRN incidents and supporting the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with response forces if a domestic incident occurs.

The 2011 *National Strategy for Counter-Terrorism* has a much shorter discussion on preventing terrorist development, acquisition, and use of WMD than the 2006 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* that it replaced. Both emphasize international cooperation to deter, target, and disrupt terrorist networks that engage in WMD-related activities. It also directs the reader to PPD-8 and includes acts of terrorism with cyber attacks, pandemics, and catastrophic natural disasters. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict is the DoD lead agent.

The 2009 *National Strategy to Counter Biological Threats* and 2012 *National Strategy for Biosurveillance* make no distinction between the deliberate release of biological warfare agents and naturally-occurring biological diseases. In fact, the biosurveillance strategy goes one step further in calling for a national surveillance effort for all WMD threats, including emerging infectious diseases, pandemics, agricultural threats, and food-borne illnesses. It should go without saying that preventing, protecting against, and responding to the thousands of naturally-occurring biological diseases and environmental hazards is very different than preventing, protecting against, and responding to nation or sub-state groups developing biological warfare agents. However, many public health advocates and bioterrorism "experts" believe that there ought to be a common approach, although the players, authorities, and budgets are distinctly separate. The Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Health and Human Services have significant responsibilities to develop national and international biosurveillance capabilities and are considered the lead Federal agents. The DoD lead is the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

Executive orders, presidential directives, and congressional laws address WMD threats with varied definitions. Annually, copious speeches and conferences focus on WMD issues, many of which mean "nuclear" rather than to address all WMD. Numerous DoD directives, instructions, and publications use different acronyms and definitions for WMD, changing context every few years. It isn't surprising that now many Federal and DoD agencies address WMD issues within their portfolios. The challenge is whether one can expect a single national strategy – or national military strategy – to address the broad range of differing threat-sources, range of responsibilities, and competition against other national security issues within each portfolio,

merely because of a commonality in the hazard presented. The question is not “What is WMD?” as much as it is “What do you mean by countering WMD? In what context?”

### — Examining the Broader Context —

Carl von Clausewitz is credited with the idea that the nature of war is unchanging, espousing that war features three dominating tendencies: primordial violence and passion, chance and probability, and subordination or rationalization as an instrument of policy. Michael Handel notes that while Clausewitz may have correctly identified those unchanging aspects of war, “in all other respects technology has permeated and irreversibly changed every aspect of warfare.”<sup>15</sup> As weapon systems and methods of warfare evolve, and societal culture changes, we similarly must adjust our views on national security. Chemical and biological weapons have evolved over the past century, and so will nuclear weapons. If one believes that total war scenarios between superpower nations is a relic of the Cold War and (as the JOE and Global Trends reports suggest) a multipolar international society more reliant on advanced technologies will be the new norm, then one ought to appreciate the possibility that NBC weapons will not be solely employed as “weapons of mass destruction.”

It is an instinctive Cold War reflex to associate chemical and biological weapons use, in particular, primarily with causing indiscriminate mass casualties amongst civil populations. Unconventional weapons were useful in the twentieth century because of the particular technology and culture of the times, when nations stood up massive forces to hurl against their adversaries. Unconventional weapons, if used in these total war scenarios, could cause significant operational effects against massed forces or strategically against an adversary’s cities. Conventional wisdom suggested that when nation survival was on the line, the regime would resort to using WMD; and yet, that didn’t happen in Iraq (1991 or 2003), Libya (2011), or Syria (2012). This is not to say that there will not be a few states that continue to seek out and develop NBC weapons. The appeal of unconventional weapons is that if used with conventional weapons, they serve as “combat multipliers” to allow a more rapid conclusion of military operations. They can act as a strategic deterrent against aggressive neighbors or invading foreign forces.

Iraq’s use of chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s was illustrative of the significant change from the “Fulda Gap” scenario of the Cold War. Iraq’s military forces used chemical weapons in conjunction with combined arms maneuvers against relatively untrained and ill-equipped Iranian ground forces, resulting in significant operational victories that led to Iran’s calling for a cease-fire. While there was concern that Iraq might load chemical warheads on its ballistic missiles, there were, in fact, no incidents of chemical Scud missile attacks against Iran. Iraq’s potential use of chemical and biological weapons to blunt U.S. military operations caused widespread concern when the United States went to war against Iraq in 1990, and again in 2003. Despite Iraq’s battlefield losses to superior U.S. forces, Saddam Hussein did not order the use of unconventional weapons. It remains unclear whether Hussein was deterred by ambiguous warnings of massive retaliation, or

just knew when to give up. However, the Cold War paradigm was clearly being replaced by something different.

Similarly, sub-state groups may believe that CBR hazards will give them some degree of notoriety in their campaign against a government, but are only capable of using them in small-scale, singular attacks causing few casualties. These actors do not and will not have the capability to cause mass casualties equivalent to a nation’s offensive WMD program. Yes, there is always the possibility of a “black swan” where a sub-state group acquires and decides to use a single nuclear weapon or large quantities of anthrax in a single incident. These possibilities need to be considered, risks mitigated, and additional resiliency developed. However, the possible use of CBR hazards by sub-state groups does not, in and of itself, suggest a mass casualty event or an existential threat to the U.S. Government.

In the Aum Shinriko attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995, the common belief is that more than five thousand Japanese citizens were affected by the nerve agent, sarin. More accurate analysis shows that the five attacks resulted in 12 deaths and short-term medical effects for less than a thousand, many of which were unprotected emergency responders rushing into the contaminated areas. The traditional wisdom is that the significant increase in technology and spread of information across the globe has only increased the possibility of a sub-state group obtaining the tools to develop chemical and biological weapons – thus the general threat is greater today than 20 years ago. However, as Dr. Milton Leitenberg notes, developing these weapons is not easy, and in context, even biological weapons are not one of the most pressing problems that we face today.<sup>16</sup>

Unconventional weapons will increasingly be used in select situations where conventional weapons do not provide enough leverage to achieve operational goals; for example, the limited and discrete use of chemical weapons in support of military operations in Yemen in 1968, Iran in the 1980s, Afghanistan and Laos in the 1970s and early 1980s, and Syria in 2013. Biological warfare agents were not employed throughout the Cold War, and contemporary use has been relatively limited to extremists using crude distillations of ricin and a large number of “white powder” hoaxes. Although the impact of natural infectious diseases remains a constant on an increasingly mobile society, the overwhelming majority of infectious diseases lack sufficient lethality and hardness for storage and dissemination to be good warfare agents. Overwrought concerns about individuals using “do-it-yourself” laboratories to replicate smallpox virus or avian flu have no basis of rationale. Biowarfare and biosecurity are not synonyms.

For all of the attempts to control the proliferation of nuclear-related technologies, nuclear-weapon states continue to modernize both their nuclear weapons and delivery systems. Nuclear power technology continues to grow. Non-strategic nuclear weapons – distinguished by the delivery systems that transport them rather than the low-yield effects that one might expect from the term “tactical nukes” – continue to remain outside arms control conventions. Russia, Pakistan, and North Korea have all publicly declared that they will consider the operational use of nuclear weapons against invading forces. Increasingly, one sees the consideration of nuclear weapons for purposes

other than strategic attacks, under the assumption that strategic escalation can, in fact, be controlled.

There are theoretical discussions about “fourth-generation” nuclear weapons that would feature pure fusion explosives with yields in the range of 1 to 100 tons equivalent of TNT.<sup>17</sup> These relatively low-yield nuclear weapons would fall far below the scale of “weapons of mass destruction,” rising slightly above the impact of the largest conventional high-explosive weapons. Because these new nuclear weapons may not require fissile material, it will significantly complicate current arms control treaty regimes and export agreements. As research on this particular technology continues, it could result in a new arms race and lower the nuclear use threshold. Given these technological advances and changes in societal culture, the Cold War term *WMD* fails to hold any value outside of arms control discussions.

### — DoD’s Joint Operating Concepts —

The prominent players in the U.S. Government’s nonproliferation and counterproliferation communities find themselves increasingly being drawn into homeland security and counterterrorism discussions. This proliferation of definitions across the range of military operations reduces our ability to collectively agree on national security positions and agendas that address unconventional weapons. It is not that an authoritative definition cannot be developed; rather, there are those who deliberately offer definitions that differ from the traditional term so as to advance particular agendas or to satisfy various advocacies. There is no clearer example than the disjointed approach seen in the DoD’s six Joint Operating Concepts (JOCs) – deterrence, cooperative security, major combat operations, irregular warfare, stability, and homeland security.

The *National Strategy to Combat WMD* talks about the use of deterrence to combat WMD, but the *National Military Strategy to Combat WMD* barely mentions the topic. The deterrence JOC mentions deterring the adversarial use of WMD during interstate conflicts as well as disrupting terrorist networks that seek WMD capabilities. Tools that enable this capability include force projection, global strike, and active and passive defense. Technically speaking, active and passive defense are more appropriately discussed in the major combat operations concept, but there is an argument by some that because active and passive defense might cause an adversary to believe that the use of WMD would be ineffective, they offer a deterrent capability. Interestingly, the national missile defense program is not addressed as an aspect of deterrence (contrary to much of the literature), but resides in the homeland security JOC.<sup>18</sup>

The cooperative security JOC identifies the proliferation of WMD materials and technology as a future concern, along with terrorism, health issues, and climate change.<sup>19</sup> There is no specific mention of WMD interdiction efforts or WMD threat reduction cooperative activities, although it mentions the need for maritime situational awareness on the movement of WMD. While the concept of security cooperation is relatively well-developed, the aspect of WMD security cooperation, and specifically WMD interdiction and threat reduction cooperation, is considered a special technical area that is executed at the na-

tional level and outside of conventional security cooperation actions.

Of all the operating concepts, one might expect that the major combat operations JOC would include a significant discussion of the impact of WMD, given the challenge posed by other nations; however, it does not. The JOC primarily addresses conventional warfare without any reference to the impact of unconventional weapons. It does mention the challenge of keeping the conflict at the conventional level and preventing the adversary from using unconventional weapons. Without discussing counterproliferation or deterrence at any point, the concept calls for the need to “prevent the extreme escalation of violence along with the horrific, long-term implications and consequences of post-WMD use.”<sup>20</sup> There is no discussion of offensive operations, active defense, or passive defense capabilities. Despite the potential for conflict with nations armed with chemical and biological weapons (Iraq 1991 and 2003, Libya 2012, Syria and North Korea), this discussion is isolated as a “special topic.”

At least the major combat operations JOC had an illustrative scenario that envisioned conflict against a nation with a WMD program that was also tied to terrorist organizations. The irregular warfare JOC does not mention WMD other than to note the need to interdict “violent extremist organizations” from having access to and using WMD.<sup>21</sup> Given the unending rhetoric about how sub-state groups around the globe are all pursuing WMD, one might expect a more robust discussion on how U.S. forces would engage sub-state groups that are seeking and/or developing a capability to use unconventional weapons. Although the *National Strategy to Combat Terrorism* has a specific goal to “deny WMD to rogue states and terrorist allies who seek to use them,” there is no discussion here on how the U.S. military would support that policy objective.

The stability operations JOC does, at least, point out the need to address the possibility of minor states or hostile sub-state groups “employ[ing] WMD or methods producing WMD-like effects to threaten or attack critical U.S., allied, or host nation targets.”<sup>22</sup> Specifically, it talks about the WMD elimination capability needed to disable and/or destroy a nation’s (or sub-state group’s) WMD program and related capabilities. One can argue as to the merits of WMD elimination, but at least it’s discussed within the right concept. Strangely enough, the concept does not, however, talk about how to deal with CBRN hazards within the context of humanitarian assistance or disaster relief. Foreign CBRN consequence management is a poorly understood mission and one not well executed between State and DoD – there is no help here in discussing that issue.

Homeland security has long been concerned with terrorist WMD, almost to the point that one might mistakenly believe that it is a more significant threat than strategic nuclear weapons, drug smuggling, human trafficking, cyber-crimes, pandemic disease outbreaks, border control, or natural disasters. The homeland security JOC carefully explains how DoD delineates its responsibilities and missions against those of the rest of the federal government. Without much surprise, the discussion focuses on responding to domestic CBRNE incidents and national missile defense as its contribution to combating WMD. It is the only JOC to refer to “CBRNE attacks” as opposed to the use of WMD.<sup>23</sup> The vignettes offer discussions of the potential missile defense and terrorist nuclear or biological challenges.

There is a Joint Integrating Concept (JIC) for combating WMD that is supposed to articulate the overall concept as to how DoD executes its operational efforts to combat WMD across the range of military operations.<sup>24</sup> Rather than providing a coherent narrative across the six JOCs, it offers a more complex picture of how the *National Military Strategy to Combat WMD* might be executed. It expands the definition of WMD to include toxic industrial chemicals, delivery systems, and other WMD-related material, but does not address operational actions against WMD-capable states that are not supporting terrorist groups. Its focus is on disrupting multiple illicit networks between state and sub-state groups. The JIC calls for a complex, national effort requiring special capabilities and tasks not called out in any other JOC. In doing so, it fails to “integrate” counter-WMD concepts across military operations and assures the need for a technical community of counter-WMD specialists working outside of the mainstream.

### — Conclusions —

In the 2008 book, *World at Risk*, the Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism expressed concerns that “unless the world community acts decisively and with great urgency, it is more likely than not that a weapon of mass destruction will be used in a terrorist attack somewhere in the world by the end of 2013.”<sup>25</sup> Its judgment was that this WMD incident would be a biological weapons attack rather than a nuclear weapon. Those five years are nearly completed, and yet, all we have seen are “white powder” incidents, initially feared as anthrax powder but inevitably identified as hoaxes or false alarms. The unjustifiable fear of a transnational sub-state group using CBRN hazards against the U.S. populace has driven an irrational drive for zero risk that cannot be sustained. Meanwhile, the focus on irregular operations since 9/11 has resulted in a near absence of concern as to the ability of U.S. forces to survive and sustain combat operations in a CBRN environment.

Over the past ten years, discussion has increased regarding the “nexus between counterproliferation and counterterrorism” or combating WMD and combating terrorism – continuing an unsupported hypothesis that transnational sub-state groups are intent on acquiring WMD materials and technology from “rogue states” that have or are developing offensive WMD programs. Oftentimes, this relationship is described as being facilitated by illicit economies and trafficking networks, thus requiring WMD interdiction exercises that target commerce between nations and sub-state groups and WMD elimination programs to remove future threats. When these pundits discuss the “nexus” between these two disparate communities, what they are really worried about is the possibility of nuclear terrorism, not chemical or biological terrorism. Daniel Byman accurately notes that nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism “are not twin horrors and do not result in a single set of policy guidelines.”<sup>26</sup> The challenge of nuclear terrorism is quite different from the challenge of why hostile states support sub-state groups or why violent extremists attack public institutions.

Counterproliferation and counterterrorism have distinct policies and instruments of state to address the various security

challenges that arise in contemporary international relations. There are a handful of nuclear-capable states as compared to the hundreds of conventionally-armed terrorist groups. Nuclear-weapon states may actively or passively back sub-state groups while understanding that they cannot afford to lose control over their nuclear weapons. Nonproliferation and counterproliferation activities take place over months and years, while counterterrorism activities are measured in hours and days. The military has a much larger role in combating WMD than combating terrorism, which is led by the diplomatic, law enforcement, and intelligence communities.<sup>27</sup> Alarmist concerns over “rogue states,” nuclear proliferation, and nuclear terrorism are not new problems and should not be overinflated.<sup>28</sup>

It would be a consummate failure to attempt to direct arms control, security cooperation, counterproliferation, combating WMD terrorism, stability operations, and homeland security in one national strategy or national military strategy to counter WMD. Although a coordinated interagency (and coordinated DoD) approach is necessary, one cannot adequately use the currently nebulous term *WMD* within the context of the very different operating concepts without creating further confusion. It is not helpful to construct a generalized defense strategy with bland phrases that allows every community to pull out what they need, nor will a new bumper-sticker adequately summarize this complex and diverse security challenge. A more productive dialogue within the national security enterprise, accurately addressing the potential use of unconventional weapons within the context of contemporary military operations, is essential to capably prepare to meet future warfare challenges.

The term *unconventional weapons* has much less baggage and would be more useful in describing today’s approach to WMD issues. The term *WMD* should be limited to the State Department’s efforts to address nations developing NBC weapons. The National Security Staff should direct and oversee the efforts of executive agencies, encouraging them to address the challenge of unconventional weapons through regular policy dialogues. The PPD-8 language of “prevent, protect, mitigate, respond, and recover” is a broad context for homeland security, and ought not be confused with the concept of “prevent, protect, respond” for addressing DoD’s interests to protect U.S. forces from unconventional weapons use.

Using the PPD-8 lexicon, designed to facilitate interagency discussions on homeland security, would only burden and confuse those responsible to prepare U.S. forces for combat against nations with NBC weapons. Seeking out the one solution that addresses all problems should be avoided at all costs; it doesn’t exist. The last decade of fighting in the Middle East, alone, serves as a good example of how conventional operations and irregular operations require different approaches. The same is true for protecting against unconventional weapons used in combat operations and responding to CBR hazards released in domestic terrorist incidents. Only by ceasing the fixation on weapons effects and putting the threat into context can we adequately address future warfare challenges that include the use of unconventional weapons.

## — NOTES —

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The mission of the **U.S. Air Force Counterproliferation Center** is to prepare Air Force leaders to engage in critical thinking on the national security challenges posed by nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.



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