

Foreword by Paul R. Pillar

Four and a half decades ago, President John F. Kennedy publicly mused about the possibility that fifteen to twenty-five countries would have nuclear weapons by the 1970s. This did not materialize, and it still has not. That such a worrisome scenario has not yet come to pass, however, provides no assurance that it will not still occur. The proliferation of nuclear or other unconventional weapons is a prime example of a security issue in which the seeds of threatening developments are always present, even though the circumstances that would cause some of those seeds to sprout are unpredictable.

Kennedy's comment should be remembered chiefly for underscoring three truths. First, proliferation of weapons capable of causing mass destruction has long been a matter of high concern and a priority of public policy. For the same reason, it is likely to continue to be a high-profile issue. Second, uncertainty in this subject abounds, and prediction is foolhardy. Kennedy wisely was not venturing a prediction but instead speaking about possibilities. And third, the future, predicted or not, can be shaped through policies, wise or not. The darker possibilities of unchecked nuclear proliferation did not materialize in the 1970s partly because of international efforts at arms control in the 1960s. These included a treaty to ban nuclear testing in the atmosphere, completed during Kennedy's presidency, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which was signed later in the decade.

Public concern and policy deliberations will continue to be focused not only on weapons proliferation itself but also on efforts to reduce the inevitable uncertainty to a minimum and to form more accurate images of foreign programs to develop nuclear and other unconventional weapons. This inevitably will mean a focus on intelligence. Large—often unrealistically large—expectations get placed on intelligence to produce precise pictures of foreign programs. Such pictures are typically difficult to draw, partly because the programs are

shrouded in assiduously maintained secrecy. The pictures become even more difficult to draw when intelligence is expected to project the future course of programs. In some cases this means anticipating decisions that foreign leaders have not yet taken, and which even the leaders themselves could not reliably predict. Whether the expectations are realistic or not, issues of intelligence are entwined with issues of proliferation. Much of the value of Thomas Graham and Keith Hansen's volume lies in providing a single integrated analysis of both.

The challenges posed to policy by the proliferation of nuclear and other unconventional weapons are multifaceted. The primary, but not sole, interest at stake is to reduce the chance of such weapons coming into the possession of those who would use them to do us harm. The traditional focus of concern has been states, especially "rogue" ones. Since the 1990s (when I was supervising analysis on terrorism within the US Intelligence Community), at least as much worry has been voiced about terrorist groups using unconventional weapons, to the point that it has become obligatory for political leaders to identify nuclear terrorism as the number one security threat to the nation. The policy challenges extend beyond keeping weapons out of hostile hands and to the larger consequences of any proliferation that does occur. These consequences include revisions to regional balances of power and the stimulation of still more proliferation on the part of regional rivals.

Difficult questions flow from these challenges, and Graham and Hansen explore several of them in depth. What are the motivations, for example, that attract regimes or terrorist groups to unconventional weapons? A full understanding of this subject is essential for crafting policies with a chance of retarding the spread of such weapons.

Regarding intelligence, a basic question is, how much more is it possible to know about foreign weapons programs, and how much are we unlikely ever to know, no matter how skillful and diligent are the intelligence efforts? An additional question, too often neglected, is how—and whether—intelligence is used in making policy. Too often intelligence on the topic of weapons proliferation (and on other topics) is assessed in isolation, with scorecards kept on how well or how poorly intelligence performs but with few stopping to ask how much difference this makes for the formulation and execution of nonproliferation policy—which is the only reason intelligence on the subject matters at all.

The unhappy experience of the George W. Bush administration's war against Iraq and how the issue of weapons of mass destruction played into the ad-

ministration's campaign to win support for the war unfortunately has clouded these issues. As confirmed by my own experience in leading other work on Iraq by the Intelligence Community during this period, the ideal—and widely assumed—model of intelligence playing directly into the making of policy often diverges greatly from the reality. In the case of Iraq, weapons of mass destruction had much more to do with selling than with motivating the US decision to launch the war. Subsequent recriminations over the war have further obscured the issues and too often politicized the retrospective assessment of what intelligence did or did not do.

In other cases, policies genuinely concerned with nonproliferation are driven largely by factors other than intelligence. This is neither surprising nor inappropriate, particularly because nonproliferation sometimes conflicts with other foreign policy objectives—a conflict that became apparent in controversy over a US-Indian nuclear cooperation agreement that after much delay became ready for signature in 2008. The statesman must weigh all national interests at stake, and not act solely in response to what intelligence may say about a particular weapon program.

A virtue of Graham and Hansen's analysis is that it casts aside the political baggage and provides a clear exposition of how intelligence has addressed unconventional weapon programs in a variety of cases. Their book is neither an attack nor an apology but instead a careful examination of the possibilities and pitfalls of intelligence work on the topic. Most important, the authors do not offer just another scorecard drawn up in isolation but instead recognize that neither intelligence nor policy can be fully understood unless examined in conjunction with the other.

More broadly, this book is a lode of information for anyone seeking to learn more about proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and in particular nuclear weapons, and about what can be, and has been, done to check the spread of such weapons. Readers of this book will gain not only a wealth of information but also a sense of what ingredients are vital to an effective nonproliferation policy. And they will gain increased immunity to many of the misconceptions about the subject.

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