

## **Globalization and WMD Proliferation: Terrorism, transnational networks, and international security By James A. Russell and James J. Wirtz (editors) (2008): Routledge**

**Prashant Kumar Singh**

*The author is a Research Assistant at IDSA, New Delhi.*

### Summary

This book puts forward a point that 'states' and 'governments' are not the only proliferators of the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in the age of globalization. Instead, non-state proliferators ('super-empowered' people like Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan) have also emerged as a major carrier of proliferation during these days. Therefore, applying only traditional perspective of 'security dilemma' and overlooking the non-state proliferators in appreciating this problem will leave serious gaps in understanding the present dimensions of the problem. On a broader level, this book tries to comprehend whether globalization is fundamentally transforming the nature of proliferation. Besides, it also tries to determine how real is the threat of the WMD's falling into the hands of terrorists.

The rationale of this book is that in the age of globalization states and governments are not the only proliferators of the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD); instead, non-state proliferators have also emerged as a major carrier of proliferation. Therefore, investigating this issue from traditional perspective – which considers the proliferation of WMD from the perspective of "security dilemma" in the state-based international system – without taking the role of extra-state proliferators into account will not be able to provide holistic view of the issue. As this book rightly claims, the exposure of the illegal nuclear supply network woven by Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan has let it be known that the proliferators independent of states can proliferate the WMD on the strength of their own. This book makes an attempt to understand how communication, transportation and financial network are "facilitating or constraining trade in dangerous contraband". Besides, it also tries to determine how real is the threat of the WMD's falling into the hands of terrorists. On a broader note, it tries to develop an understanding whether the processes of globalization are fundamentally transforming the nature of proliferation.

The book puts forward an assertion that the problem of transnational proliferation networks should be seen in due proportion instead of unrealistically hyping it up. It asserts that some interested individuals and local groups have become powerful enough to forge a nexus among terrorism-criminals-WMD by manipulating facilities provided by globalization, though this phenomenon remains an aberration only. The reason behind this preposition is that the locus of these networks remains highly individual-centric and are not state-sponsored groups, though they work in relatively permissible and familiar politico-administrative environment. Therefore, their capabilities remain very limited. However, this book does not suggest that these individual-centric transnational groups should not be taken seriously. Instead, it categorically maintains that these groups involve an element of unpredictability and are capable of giving surprise, which makes them dangerous.

In this context, it is argued that states need to

adjust their security policies vis-à-vis this new threat as this threat poses double paradox. The paradox on international level is that international institutions and regimes meant for curbing proliferation can exert pressure on governments, but these groups, run by 'super-empowered individuals', remain outside their ambit. They are not mandated for doing that. And, the paradox on national level is that governments find themselves in such a predicament where if they deny people access to information and knowledge in the name of curbing the proliferation, it becomes counter-productive and if they do not, the curbing becomes very difficult. In this scenario, ensuring non-proliferation is a tricky preposition.

This book is an edited volume in which a number of scholars have explored various issues concerning the problem of proliferation using globalization as a security paradigm. The book has broadly investigated three themes. First of all, it has analyzed how globalization has enhanced the capabilities of individuals and local communities to affect the world scenario through the proliferation. Secondly, it discusses the theme of proliferation per se. The second theme focuses on both horizontal and vertical non-traditional proliferation. In horizontal spread of the WMD, primitive WMD reach local groups and individuals, while in vertical spread governments acquire advanced WMD. The third theme produces the picture of the limitations of capabilities of the traditional defence apparatuses in tackling the proliferation of the WMD.

In the first theme, it refutes that the proliferation is a necessary corollary of globalization. It asserts that globalization has come to benefit people and provide them with opportunities. However, it is altogether different matter that some rogue individuals are trying to exploit these opportunities. In the second theme, it deals with separate issues, types and cases of the proliferation. This book covers Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan's notorious proliferation ring with fair details. It separately covers near-term threats of chemical weapons terrorism. It has done a study on relatively unexplored area of unmanned air vehicles as terrorist weapons. Under the second theme, it has tried to establish

the link among transnational organised crime, terrorism and nuclear trafficking. Its finding is that "while the links between drug smuggling and nuclear trafficking were clearly identifiable, such links with weapons-smuggling rings were weaker". Incidentally, this book has probed constituency constraints on al-Qaeda regarding violence. Its assertion is that al-Qaeda is dependent on constituency support for survival and the world-wide Muslim community in general does not endorse apocalyptic methods of warfare. Therefore, al-Qaeda being an ideologically motivated organisation cannot overlook larger religious notions and beliefs of its constituency. As a part of the third theme, this book has studied constraints that intelligence agencies encounter in detecting and investigating the acts and incidents of proliferation.

On the whole, the book places capabilities of non-state proliferators of the WMD in proper perspective and the complex situations that traditional states have to face in dealing with clandestine acts of some individuals.