

**DECONSTRUCTING THE RISK TO AUSTRALIA:  
NON-STATE MICRO-PROLIFERATION AND THE  
USE OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION**

**By**

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of the University of New England**

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.



Kenneth Norman  
30 April 2002

Surprise, when it happens to a government, is likely to be a complicated, diffuse, bureaucratic thing. It includes neglect of responsibility but also responsibility so poorly defined or so ambiguously delegated that action gets lost. It includes gaps in intelligence, but also intelligence that, like a string of pearls too precious to wear, is too sensitive to give to those who need it. It includes the alarm that fails to work, but also the alarm that has gone off so often it has been disconnected. It includes the unalert watchman, but also the one who knows he'll be chewed out by his superior if he gets higher authority out of bed. It includes the contingencies that occur to no one, but also those that everyone assumes somebody else is taking care of. It includes straightforward procrastination, but also decisions protracted by internal disagreement. It includes, in addition, the inability of individual human beings to rise to the occasion until they are sure it is the occasion – which is usually too late (unlike movies, real life provides no musical background to tip us off to the climax). Finally, as at Pearl Harbour, surprise may include some measure of genuine novelty introduced by the enemy, and possibly some sheer bad luck. The results, at Pearl Harbour, were sudden, concentrated, and dramatic. The failure, however, was cumulative, widespread, and rather drearily familiar. This is why surprise, when it happens to a government, cannot be described just in terms of startled people. Whether at Pearl Harbour or at the Berlin Wall, surprise is everything involved in a government's (or in an alliance's) failure to anticipate effectively.

Thomas C. Schelling,  
 Foreword to *Pearl Harbor;*  
*Warning and Decision,*  
 by Roberta Wohlstetter

## **Preface**

This thesis was completed at a time of dynamic and catastrophic global change. While in a sense the events of 11 September 2001 involving the attacks against the United States' World Trade Centre and Department of Defence did not so much change what is understood of the potential of transnational terrorists, it did fundamentally shift the thresholds in the use of ultra-violence to achieve an outcome. It singularly re-affirmed how little western democracies actually understand of those psychosocial factors and behaviours that influence non-state actors. There are those who repetitively rattle off exhortations of vulnerability and threat, yet confine themselves to vagaries and rhetoric in defining trends and patterns – never committing to analysis beyond the mere prospect of action. Their analysis and predicant claims that terrorist attacks will eventually occur, made in the comfortable expectation they might never be proved wrong based on trends in the historical record, is too often mistaken as analysis and assessment and not the speculation that it actually is. The continuous flow of political, religious, cultural and economic dogma delivered by non-state actors, more often only threatening the use of weapons of mass destruction, yet still resulting in increased societal and government anxiety, must be counter-balanced with not only credible risk analysis, but effective deterrence strategies and ubiquitous counter-measures.

This thesis is based entirely on unclassified material and complies with the requirements of the Commonwealth Protective Security Manual 2000. The views expressed throughout this thesis are entirely my own and the information in no part represents Australian Defence or Government policy. Throughout the research a wide range of inadequacies and vulnerabilities, both within international and domestic regulatory controls and anti-terrorist measures, has become obvious. It has not been, however, the intent of this thesis to provide a prescriptive methodology on how to circumvent specific regulatory structures or processes. Caution has been exercised in identifying critical detail in aspects of national vulnerabilities in order to ensure this thesis is neither misused and also to allow it to remain an unclassified research publication.

The increased sensitivity to terrorism following the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States reaffirms my intent that this research not provide the potential for misuse or contribute to the already wide array of literature which seeks to disaggregate national security as a public information process rather than as analysis attempting to construct national deterrence measures.

The events that transpired on 11 September 2001 appear to have woken Australia from its malaise and the naïve view that geographical boundaries provide nothing more than a change of color in the landscape as viewed from an aircraft. While it was hoped the impetus for change could have been facilitated through research and scholarly study, rather than a catastrophic event of the magnitude of the terrorist attacks in the United States, the catalyst for change has arrived and must be seized. The problem now is about managing risks, yet the balance between risk aversion and risk taking is a precipice that is easy to cross. This thesis was written as a study in recognising and identifying deficiencies and what measures need to be considered within the remediation processes we now seek in attempting to improve the national security environment. At the core of the analysis is the precept that the propensity within non-state groups to utilise weapons of mass destruction can be influenced through well articulated and prosaic pre-emptive deterrence measures set within national trade, industry, research and government policy, capabilities and practices.

The end of the year 2001 invoked dramatic and fundamental change to counter-measures against terrorism and has resulted in wide reform that would have been impossible only a year ago. This thesis has been an ongoing research project and preceded these events by years, yet it only provides what is the first of a number of evolutionary stages in a national reform process, that is, the most significant step in identifying the nature and scope of the actual problem. Still, to date the rhetoric of preparedness and initiatives to improve capabilities by governments has been directed nearly entirely at increased punitive measures, export controls and harsher anti-terrorist legislation. Yet these retributive measures only address specific aspects of behavioural change or limited windows of activity and fail to consider rehabilitative actions and

counter-measures that might exert a greater influence on capability development processes across the non-state threat continuum. The military response to the acts of terrorism should not be confused with the processes of justice and deterrence. As is always the case in the climate following a crisis, it has proven to be opportunistic for intelligence, security and police in the race for increased resources, wider powers and greater funding. Yet how effective and well targeted will these measures be compared to those already adopted prior to the 11 September 2001 attacks? Dramatically increased funding provides the prospect of widely increased capabilities, yet declared expenditure in the United States of over eleven billion dollars annually on countering terrorism in the year prior to 11 September 2001 failed to provide any warning of the attacks. So how much money and effort is necessary and how can we more effectively preempt these transnational non-state threats, particularly those that might maintain the potential for a catastrophic outcome?

The relevancy of this thesis has never been greater and in simple terms it has but one desired outcome – to assist in establishing an enhanced theoretical and practical national security framework. The context in which this framework is set critically depends for its efficacy on a range of national and international non-proliferation, counter-proliferation and anti-terrorist controls and an understanding of the nature of non-state development and the micro-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Kenneth Norman

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