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THESIS

CBRN TERRORISM OBSESSION PRIOR TO 9/11

by

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December 2011

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CBRN TERRORISM OBSESSION PRIOR TO 9/11

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

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LIST OF TABLES

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CBRN	Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CTC	Counter Terrorism Center
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
GAO	Government Accounting Office
IC	Intelligence Community
IC21	The Intelligence Community in the 21st Century
IG	Inspector General
INR	State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research
LOC	Library of Congress
NBC	Nuclear, Biological, Chemical
NIC	National Intelligence Council
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
NSC	National Security Council
NSS	National Security Strategy
OSINT	Open-Source Intelligence
PDD	Presidential Decision Directive
SCT	*Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
SIR	Strategic Intelligence Review
SSCI	Senate Select Committee on Intelligence
TPV	*Terrorism and Political Violence*
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

The 9/11 Commissioners identified four failures contributing to the success of the attacks: imagination, policy, capabilities, and management.[1] The imagination failure was considered to be the most critical, and the commission argued that organizations such as the Counterterrorism Center (CTC) at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) failed to imagine and plan for the possibility that terrorists might use aircraft as weapons. This imagination failure has been widely accepted as a fundamental cause for the disaster of 9/11, but little work has been done to examine why organizations such as the CTC failed to imagine the threat. We appear to understand the "what" of the 9/11 failure, but not the "why." This thesis will ask why the academic, policymaking communities failed to anticipate the use of suicide hijackings. It argues that these communities might have been too focused on other methods of attack, or other national security threats. Following the Cold War, these national security threats changed with proliferation and terrorism overtaking conventional threats, and the result, according to some experts, was an obsession with WMD terrorism.

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to a rising concern over the proliferation of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons. This, coupled with the 1995 attack by Aum Shinrikyo on a Tokyo subway using Sarin gas, as well as the massive stockpiles of Iraqi chemical and biological weapons discovered after the first Gulf War, led many to become concerned that terrorists could easily acquire and use CBRN weapons.[2] As CBRN terrorism became a plausible threat, many leaders used heated rhetoric on the topic, causing some to argue these leaders were obsessed.

Although the 9/11 Commission did not see an obsession with CBRN terrorism as a factor, some experts have suggested it may have contributed to the failure to prevent the

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[1] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 2004), 4.

[2] Ehud Sprinzak, "The Great Superterrorism Scare," *Foreign Policy* 112 (1998): 110–111.

9/11 attacks. After 9/11, terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman testified before Congress that everyone was fixated on weapons of mass destruction (WMD), stating, "The implicit assumptions of much of American planning scenarios on mass casualty attacks were that they would involve germ or chemical agents."[3] Andrew Silke furthers this notion of WMD preoccupation by the academic community claiming, "If the failure to mark out the importance of al-Qa'eda was the biggest oversight in research prior to 9/11, the obsession with work on WMD threats—as opposed to more mundane tactics—will likely be judged as the second most significant failing." [4]

This thesis will examine the question: To what extent were the academic, policymaking, and intelligence communities obsessed with CBRN terrorism prior to 9/11? This thesis examines each of these communities to determine whether its members were obsessed with CBRN terrorism and what, if any, the implications were

B. HYPOTHESIS AND FINDINGS

Research on this thesis started with the hypothesis that an obsession with CBRN terrorism by the academic, policymaking, and intelligence communities was a contributing factor in the overall intelligence failure of 9/11. But, over the course of the research, this thesis found quite the opposite. On a rhetorical level, the concern over CBRN terrorism might have approached obsession. After examining the factual data of topics researched by the academic community, policies enacted for the sake of national security, and collection priorities of the intelligence community, we find that an obsession did not exist.

[3] Bruce Hoffman, *Lessons of 9/11*, United States Joint September 11, 2001 Inquiry, Staff of the House and Senate Select Committees on Intelligence (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2002), 18.

[4] Andrew Silke, "An Introduction to Terrorist Research," in *Research on Terrorism Trends, Achievements and Failures*, ed. Andrew Silke (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2004), 24.

1. Academic Community

Given the hindsight statements by experts within the field of terrorism identifying an obsession by academia with WMD, is there empirical evidence that the academic community was infatuated with the prospect of CBRN terrorism? If so, what drove this obsession?

2. Policy Makers

Following the Cold War, national security needs were constantly evolving. Did politicians correctly perceive those needs and adjust priorities accordingly? What were the most significant threats facing the U.S. prior to 9/11? Where does CBRN terrorism fall within this spectrum? Were politicians focusing academic and intelligence resources on the prospect of CBRN terrorism?

3. Intelligence Community

Intelligence agencies provide information to policy makers enabling them to make informed decisions. This relationship is a two-way street where politicians are able to influence the direction of collection and assessment of these agencies. In the post-Cold War environment, where were intelligence agencies focusing their efforts? Were they investigating CBRN terrorism to an obsessive degree?

C. IMPORTANCE

These questions are important for two main reasons. First, having recently passed the ten-year anniversary of 9/11, many of the failures identified by the 9/11 Commission have gone unanswered. Other failures have not been identified. Conventional analysis conducted by both the Congressional investigation and the 9/11 Commission failed to recognize what may have been a critical failure, the obsession with WMD terrorism by the academic, policymaking, and intelligence communities. Second, we are more obsessed with WMD terrorism today, suggesting that we are still blinded and vulnerable to the more likely, and more commonplace, threats we might actually face.

Concerns over the policies and agencies responsible for the prevention of terrorist attacks have been in the spotlight for the last ten years. Members of the 9/11 Commission are engaged in a process of reviewing the implementation of recommendations they made in the wake of their report. Progress has been made in some areas, but others are far from complying with the commission's recommendations. In their recent statement before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, the chairmen of the 9/11 Commission, Governor Kean and Senator Hamilton, stated that these unfulfilled recommendations, "…require urgent attention because the threat from al Qaeda, related terrorist groups, and individual adherents to violent Islamist extremism persists."[5]

We have not yet understood or fully identified the imagination failure of 9/11, which related to the inability to perceive the use of a hijacked airliner as a suicide weapon. It did not address the national security priorities researched by the academic community, policies created by policymakers, or collection allocation of the intelligence community. The problem of imagination still persists, as evidenced by the attempted attacks since 9/11. We have not anticipated several new methods of attacks: shoe bombs, underwear bombs, and exploding printer cartridges. Are we failing in imagination because resources and attention are directed elsewhere?

Counterterrorism does not have the luxury of an infinite resource pool. The U.S. has spent $1 trillion on counterterrorism in the aftermath of 9/11.[6] It is therefore vital that our policy, resources, and efforts focus on the most important and likely threats facing our country. The debate over the probability of CBRN terrorism needs to be addressed with a risk-management based approach so these resources can be directed appropriately. More importantly, an intense focus on one area of terrorism must not blind us to other more likely methods of high-consequence attack.

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[5] Thomas H. Kean and Lee Hamilton, "Testimony " in *Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs* (2011), 4.

[6] John Mueller and Mark G. Stewart, "Terror, Security, and Money: Balancing the Risks, Benefits, and Costs of Homeland Security," in *Annual Convention of the Midwest Political Science Association* (Chicago, IL: 2011), 2.

D. ORIGIN OF THE OBSESSION DEBATE

The debate over the possibility of CBRN terrorism has existed since the advent of nuclear weapons. In 1946, Oppenheimer was concerned over a few men smuggling an atomic bomb into New York City.[7] Early fears were mainly over nuclear terrorism, which coincided with Cold War fears of nuclear war. The scope of this thesis will be limited to the modern fear over CBRN terrorism that began with a combination of events: the fall of the Soviet Union and the associated concern for the security of their CBRN weapons; the 1995 Aum Shinrikyo sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system; and the discovery of a large Iraqi stockpile of chemical and biological weapons following Operation Desert Storm.[8]

Senator Richard Lugar stated that, "As a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet totalitarian command and control society, a vast supermarket of weapons and materials of mass destruction has become accessible."[9] His comments were based upon the premise that the collapsing government was unable to pay soldiers who guarded NBC stockpiles and the scientists who created them. When guards go unpaid, and are unable to sustain themselves and their families, they might become desperate and potentially sell the equipment they safeguard. Others made a similar argument concerning the scientists who create these weapons. Many feared they would immigrate to North Korea or Iran, given the right price.[10] These viewpoints led many to obsess that a plethora of CBRN weapons would become easily available to any terrorist organization.

Iraq's large quantities of chemical and biological weapons, combined with Iraqi humiliation over losing the first Gulf War, provided Saddam Hussein his only option to deal with the U.S, asymmetric warfare with terrorists. Iraq also possessed a large arsenal of chemical and biological weapons. According to a declassified intelligence report, Iraqi

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[7] John Mueller, *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 16.

[8] Ehud Sprinzak, "The Great Superterrorism Scare," Foreign Policy 112 (1998): 110–111.

[9] Richard G. Lugar, "Viewpoint: The Threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction: A U.S. Response," *The Nonproliferation Review* 6, no. 3 (1999): 51.

[10] John Parachini, "Collapsing States and Abrupt Regime Changes: Implications for NBC Terrorism," in *Hype or Reality: The "New Terrorism" and Mass Casualty Attacks*, ed. Brad Roberts (Alexandria, VA: The Chemical and Biological Arms Institute, 2000), 85–86.

agents were trained to use chemical and biological weapons by the East German State Security Service. Agents "learned how to handle anthrax, elements that cause yellow fever, and nerve gases such as Yperite and Sarin." [11] It is possible that the Iraqi intelligence service provided this training to terrorist organizations. With the combination of capability, training, and intent obsession with CBRN terrorism was further fueled.

Aum Shinrikyo's attack on the Japanese subway system in 1995 was a catalyst for furthering the obsession with NBC terrorism. Prior to this attack, no terrorist group had used chemical or biological weapons on a large scale, and the small number of incidents that did occur were unsuccessful. Aum's attack was an international media event leaving 12 dead and 5,500 affected by the sarin gas. Casualties on this scale invalidated a previous widely held view often quoted that "terrorists want a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead."[12] Of the three events spawning the obsession, this is perhaps the critical one. In his research, Cameron states, "Most analysts and those charged with countering terrorism assumed that Aum's attack represented a harbinger of the future and that other, increasingly lethal, attacks with WMD would follow and that terrorism was on an escalatory spiral."[13]

E. OBSESSION, PESSIMISTS, AND OPTIMISTS

As this thesis begins a search for obsession, the term must be defined. Webster's Medical Dictionary defines obsession as "a persistent disturbing preoccupation with an often unreasonable idea or feeling." In order to reach a judgment that any of the three communities were obsessed with CBRN terrorism, two questions must be answered. Was the preoccupation with CBRN terrorism persistent? Was the preoccupation unreasonable? Those who are obsessed with CBRN terrorists have been labeled as

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[11] GulfLink, *Iraqis Trained to Use Chemical and Biological Weapons* (1995).

[12] Brian Jenkins, *Will Terrorists Go Nuclear?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1975), 4.

[13] Gavin Cameron, "Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism Reserach: Past and Future," in *Research on Terrorism. Trends, Achievements, and Failures,* ed. Andrew Silke (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2004), 80.

pessimists or doomsayers, and the logic behind this way of thinking will be further examined in this section to fully understand what this thesis searches for.

Relative to the likelihood of CBRN terrorism, people generally fall into two camps: pessimists and optimists. Pessimists believe that the era of superterrorism has emerged, and that attacks will produce more casualties with more sinister weapons. Optimists believe that terrorists will stick to the traditional gun and bomb, and that they do not want a lot of people dead, they want attention. These camps have members in academic, policymaking, and intelligence communities, but the main ideas are best summarized by academics, and will be discussed in further detail below. Before the two schools of thought are further analyzed, one must understand how they reach the decision to support one cause or the other. In order to understand how each camp arrives on their viewpoint, one must examine how they view the WMD acquisition process and how they view the motives that might inspire a group to use such a weapon.

1. Capabilities Proposition

According to Sprinzak, the capabilities proposition envisions that "…anyone with access to modern biochemical technology and a college science education could produce enough chemical or biological agents in his or her basement to devastate the population of London, Tokyo, or Washington."[14] Believers in the capabilities proposition find that materials are readily available from a number of sources and that with the right education; one can develop at least chemical or biological weapons. Sprinzak's point of view here clearly takes on pessimistic tones, even though he is clearly an optimist. The important concept is the likelihood of terrorists using CBRN weapons is dependent on how or if the group can acquire them. Sprinzak limits his capabilities proposition to the terrorist constructing his own CBRN weapon, but he fails to examine other methods of acquiring CBRN weapons. The capabilities proposition should have three subcategories: construction, state sponsorship, and black markets.

[14] Cameron, 112.

a. Construction

For construction terrorists have two options. The first is to build it, as Sprinzak defines in his original definition of the capabilities proposition. The second option is to hire, kidnap, or brainwash scientists to do the work for them. Sprinzak does not account for this second option. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, many believed that a large number of scientists, with knowledge of CBRN weapons would be unemployed and readily available. This "brain drain" on the scientific community deeply troubled all of the communities analyzed in this thesis. In 1992, former CIA Director Robert Gates estimated the number of scientists from the former Soviet Union who could build nuclear weapons between 1,000 and 2,000, and chemical or biological weapons at a few thousand.[15] The concern was that those scientists whose talents had no use outside of the weapons industry would become recruits of governments or terrorist organizations desiring CBRN capabilities.

b. State Sponsors

Another avenue of acquisition is from a sponsor. From 1993 to 1999, the following countries were on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism: "Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria."[16] Of these seven countries, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, and Syria all were suspected of either possessing or attempting to acquire biological and chemical weapons.[17] With both the capability and a grievance against the U.S., why then were these nations not handing these weapons out to the terrorist groups they sponsored? On the issue of state sponsored proliferation to terrorist groups, Laqueur has stated, "There is no reason to assume that a rationally acting government, however radical would pass on nuclear weapons to a terrorist group, because

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[15] Robert Gates, "Weapons Proliferation in the New World Order: Testimony before the Committee on Governmental Affairs," in *Committe on Governmental Affairs*, 102nd Congress (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), 9.

[16] U.S Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1999* (2000), 2.

[17] Richard A. Falkenrath, Robert D. Newman, and Bradley A. Thayer, *America's Achilles' Heel: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Terrorism and Covert Attack* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998),, 64.

the consequences could be devastating for the suppliers."[18] This could also be applied to chemical and biological weapons. Laqueur uses an important modifier in his quote, "rationally acting government." This term cannot be applied to all state sponsors of terrorism equally.

A great number of unstable and failing states exist who possess CBRN weapons. If a regime were forced to the breaking point with no hope of coming out of a situation alive, they might give CBRN weapons to a terrorist group. The Bush administration used this as logic for going to war in 2003. Iraq had a large arsenal of NBC weapons and had used them in their war against Iran, thus showing they did not possess a norm against the use of such weapons. When they lost the war against the coalition in the first Gulf War, it was widely believed they would use terrorists as proxies to fight the west. Given that no such attack occurred with a weapon donated by a state sponsor, this provides some evidence to support the notion that a state actor will not provide CBRN weapons to a terrorist organization because of fear of retaliation. While state sponsors would likely find these reasons as a deterrent to avoid proliferation of WMD to terrorists, another compelling reason is control.

If CBRN weapons were given to a terrorist organization, the sponsor would lose control over the asset, with no guarantee for how it would be used. There is no assurance that the organization would use the weapon against a promised target, or that the group would not turn the weapons against their sponsors. Laqueur stated, "Governments, however ruthless, ambitious, and ideologically extreme will be reluctant to pass on unconventional weapons to terrorist groups over which they cannot have full control…."[19] For example, when North Korea attempted to acquire nuclear weapons from China, they were refused.[20] State sponsors of terrorism are highly unlikely to pass CBRN weapons to terrorist organizations, an assessment that has been supported by the intelligence community.

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[18] Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 256.

[19] Walter Laqueur, "Postmodern Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 5 (1996): 34.

[20] Mueller, *Overblown*, 16.

c. Black Market

The fall of the Soviet Union provided a lax security environment where many thought CBRN stockpiles would be readily available on the black market. Jessica Stern has called this "the most profound contribution to the increased danger that terrorists will acquire and use weapons of mass destruction…"[21] Combined with an inadequate security environment, corrupt government, and organized crime, the threats posed by black markets appeared to be high.

2. Chaos Proposition

It is not enough for a terrorist group to possess CBRN weapons; they must have the will to use them. Central to the belief of the pessimist is the fear that a number of groups are willing to employ WMD. This fear is based upon the chaos proposition outlined by Sprinzak that states, "The post-Cold War world swarms with shadowy extremist groups, religious fanatics, and assorted crazies eager to launch a major attack on the civilized world—preferably on U.S. territory."[22] This ideological basis only applies to a limited number of terrorist groups, but there are reasons why all groups might not use CBRN weapons.

The same logic as to why state actors do not use CBRN weapons has commonly been applied to non-state actors. NBC weapons have rarely been used by state-actors for several reasons: widely held norms against the use of such weapons, fears of reciprocity, and fear of international and domestic backlash.[23] These same norms against the use of CBRN weapons can be generally applied to traditional terrorist groups, but not to religious cults or millenarian groups. Thus it is important to examine a group's ideological background, in order to determine if they might use CBRN weapons.

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[21] Jessica Stern, *The Ultimate Terrorists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 88.

[22] Sprinzak, 112.

[23] Ehud Sprinzak, "On Not Overstating the Problem," in *Hype or Reality: The "New Terrorism" and Casualty Attacks*, ed. Brad Roberts (Alexandria, VA: The Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute, 2000), 28.

Traditional terrorist groups have been characterized as either ethnic or socio-revolutionary.[24] Both of these groups would not likely use CBRN weapon for several reasons. First, any group that acquires or uses these weapons will face a harsh response from the government they oppose. More importantly, they face alienating their support base through the use of weapons generally believed as immoral. Additionally, young organizations or individuals do not carry out extreme violence. It takes time to harden a person to use a WMD with a string of low-level violence prior to escalation, and the enemy must be dehumanized. [25] It may be easier to dehumanize the enemy in the case of ethnic terrorism, and this has widely been proven, for example the Palestinians calling Jews dogs.[26] Groups falling in the socio-revolutionary typology will have a more difficult time using such a weapon on their own people, unless they specifically target government forces and ensure there are no civilian casualties. It is inherently difficult to control the effects of CBRN weapons, and it would be nearly impossible to avoid civilian casualties.

Only a small number of terrorist groups exist with the necessary ideological attributes to conduct an attack using CBRN weapons: religious millenarian cults, brutalized groups [those who have been subjected to genocide or destruction], and "small terrorist cells or socially deranged groups".[27] Aum fits the millenarian cult typology, and their sarin gas attack provides evidence that such a group is willing to use CBRN weapons. They believed Armageddon was a foregone conclusion and were willing to give it a push. There is also some evidence to support the idea that those groups facing genocide are willing to use these weapons. Uranium was found in the apartment of an ex-Bosnian government member in 1994. At the time, Bosnians were experiencing "something bordering on genocide and nobody was giving them the help they needed."[28]

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[24] Peter Waldmann, "Ethnic and Sociorevolutionary Terrorism: A Comparison of Structures," *International Social Movement Research* 4, no. (1992): 237–238.

[25] Sprinzak, "On Not Overstating the Problem," 47.

[26] *Death in Gaza*, directed by James Miller, HBO films 2004.

[27] Sprinzak, "The Great Superterrorism Scare," 114.

[28] Alex P. Schmid, "Terrorism and the Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction: From Where the Risk?," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11, no. 4 (1999): 115.

Any group with facing annihilation, with nothing to lose, might be willing to use CBRN weapons.

3. Camp 1: Doomsayers

The pessimists argue that terrorists will obtain and use CBRN weapons representing "an eminent threat to America's future."[29] They find that the consequences of a WMD attack outweigh any analytical threat analysis or mathematical risked-based probability analysis, and are willing to spend whatever amount of money is necessary for defense. Doomsayers would accuse the optimists of complacency who use bad assumptions governing the possible terrorist acquisition and use of CBRN weapons.[30] This school is firmly grounded in the chaos proposition. Matthew Morgan claimed that terrorists have focused on chaos and destruction over political or religious views and "today's terrorists seek destruction and chaos as an ends in themselves."[31] His main source of evidence was Pakistani General S.K. Malik's 1979 book, which stated, "terror struck into the hearts of the enemies is not only a means, it is in the end itself." [32] Furthering this idea were opinions such as that of Harvard University Professor of Human Rights Michael Ignatieff, who stated shortly after 9/11, "What we are up against is apocalyptic nihilism. The nihilism of their means—the indifference to human costs—takes their actions not only out of the realm of politics, but even out of the realm of war itself."[33]

4. Camp 2: Naysayers

At the other end of the spectrum are the optimists, who believe terrorists are unlikely to acquire and use CBRN weapons. This camp centers their argument around

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[29] Ashton Carter, John Deutch, and Philip Zelikow, "Catastrophic Terrorism: Tackling the New Danger," *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 6 (1998): 94.

[30] Falkenrath, et. al., 27.

[31] Matthew J. Morgan, "The Origins of the New Terrorism," *Parameters* 24 (Spring 2004): 30.

[32] S.K. Malik, *The Quranic Concept of War* (Lahore, Pakistan: Wajidalis, 1979), xv. In his 2007 Book Review of *The Quranic Concept of War*, Army Lt. Col. Joseph Myers states Malik's concept of terror as the end, versus the means, as his most noteworthy and controversial statement in the book. Joseph C. Myers, "Book Review: The Quranic Concept of War," *Parameters* 36 (Winter 2006/2007): 7.

[33] Michael Ignatieff, "It's War - but It Doesn't Have to Be Dirty," *The Guardian*, October 1, 2001.

the following themes: no one has successfully perpetrated an attack using these methods with large scale casualties and terrorists pursuing political goals are more interested in the media spotlight than large body counts.[34] Sprinzak summarized the naysayers viewpoint stating: "the threat of superterrorism—the strategic use of unconventional weapons by non-state terrorist organizations to bring about a disaster involving thousands

of casualties—is much smaller than believed."[35] Optimists also believe "the relatively low risks of such an event do not justify the high costs now being contemplated to defend against it."[36]

E. LITERATURE REVIEW

The 9/11 Commission Report is the quintessential historical record regarding the events leading up to and occurring on that day. Of the four failures identified by the 9/11 Commission, this thesis will address only imagination. Analysis of the imagination failure is limited to intelligence failure and the potential use of aircraft as suicide vehicles. Despite the identification of an intelligence and policy failure, no study was conducted regarding what these communities were focused on, and the commission makes no mention at all of academic failure.

Most accounts of 9/11 do not mention any focus on WMD terrorism. In their analysis of the imagination failure, commissioners very briefly mention the WMD threat prior to 9/11. They insinuate that the head analyst at the CTC was focused on catastrophic threats only in terms of CBRN weapons. Here, they present a single piece of evidence, a quote from a book by former CTC head analyst, Paul Pillar, "It would be a mistake to redefine counterterrorism as a task of dealing with 'catastrophic,' 'grand,' or 'super' terrorism, when in fact these labels do not represent most of the terrorism that the United States is likely to face or most of the costs that terrorism imposes on U.S.

[34] Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 73.

[35] Sprinzak, "On Not Overstating the Problem," 3.

[36] Sprinzak, "The Great Superterrorism Scare," 111.

interests."[37] From this quote, the commission arrives at an assessment that the "head of analysis at the CTC until 1999 discounted the alarms about a catastrophic threat as relating only to the danger of chemical, biological, or nuclear attack…."[38] The commission does not convey what it meant by this statement. Was Pillar, and by extension the CTC, obsessed with WMD?

In the book cited by the 9/11 Commission, Pillar suggests he was not. Pillar states, "CBRN terrorism should not be the main basis for shaping thinking about terrorism overall or for organizing efforts to confront it."[39] From his own words Pillar is advocating that we should not allow ourselves to become obsessed with the WMD threat. It appears as though the 9/11 Commission misinterpreted Pillar, but this raises an interesting question of whether intelligence agencies were preoccupied with CBRN terrorism as the 9/11 Commission vaguely suggests, or if it was one of the many worries that Pillar and the rest of the intelligence community were focused on.

1. Academic Community

With the advantage of hindsight, many academics have acknowledged the failure within their own community and the political arena. Bruce Hoffman identified a gap in his foreword to *Research on Terrorism*, "Much attention has been focused on the intelligence failures that led to the tragic events of 11th September 2001. Surprisingly little attention, however, has been devoted to the academic failures."[40] While acknowledged by many within the academic community, little evidence has been presented to advocate this position. Andrew Silke makes the strongest argument in support of this position: "If the failure to mark out the importance of al-Qa'eda was the biggest oversight in research prior to 9/11, the obsession with work on WMD threats—as opposed to more mundane tactics—will likely be judged as the second most significant

[37] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, 343.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Paul R. Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 23.

[40] Bruce Hoffman, "Preface," in *Research on Terrorism Trends, Achievements and Failures*, ed. Andrew Silke (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2004), xvii.

failing."[41] In his research, Silke analyzes the academic focus prior to 9/11. He provides statistical analysis of the terrorism academic community including authors (profiling number of articles and books published and their backgrounds), country focus, regional focus, terrorist group focus, and group ideology.[42] As this thesis will demonstrate however, Silke's research is limited to only the two major terrorism journals, and his statistical analysis can be misleading.

2. Policymaking Community

It is possible that politicians had too much imagination in the realm of methods terrorists would most likely employ. The attack by the Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo using sarin nerve gas on a Tokyo subway started an obsession amongst U.S. policy makers who were concerned that a "new threshold in terrorist experience had materialized."[43] Hoffman furthers the viewpoint of the government's obsession with these weapons and highlights the debate between policy makers and academics. Academics had a skeptical view on their potential use while policy makers were "plowing fullsteam ahead" in planning for the worst-case scenario.[44] Few observers, however, have provided evidence of an obsession by senior policy makers concerning WMD terrorism, and this thesis will attempt to find evidence supporting or disproving this argument.

3. Intelligence Community

In her examination of the 9/11 intelligence failures, Amy Zegart provides analysis of the organizational and cultural obstacles that have kept intelligence organizations from adapting to current threats and challenges. She highlights that many recognized the need for reform within the intelligence community after the Cold War. This acknowledgement

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[41] Andrew Silke, "An Introduction to Terrorist Research," in *Research on Terrorism Trends, Achievements and Failures*, ed. Andrew Silke (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2004), 24.

[42] Silke, "The Road Less Traveled," 186–211.

[43] David C. Rappoport, "The Fourth Wave: September 11 in the History of Terrorism," *Current History* 100, no. 650 (2004): 422.

[44] Bruce Hoffman, "The Debate over Future Terrorist Use of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Weapons," in *Hype or Reality: The "New Terrorism" and Casualty Attacks*, ed. Brad Roberts (Alexandria, VA: The Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute, 2000), 220.

is traced through multiple government commissions providing recommendations for change that were not implemented or followed up. A dangerous trend is shown where over the course of these commissions, they all made similar recommendations. Zegart provides a consolidated source of these commissions, but does not look at any particular issue intelligence agencies focused on prior to 9/11.[45] Many have described the failings of the intelligence community, including Zegart, but little has been done about what intelligence analysts and agencies wrote or warned about WMD terrorism.

F. METHODS AND SOURCES

This thesis will ask whether the academic, policymaking and intelligence communities were obsessed with CBRN terrorism. A process-tracing method is used to examine the focus on WMD within these three distinct groups from conceptual origin through 9/11. If this obsession is found to exist, then we will consider whether this was a contributing factor in the overall catastrophic failure to anticipate the use of suicide-hijackings on the attacks of 9/11.

Sources for this thesis include only documents and literature at the unclassified level. Much of the testimony that is examined in the policymaking and intelligence community contained both an open and closed session. Information that was divulged in the classified sessions was not available.

The search within the academic community examined the literature published from the time when the obsession with CBRN terrorism began to rise (after the 1995 Aum Shinrikyo attack) through 9/11. This thesis reviews Silke's statistical analysis of the two leading journals in the field of terrorism studies will be conducted. Silke analyzes the academic focus prior to 9/11 through a statistical analysis of authors (profiling number of articles and books published and their backgrounds), country focus, regional focus, terrorist group focus, and group ideology.[46]

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[45] Amy B. Zegart, *Spying Blind: The CIA, the FBI, and the Origins of 9/11* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[46] Silke, "The Road Less Travelled: Recent Trends in Terrorism Research."

Analysis of the intelligence and policy examined numerous intelligence reform commissions conducted prior to 9/11. These commissions are nicely summarized in Zegart's book, and they will be further investigated for any CBRN terrorism focus. Declassified intelligence reports and literature from former intelligence officers will also be examined. Policy statements of the executive and legislative branches will be examined for any WMD terrorism obsession within these documents. Other sources will include Congressional Hearings and Testimony, Congressional Research Service (CRS) Reports, and Government Accounting Office (GAO) Reports.

G. OVERVIEW

This thesis is organized around the search for obsession with CBRN terrorism within three separate communities: academic, policymaking, and intelligence. A separate chapter will be used for each in search of physical evidence of obsession with CBRN terrorism. As stated up front, the starting hypothesis that any or all of these communities were obsessed with CBRN terrorism is unable to be proven amongst the literature that exists at the unclassified level. All were concerned with CBRN terrorism to some degree, but not clinically obsessed. As will be discussed in the concluding chapter, if anything, 9/11 triggered an obsession with CBRN terrorism, a mistake that has cost our nation a large sum of our national treasures, men, women, and money. Obsession with high-consequence, low-probability events is blinding us to the more likely scenarios eating away at our limited resource pool.

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II. ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

Academia has strong links to the intelligence and policymaking community, and has the ability to influence both. Some politicians have gone so far as to call academic work open-source intelligence (OSINT). During the Congressional Joint Inquiry on the intelligence community prior to 9/11, Senator Mike Dewine called a Library of Congress (LOC) report OSINT. He states, "We must remember that open-source information was used to warn investigators in 1999 that al-Qaeda terrorists might fly a hijacked airliner into American buildings."[47] What was actually said in the LOC report was, "Suicide bomber(s) belonging to al-Qaida's Martyrdom Battalion could crash-land an aircraft packed with high explosives (C-4 and semtex) into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), or the White House."[48] While the merits of these claims are outside the scope of this thesis, it is important to establish the role and impact academia can have on both the policymaking and intelligence communities.

If academic work can be used as an intelligence resource, then it is plausible that in addition to the intelligence failure on 9/11, an academic failure also occurred. Andrew Silke has suggested that the academic community experienced such a failure: "If the failure to mark out the importance of al-Qa'eda was the biggest oversight in research prior to 9/11, the obsession with work on WMD threats—as opposed to more mundane tactics—will likely be judged as the second most significant failing."[49] Silke makes the claim but provides insufficient evidence in support of his argument.

As discussed in the literature review, before 9/11 there was a debate amongst academics over whether or not a new type of superterrorism was emerging. This chapter will attempt to determine whether the concern over superterrorism was prevalent at a sufficient level to constitute obsession within the academic community.

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[47] Mike Dewine, "Additional Comments Joint Inquiry Staff Report," in *Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities Before and After the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001*, (Washington, D.C., December 18, 2002), 6.

[48] Rex A. Hudson, *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, September 1999), 7.

[49] Silke, "An Introduction to Terrorist Research," 24.

This chapter will start with a poll of academics in 1985 that asked the community their belief on the likelihood of a CBRN terrorist incident. This will help set the stage for the remainder of the chapter. Silke's statistical analysis will be reexamined and used as a starting point for a broader statistical analysis of the two major journals within the field of terrorism studies, *Terrorism and Political Violence* (TPV) and *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (SCT). A study of the topics terrorism experts were publishing on within the era will also be analyzed. Finally, the scope of Silke's research will be expanded beyond the two primary journals. This will help to more completely answer the question of whether the academic community was obsessed with CBRN terrorism prior to 9/11.

When Silke is reexamined, his claim of WMD obsession appears overblown. However, a considerable amount of attention was paid to the threat of CBRN terrorism. The experts who viewed superterrorism as a serious threat to U.S. security had the ear of politicians, and subsequently were able to influence policy.

A. POLL DATA

It is not uncommon for academic communities to poll their members concerning important issues. Prior to 9/11, only one such poll regarding the likelihood of CBRN terrorism was conducted within the academic community. Brian Jenkins cites the following: "According to a poll conducted in 1985 by *TVI Report*, a quarterly journal devoted to the study of political violence, 69 percent of the readers responding (mainly government officials and members of the research community) thought it likely that terrorists would employ chemical weapons by the end of the century, while the use of biological or nuclear weapons by the year 2000 was considered unlikely."[50] A belief suggesting that these experts considered an act of CBRN terrorism likely, does not by itself promote the obsession claim. In order to establish a link between the likelihood of and obsession with CBRN terrorism, one must look to the work that these academics and government officials conducted.

[50] Brian Jenkins, "Understanding the Link between Motives and Methods," in *Terrorism with Chemical and Biological Weapons: Calibrating Risks and Responses*, ed. Brad Roberts(Alexandria, VA: The Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute, 1997), 43.

B. SILKE REVISITED

Andrew Silke has been conducting statistical analysis of the terrorism academic community since 2001. He provided subsequent updates in 2004, 2006, and 2008. His sources only include the two main peer-reviewed journals within the terrorism field, TPV and SCT. His methodology involved the construction of a database that looked at the following categories of each article published during the 1990s: geographic, temporal, terrorist group, terrorist tactic, conceptual focus, data-gathering methods, and statistical analysis methods.[51] Any article that included CBRN terrorism, as a terrorist tactic, would be counted as an article focused on CBRN terrorism. This brings up a shortcoming in his research. Some of these articles are not focused on CBRN terrorism; they merely mention it as one of the many weapons of the terrorist group, and not as the focus of the article. After compiling his database Silke reached the conclusion that "Prior to 9/11, nearly six times more research was being conducted on CBRN terrorist tactics than on suicide tactics. Indeed no other terrorist tactic (from car-bombings, hijackings, assassinations, etc.) received anywhere near as much research attention in the run up to 9/11 as CBRN."[52] Taken without further analysis, Silke's work would appear to support the idea that the academic community was obsessed with CBRN terrorism.

If one looks closely at the numbers presented in his study there are some contradictory statistics. In one chart used to compare CBRN focus before and after 9/11, only 2.7 percent of the research prior to 9/11 was focused on CBRN terrorism.[53] He shows that this number doubles after 9/11, but 5.4 percent of the literature on one category is not nearly as obsessive as his previous statistic (six times as much research was conducted on CBRN terrorism than suicide tactics). It is thus necessary to reexamine Silke's statistical work with a little more scrutiny.

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[51] Andrew Silke, "Research on Terrorism: A Review of the Impact of 9/11 and the Global War on Terrorism," in *Terrorism Informatics: Knowledge Management and Data Mining for Homeland Security*, ed. Hsinchun Chen, Edna Reid, Joshua Sinai, Andrew Silke, and Boaz Ganor (New York: Springer, 2008), 48.

[52] Ibid., 43.

[53] Ibid.

1. Terrorism and Political Violence

In an effort to broaden the scope of Silke's work, the following key word searches were conducted (from the first issue in 1990 until the 10th of September 2001) within the Taylor Francis online database (home of TPV current and archived issues): WMD, CBRN, nuclear terrorism, chemical terrorism, and biological terrorism. The table below summarizes the number of returns:

Keyword	Number of Articles Returned (Duplicated in other categories)	Percentage of Total (348 Articles from 1990 through Vol. 13 Issue 3)
WMD	18	5.1%
CBRN	5 (2)	1.4 %
Nuclear Terrorism	17 (7)	4.8 %
Chemical Terrorism	9 (8)	2.5%
Biological Terrorism	10 (9)	2.8%

Table 1. TPV Articles Related to CBRN Terrorism

In total there were 33 articles covering the range of topics equating to 9.4 percent of the literature within TPV referring to CBRN terrorism. This falls short of obsession. However, prior to 9/11 TPV devoted an entire issue to "The WMD Problem."[54] While this is significant as an indicator of an increased focus on CBRN terrorism, nine percent does not further the obsession claim.

2. Studies in Conflict and Terrorism

The same methodology was used for analyzing SCT as was used in the analysis of TPV. Data was examined from the first issue in 1990 through the issue prior to the 9/11 attacks yielding a total of 247 articles. The table below summarizes the keyword search within the Taylor Francis online database:

[54] *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 3 (2001).

Keyword	Number of Articles Returned (Duplicated in other categories)	Percentage of Total (247 Articles from 1990 to 2001 Issue 5)
WMD	14	5.6%
CBRN	6 (5)	2.4%
Nuclear Terrorism	13 (5)	5.2 %
Chemical Terrorism	2 (2)	< 1%
Biological Terrorism	8 (7)	3.2%

Table 2. SCT Articles Related to CBRN Terrorism

Without looking at repeat articles, 24 total articles contained one or more of the five keywords examined in the chart above. This indicated 9.7 percent of the total articles with any mention of CBRN terrorism.

Both journals within the field yielded approximately the same result. TPV had 9.4 percent of its articles related to CBRN terrorism while SCT had 9.7 percent. Again, this shows an interest in CBRN terrorism amongst the academic community, but it is just one of the many areas of focus. A community obsessed with CBRN terrorism would be one where the vast majority of articles were focused on the subject. Also, if an obsession existed, the best minds within the field would be focused on the hot topic of the day.

C. THE "EXPERTS"

Schmid and Jongman first defined terrorism experts when they conducted an examination of the state of knowledge within the terrorism field. In an effort to determine who the experts were within the field, they sent out a questionnaire to thirty-three prominent scholars within the field of terrorism asking, "Who are the leading authors in the field?"[55] The table below summarizes their findings:

[55] Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, & Literature*, 3rd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2008).

Number of Citations	Author
20-25	Jenkins, Wilkinson
15-19	Bell, Alexander
10-14	Schmid, Clutterbuck, Mickolus, Friedlander, Kupperman, Miller, Sterling, Stohl, Wardlaw, Arendt, Bassiouni
3-4 Citations	Carlton, Ferrarcuti, Merari, Sloan, Thornton, Wolf, Cline, Cooper, Crozier, Dobson, Payne, E. Evans, Gurr, Hacker, Horowitz, Livingston, Paust, Walter

Table 3. Terrorism Experts According to Schmid and Jongman

For example, out of 33 questionnaires 20–25 people acknowledged Brian Jenkins as an expert. Interestingly, 33 questionnaires yielded 33 experts. If these authors were focused on CBRN terrorism, an obsession claim would be justifiable.

Were any of these experts publishing articles on CBRN terrorism during the time period? The leading experts, according to Schmid and Jongman, both published articles on CBRN terrorism. Brian Jenkins published "Terrorism and Beyond: a 21st Century Perspective." Paul Wilkinson published two articles in TPV, "Technology and Terrorism" and "Enhancing Global Aviation Security." Other CBRN terrorism related articles included: a conference report by Alexander, "The George Washington University Conferences on Terrorism; Superterrorism: Biological, Chemical, and Nuclear" and an article published by Merrari, "Terrorism as a Strategy of Struggle: Past and Future." Of all of these experts, the article with the most CBRN focus was Schmid's "Terrorism and the Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction: From where the Risk?" in 1999. This shows that very few of the experts focused on CBRN terrorism, as there were many issues to examine within the terrorism field. This points further away from obsession, and more towards balance.

Silke is not satisfied with the Schmid and Jongman list, and he expanded it through his study of TPV and SCT. On the Schmid and Jongman study he notes, "While the 1988 survey was unquestionably a measure of perceived quality, and this survey is essentially more a measure of quantity, the emergence of these other wrtiers to the forefront of the field (at least in terms of output) does seem to indicate the arrival of new leading figures in the field."[56] Silke gives an author prolific status for crossing the threshold of three total articles published from 1990–1999. Were any of his prolific authors focused on WMD terrorism?

The 22 prolific authors identified by Silke within TPV combined to publish a total of 93 articles from 1990 - 9/11. Several of the authors collaborated on the same articles and those were not counted in these numbers. Of these 93 articles, only 9 had any mention of WMD or CBRN terrorism, 9.6 percent. Within those 9 articles many had a brief mention of CBRN terrorism, and only Schmid's "Terrorism and the Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction: From where the Risk?" was completely devoted to the topic. Experts publishing within TPV were concerned about CBRN terrorism, but it was only one of the many issues in terrorism studies.

Silke's 18 experts within SCT published 43 articles from 1990 to 9/11 with only 7 having any mention of CBRN terrorism. Thus 16.2 percent of the articles from the experts dealt with CBRN terrorism, but only one was devoted to the topic, Rosenau's 2001 article "Aum Shinrikyo's Biological Weapons Program: Why did it Fail?" Once again, the experts were not obsessed with CBRN terrorism.

Narrowly defining the experts as those who publish frequently within the narrow focus of these two journals misses some truly prolific contributors to the field, such as those who publish books, studies, and within other related journals (proliferation and political science for example). Richard Falkenrath wrote one of the most important works on the issue of CBRN terrorism, *America's Achilles Heel*, yet he only published one article in SCT during the timeframe. Nuclear terrorism expert Brian Jenkins, also published one article within SCT. Chemical and biological weapons expert Gavin

[56] Silke, "The Road Less Travelled: Recent Trends in Terrorism Research," 193.

Cameron is also only published once in SCT, yet published many books on the subject. These many examples show the need to expand the analysis further to other sources.

D. BIBLIOGRAPHIC STUDIES

To investigate the full range of literature, one must look beyond the primary journals. The Library of Congress (LOC) first published a bibliography on terrorism in 1989, with subsequent updates in 1993 and 1998. The 1993 bibliography incorporated the earlier work of a 1989 product and was titled *Combatting Terrorism: Literature on Future Trends in Terrorism*. Sponsored by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict, the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress created the bibliography "to provide officials in decision making positions quick access to the literature in the field to help them make informed policy decisions."[57] As shown in the introduction to this chapter, products by the LOC were seen in hindsight as open-source intelligence. Thus if these products were obsessive relative to CBRN terrorism, it is likely this feeling could be impressed upon the policymaking community. This section will examine LOC CBRN terrorism bibliographies in search of obsession.

Sources of the bibliography included "books, articles, doctoral dissertations, and government and congressional reports on terrorism mostly from 1989 to mid-1993."[58] Within the bibliography, the authors identified 54 different keywords within the 338 sources. Of significance to this thesis were the keywords "biological weapons," "chemical weapons," and "nuclear weapons." All uses of these keywords were associated with writings on terrorism. An analysis of how frequently these keywords appeared as compared to the other 51 keywords will help determine if a preoccupation with CBRN terrorism existed.

The study found the keyword "nuclear weapons" in 16 sources, "chemical weapons" appeared four times, and "biological weapons" was cited 8 times. Biological

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[57] Library of Congress Federal Research Division, *Combatting Terrorism: Literature on Future Trends in Terrorism*, (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, June 1993), Preface.

[58] Ibid.

weapons made up 2.3 percent of the articles, chemical weapons 1.1 percent, and nuclear weapons 4.7 percent. In total 28 appearances of any of these keywords occurred. Only 8.2 percent of the total number of sources was concerned with CBRN terrorism. These numbers do not show a fascination with CBRN terrorism within the wider field of literature of the time. A closer look at the sources within the bibliography revealed different numbers.

Conducting a keyword search of the terms nuclear, chemical, and biological within the actual document revealed different numbers than presented in the findings by the LOC researchers. Some articles went uncounted in the nuclear, chemical, and biological keywords and were instead counted under the "future trends" keyword. Not counting the articles that were repeated under multiple keywords, this study revealed a total of 42 of 338 sources related to CBRN terrorism, 12.4 percent. While slightly different than the analysis by the authors of the bibliography, the trend still shows concerns over CBRN terrorism. But, these concerns did not dominate research during the time period. Did this change with time as a result of terrorist attacks in the late 1990s?

The 1998 bibliography covered 1996 to mid-1998 with every annotation from openly published literature on future trends in terrorism. Sources included 295 works from journals, news magazines, newspapers, and monographs with many of the 295 articles focusing on NBC threats. The authors of the bibliography found that, “The dominant trend discussed in this literature is the increasing likelihood that terrorists will use weapons of mass destruction (WMD), particularly against the United States.”[59] In order to assess this conclusion, an evaluation of the literature within the bibliography was conducted.

Of the 295 sources, 209 contained key words related to CBRN terrorism (CBRNC; chemical weapons of mass destruction; chemical terrorism; chemical, biological nuclear agents; nuclear weapons of mass destruction; bio-agent detection; WMD in urban areas; biological weapons of mass destruction; biological decontamination; chemical decontamination). At face value, this would be striking

[59] LaVerle Berry, Glenn Curtis, and Rex Hudson, *Bibliography on Future Trends in Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, September 1998), preface.

evidence in support of an obsession claim, with 71 percent of the sources related to CBRN terrorism. A closer examination of these sources revealed some issues with the data.

Many of the sources were from the popular media including the *New York Times*, *Newsweek, Aviation Week and Space Technology*, *The Guardian*, *The New Yorker*, *US News and World Report*, and *Business Week.* Also included were several sources of questionable reputability including *Soldier of Fortune*, *SWAT*, and *Covert Action Quarterly*. Of the 209 sources the Library of Congress lists as related to CBRN terrorism, 84 were from other popular literature or the news. Also, 22 of the articles were in response to an article written by chemical and biological terrorism expert David Tucker. Essentially 106 sources can be removed from the original 209, making 103 of 295 sources legitimate. Approximately 34 percent of the legitimate sources contained within the 1998 Library of Congress bibliography were focused on CBRN terrorism. This increase is significant and undoubtedly focus was shifting towards CBRN terrorism, but the addition of questionable sources makes the data questionable.

E. CONCLUSION

Silke's statistics can be misleading without a contextual examination, and alone do not justify the claim of obsession. His study showed only 2.7 percent of the research done within the two primary journals was focused on CBRN terrorism, a far cry from obsession. Silke's research also has a narrow focus, only looking at CBRN terrorism within the literature of the two main journals for terrorism: *Terrorism and Political Violence* and *Studies in Conflict &Terrorism*. He does not evaluate any other type of published literature that might have had a CBRN terrorism focus, nor does he look at the wider spectrum of scholarly journals that have published articles on CBRN terrorism (for example proliferation journals).

The statistical analysis within the two major journals would point to a lack of obsession within the academic community concerning the likelihood of CBRN terrorism. Expanding the field of literature provides similar results. A review of the LOC bibliographies shows an increasing concern with CBRN terrorism, but it was not

overwhelming compared to other concerns. Academia was clearly focused on CBRN terrorism as an important issue of the time, but obsession is too strong a word.

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III. POLICYMAKERS

Policymakers first realized the grave threat America faced from terrorism following the first World Trade Center Bombing on February 26, 1993. Arguably, the first international terrorist attack on US soil resulted in the breaching of a psychological security barrier by the American public.[60] This combined with the 1995 Aum Shinrikyo sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway brought about an extreme concern over CBRN terrorism amongst the political leadership of our country. In response policy makers took different measures to reform national security policy. Some viewed these measures as going overboard and obsessive. David Claridge called superterrorism "...a defining obsession of the Clinton administration, comparable to Ronald Regan's fear-mongering Soviet 'evil empire'."[61] Claridge makes this claim with little support, citing only Clinton's fascination with a fiction book, *The Cobra Event*. This chapter will examine the policymaking community from the 1990s until 9/11 in search of evidence to support or refute the argument that policymakers were obsessed with CBRN terrorism.

In order to analyze the policymaking community, the community must first be defined. Prior to 9/11, more than 40 agencies had a role in counterterrorism. Counterterrorism policy was coordinated by the National Security Council (NSC).[62] At that time, the NSC consisted of the President, Vice President, Secretaries of State, Defense, and Energy, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS).[63] This chapter will investigate CBRN terrorism obsession within the applicable elements from the policymaking community: executive branch, State Department, Department of Defense (DoD). Analysis of the CIA will be

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[60] Robert Kupperman, "A Dangerous Future," *Harvard International Review* 17, no. 3 (1995).

[61] David Claridge, "Exploding the Myths of Superterrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11, no. 4 (1999): 133.

[62] Government Accountability Office, "Combating Terrorism: Linking Threats to Strategies and Resources," in *Statement of Norman J. Rabkin, Testimony Before the Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans Affairs, and International Relations, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives* (Washington, D.C.: Government Accountability Office, July 26, 2000), 3.

[63] Alan G. Whittaker, Frederick C. Smith, and Elizabeth McKune, "The National Security Policy Process: The National Security Council and Interagency System," (Washington, D.C.: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, U.S. Department of Defense, October 8, 2010), 12.

conducted in the next chapter. Also included will be a Congressional analysis, as they provide funding and legislation relative to counterterrorism.

Analysis of the policymaking community will begin with several surveys conducted in the 1990s that examine public and leadership perceptions on national security threats. These survey results show that policymakers were less concerned with terrorism and CBRN terrorism than the general public. This chapter will also examine reform within the government concerning counterterrorism during the 1990s. Following the Cold War, the national security apparatus was changing to meet new threats. How concerned were these institutions with CBRN terrorism? Finally, a review of the executive and legislative branches of government will be conducted in search of obsession. Were the actions of policy makers obsessive concerning CBRN terrorism?

A. LEADERSHIP SURVEYS

The Chicago Council on Foreign relations conducts a survey every four years, in which it surveys both the American public and leadership. An examination of the 1995 and 1999 studies will show a linkage between public perceptions and policymaker attitudes concerning CBRN terrorism.

Applicable to this research, are the 1995 and 1999 surveys that involved over 1,500 citizens and 379 leaders. Surveyed leaders included members of the House and Senate as well as other groups knowledgeable in international affairs to include: business, media, academics, and policy institutions.[64] The table below shows the perceptions of the most dangerous threats to U.S. interests from the 1995 survey:

[64] The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, "American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy 1999," ed. John E. Reilly (Chicago: The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1999), 3.

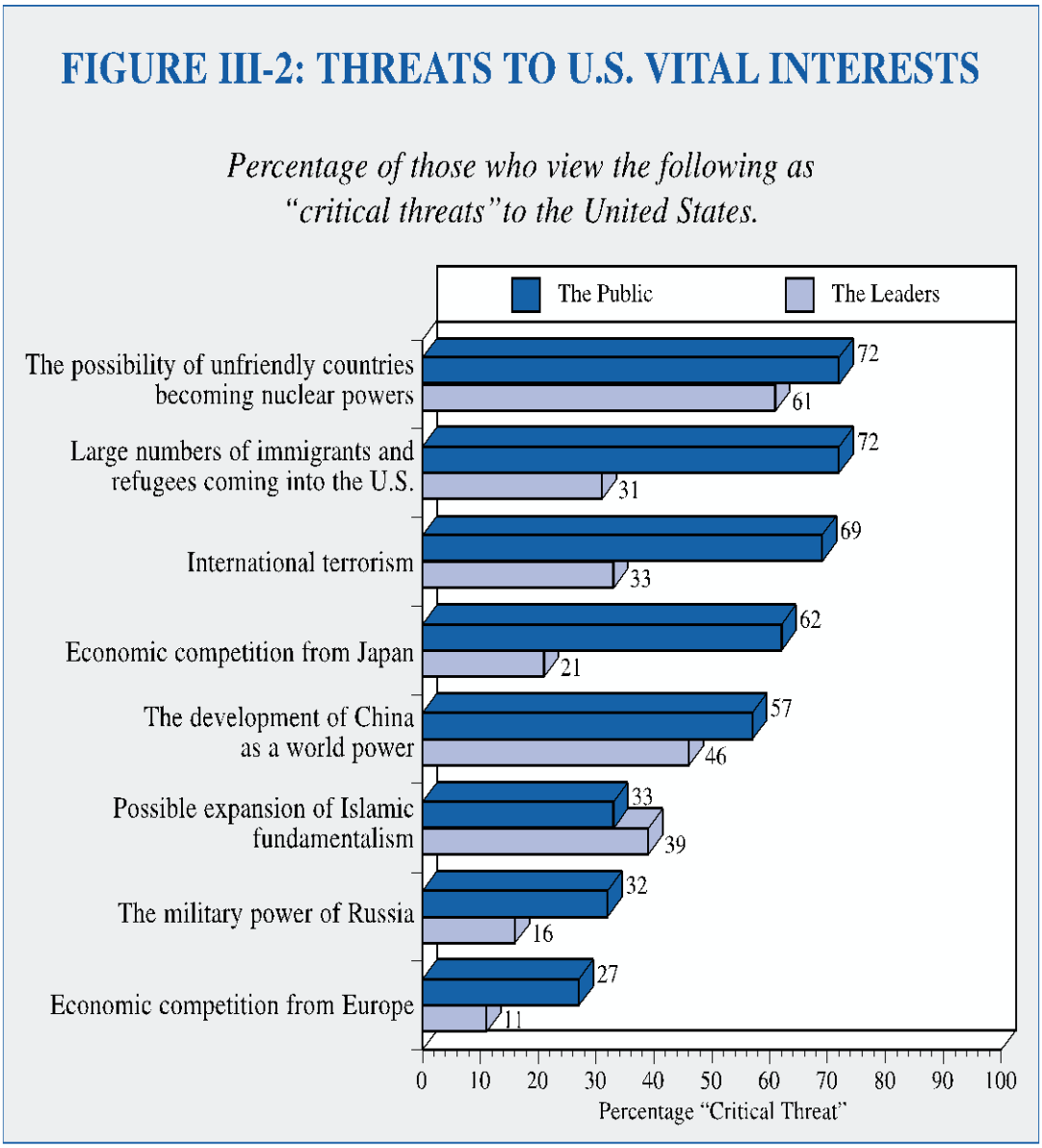

Figure 1. 1995 Perceived Threats to National Security (From [65])

Related to issues of CBRN terrorism in this study are the threats of nuclear proliferation and international terrorism. Unfriendly countries proliferating nuclear technology or weapons to terrorist groups is a worst-case scenario. Public opinion was most concerned with nuclear proliferation, with 72 percent of those surveyed believing

[65] The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, "American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy 1995," ed. John E. Reilly (Chicago: The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 1995), 21.

this to be a critical threat. This category was also the highest concern for leadership, with 61 percent finding nuclear proliferation as a critical threat. Also of interest is the gap of 36 percentage points between the public and leadership over international terrorism. Leadership appeared to be less concerned about international terrorism than the public. The 1995 data shows a concern with both proliferation and terrorism, but this alone does not indicate an obsession. A comparison of the 1995 and 1999 polls will be useful to determine changes in attitudes relative to CBRN terrorism.

From April 19, 1995 until August 7, 1998, the U.S. experienced three major terrorist attacks against its interests. In the largest domestic terrorist attack on our soil, the Oklahoma City bombing resulted in 168 dead and 600 wounded. Khobar Towers, a military housing facility in Saudi Arabia was bombed on June 25, 1996, resulting in 19 Americans killed and 240 Americans wounded. The most devastating of attacks were the multiple U.S. embassy bombings on August 7, 1998 that resulted in 301 total deaths and 5,077 people wounded. Combined with the 1995 Aum Shinrikyo Sarin attacks, public attitudes on terrorism drastically changed. The table below shows the survey results of threat perceptions from the 1999 study:

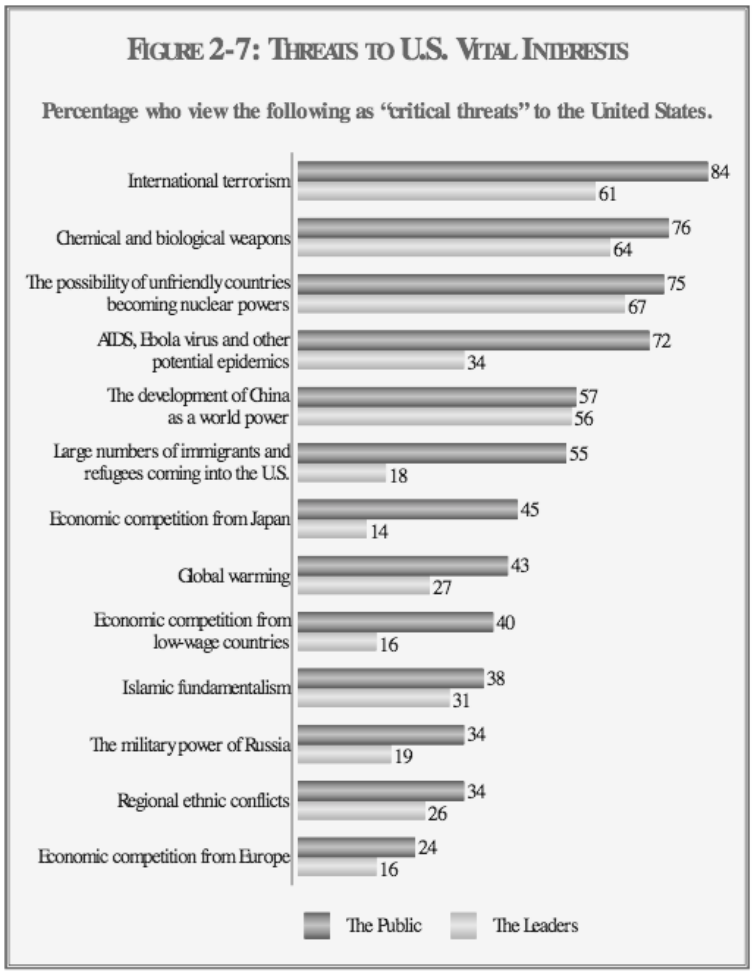

Figure 2. 1999 Perceived Threats to National Security (From [66])

Public fears over international terrorism significantly increased from 69 percent to 84 percent from 1995 to 1999. Leadership now placed international terrorism at the top of the threat list with a 28-point increase from the 1995 poll. Nuclear proliferation fears remained roughly the same between the two surveys. What is significant is the emergence of chemical and biological weapons as a critical threat. Prior to 1999, they were not on the list of significant threats.

Citizens and leaders alike became more concerned with international terrorism as the nation moved towards the new millennium. Fears of chemical, biological, and

[66] The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations," American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy 1999," 15.

nuclear proliferation were viewed as a significant threat to U.S. vital interests. Obsessive behavior cannot be proven with these statistics alone. An examination of how politicians reacted in the wake of these new threats and attitudes is necessary to prove or disprove obsession.

B. POLICY COMMISSIONS

Following the Cold War, policymakers realized threats to U.S. national security had changed significantly. Subsequently, 12 commissions, studies, and task forces were conducted to examine U.S. counterterrorism policy, the intelligence community, and the law enforcement community.[67] In her study of these commissions, Amy Zegart looks at intelligence and non-intelligence recommendations that were made and whether these were implemented. She concludes that prior to 9/11, U.S. intelligence agencies were unable to adapt to the evolving terrorist threat.[68] The relevant question to this thesis thus becomes, were policymakers or intelligence agencies unable to adjust to the threat because they were obsessed with WMD terrorism?

Zegart categorized the 12 commissions by primary topic into three categories: intelligence, law enforcement, and counterterrorism.

[67] Amy B. Zegart, *Spying Blind: The CIA, the FBI, and the Origins of 9/11* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 27.

[68] Ibid., 35.

Study	Topic	Intelligence Recommendations	Non-Intelligence Recommendations	Total	Intelligence Percent of Study
Council on Foreign Relations	Intelligence	29	0	29	100%
National Performance Review	Intelligence	35	0	35	100%
National Institute for Public Policy	Intelligence	34	0	34	100%
House Intelligence Comm. Staff	Intelligence	74	1	75	99%
Aspin-Brown Commission	Intelligence	38	1	39	97%
20th Century Fund	Intelligence	17	1	18	94%
FBI Strategic Plan 1998	Law Enforcement	54	6	60	90%
Webster Commission	Law Enforcement	10	11	21	48%
Bremer Commission	Counterterrorism	12	24	36	33%
Deutch Commission	Counterterrorism (WMD)	17	40	57	30%
Gilmore Commission	Counterterrorism	14	46	60	23%
Hart-Rudman	Counterterrorism	6	44	50	12%
Total		340	174	514	66%

Table 4. Summary of Commissions Reviewed by Zegart (From [69])

This section will examine those commissions where intelligence was less than 50 percent of the total concentration, as identified by Zegart. The other commissions and studies with an intelligence focus will be examined in the next chapter.

Five of the 12 studies have a non-intelligence focus. Were any of these studies obsessively focused on CBRN terrorism?

[69] Zegart, 32.

The next section will review the five counterterror and law enforcement commissions to examine what were determined to be the greatest threats to national security and where CBRN terrorism ranked within those threats.

1. 1998 FBI Strategic Plan

In response to the changing security environment and both international and domestic terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, the FBI began to reexamine its priorities. The plan for this change was released in draft form in May of 1998. This report is unavailable, but the new priorities outlined by this plan have been cited elsewhere. According to the strategic plan, the FBI highest priorities were national and economic security, which was defined as "foreign intelligence, terrorist, and criminal activities that directly threaten the national or economic security of the United States."[70] The following graphic depicts FBI priorities according to the strategic plan:

[70] U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General Audit Division, "Federal Bureau of Investigation Casework and Human Resource Allocation: Audit Report 03-37," (September 2003), ii.

Figure 3. 1998 FBI Strategic Plan Priorities (From [71])

Nowhere within these goals is any mention of CBRN terrorism. Without access to the original document to view any subsets of these tiers and goals, FBI attention to CBRN terrorism prior to 9/11 will be difficult to examine. The Inspector General (IG) report where the Strategic Plan goals were obtained listed WMD as a subset of the domestic counterterrorism program, but provided no further information on the program.

[71] U.S. DOJ Office of the IG Audit Division, iii.

Unrelated to the strategic plan, but important to the search for obsession with CBRN terrorism, the remainder of this section will address the FBI's focus on WMD terrorism prior to 9/11.

Prior to 9/11 the FBI had two units responsible for WMD. The operational unit is concerned with "operations, cases, and threats, which reportedly tripled in 1997 over 1996 figures."[72] A support unit covers a countermeasure program, conducts exercises, and assists in first responder training. Over 100 cases involving WMD were investigated by the FBI in 1997. Did this increase in caseload subsequently increase obsession? Thirty interagency exercises involving CBRN incidents were conducted between October 1994 and March 1997.[73] If these exercises occurred more frequently than other types, does this point to an obsession?

The following summarizes the FBI counterterrorism budget from 1995–1999:

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
$256.1M	$344.9M	$481.5M	$581.2M	$608.6M

Table 5. FBI Counterterrorism Budget 1995–1999[74]

Counterterrorism funds more than doubled from 1995 to 1999. This would point to an enhanced concern with terrorism in general. An examination of CBRN terrorism budget items is difficult because a lack of specific numbers and incomplete reporting. A GAO report broke down some spending categorically only in 1997 and 1998. In 1997, $22.9 million was spent on counterterrorism personnel directly associated with CBRN terrorism (the majority of this money was used for CBRN investigations). This equals roughly 27.6 percent of the overall personnel budget in 1997 (corresponding to the increased number of CBRN investigations, mostly hoaxes).[75] Non-personnel expenditures related to CBRN terrorism was only $6 million, 11.7 percent of the overall non-personnel

[72] See note 3, United States General Acounting Office, "Combating Terrorism: FBI's Use of Federal Funds for Counterterrorism-Related Activities (FYs 1995–98) GAO-GGD-99–7," (Washington, D.C.: GAO, November 1998), 26.

[73] Ibid., 32.

[74] Ibid., 8.

[75] Ibid., 40.

budget.[76] Allocations in 1998 were not specified for personnel. Non-personnel expenses related to CBRN were $7 million, approximately 13 percent of overall non-personnel expenditures.[77] Financial data is incomplete, and what data is available clearly points to an increased concern with terrorism in general, but not obsession with CBRN terrorism. CBRN terrorism was a new concern that had not been addressed by the government prior to this point. Increased spending merely points to the significant cost in bringing new programs online.

2. Webster Commission (2000)

As a result of the Robert Hanssen espionage case, the Commission for the Review of FBI Security Programs was established. Headed by William Webster, the Webster Commission was charged with analyzing and recommending changes to the FBI security program.[78] The commission was not concerned with WMD terrorism.

3. Bremer Commission (2000)

In response to growing threats and concerns over terrorism in the late 1990s, Congress created the National Commission on Terrorism to "...evaluate U.S. laws, policies, and practices for preventing and punishing terrorism aimed at U.S. citizens."[79] Zegart's analysis of the Bremer Commission examined the number of intelligence and non-intelligence recommendations. She counted 36 total recommendations made by the Bremer Commission, 12 intelligence and 24 non-intelligence recommendations.[80] To expand her analysis to this thesis, one must look at the specific recommendations to determine if the commission had an excessive WMD focus.

The Bremer Commission mentions CBRN terrorism as the number four of the five total recommendations: "A terrorist attack involving a biological agent, deadly

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[76] Ibid., 41.

[77] Ibid., 42.

[78] Commission for Review of FBI Security Programs, "A Review of FBI Security Programs," (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Justice, March 2002), 7.

[79] Raphael F. Perl, "CRS Report for Congress: National Commission on Terrorism Report: Background and Issues for Congress," (Congressional Research Service, February 6, 2001,), 2.

[80] Zegart, 32.

chemicals, or nuclear or radiological material, even if it succeeds only partially, could profoundly affect the entire nation. The government must do more to prepare for such an event."[81] At first glance, this appears to suggest that CBRN terrorism was not the top priority. Policymakers obsessed with CBRN terrorism would have made this the number one recommendation. If it were, this might better support an obsession claim. A careful examination of the commission's recommendations is needed to support or refute obsession.

This study of the Bremer Commission found 37 total recommendations (Zegart excludes some "because they suggested no actionable steps or focused narrowly on cost savings").[82] These recommendations were further classified under the following groups: CIA, FBI, Counterterrorism, information sharing, foreign policy, terrorism financing, legal reform, budget, and CBRN.

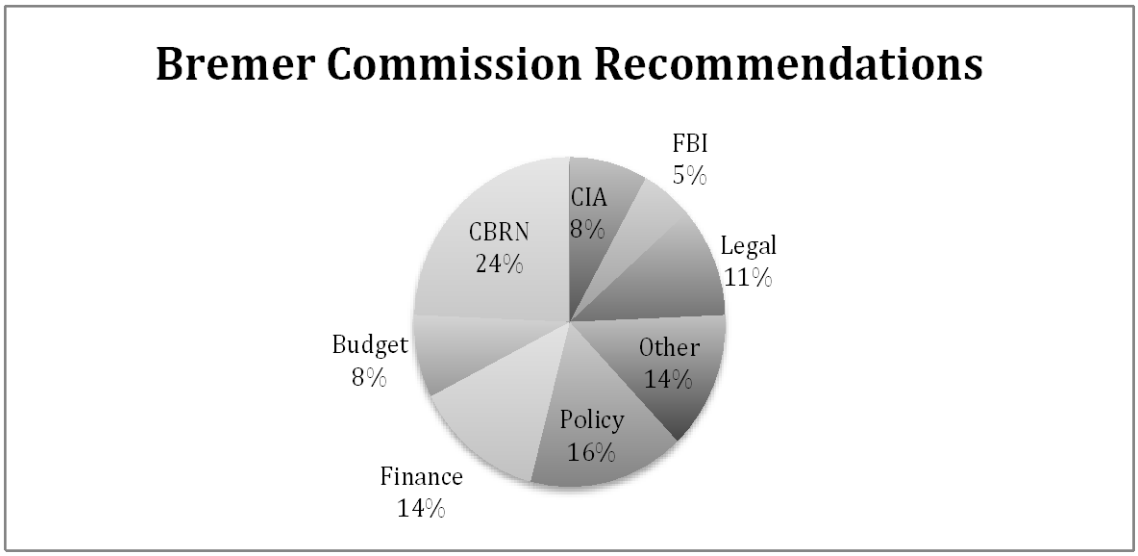

Figure 4. Bremer Commission Recommendations[83]

Approximately one quarter of the recommendations were related to countering CBRN terrorism. This number shows a significant focus on CBRN terrorism, but falls

[81] National Commission on Terrorism (Bremer Commission), "Countering the Changing Threat of International Terrorism: Report of the National Commission on Terrorism," (Washington, D.C.: 2000), v.

[82] Zegart, 201.

[83] Bremer Commission.

short of evidence of obsession. It supports the findings from the FBI study, where the focus is making up for the lack of a previous capability, and further shows counterterrorism and proliferation as but one of the many national security concerns.

4. Deutch Commission (1998–1999)

Congress tasked the Commission to Assess the Organization of the Federal Government to Combat the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (Deutch Commission) to "assess the organization of the Federal Government with regard to WMD proliferation and to make recommendations for improvements."[84] Established in 1998, the commission made its final report on July 14, 1999. The commission found five key worries to U.S. security. They found the most serious threat to the United States as the "terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction against the United States or its allies..."[85] Other concerns included: manufacturing capability and stockpiles of CBRN weapons of "Iran, Iraq, North Korea, or other unfriendly states;" Russian "weapons, technology, materials, and expertise" flowing to other nations; China as a proliferator of "ballistic missiles, weapons of mass destruction, and enabling technologies;" and the destabilizing effect of WMD programs throughout the world.[86] Ultimately the commission found "that the US Government is not effectively organized to combat proliferation."[87]

The 57 recommendations made by the commission focus on nonproliferation and counterproliferation. A review of the recommendations found 79 percent to deal with nonproliferation, 19 percent other (topics included intelligence sharing, analysis and estimates, budget transfers, FBI automated information systems, improved FBI-CIA coordination, and vaccine stockpiles) and 2 percent counterterrorism. This is still significant in that CBRN terrorism is less likely to happen if terrorists are unable to obtain the weapons. Given the technical issues with a group constructing their own

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[84] Commission to Assess the Organization of the Federal Government to Combat the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (Deutch Commission), *Combating Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction* (1999), v.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid., 4.

[87] Ibid., v.

weapon, it is more likely that a group would acquire weapons through black markets or state-sponsors, a proliferation issue. The commission highlighted the fact that the U.S. government had not seriously addressed the threat of CBRN terrorism and nonproliferation. While the fact this commission was established showed an interest in WMD, it is not surprising that a WMD commission would focus on CBRN terrorism threats, and thus does not help support an obsession claim.

5. Gilmore Commission (1999–2000)

The Commission to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (Gilmore Commission) was also focused solely on CBRN terrorism. At first glance, another report with this narrow focus might support the obsession claim. This report starts with the statement, "The possibility that terrorists will use 'weapons of mass destruction (WMD)' in this country to kill and injure Americans, including those responsible for protecting and saving lives, presents a genuine threat to the United States."[88] In their analysis, the commission uses a methodology similar to the one outlined in Chapter II, focusing on capability and intent. They conclude that it would be difficult for terrorists to gain CBRN weapons, but ".... such a catastrophic event is within the realm of possibility. Therefore, the panel believes that comprehensive capabilities must be developed to respond to incidents across a broad spectrum."[89]

Despite the focus of the long-term commission on CBRN terrorism, the commission does not take an obsessive view of the threat, although they indicate "...too much of the Federal effort to date—even those programs that ostensibly are designed to enhance state and local response capabilities—has been predicated on the tacit assumption that preparing for the 'worst case' will automatically encompass lesser threats."[90] Contrary to the actions of the government, the commission urges balance

[88] Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (Gilmore Commission), *First Annual Report to the President and the Congress: Assessing the Threat* (1999), 9.

[89] Ibid., 21.

[90] Ibid., 55.

between catastrophic threats and the more likely conventional weapons terrorists have traditionally employed. They note that a successful CBRN terrorist attack would cause great harm but "...it is highly unlikely that it could ever completely undermine the national security, much less the survival, of the United States as a nation."[91] Such a statement undermines the beliefs of the superterrorism school. If our way of life cannot be destroyed, then worrying excessively about CBRN terrorism is a misplacement of assets and fears.

6. Hart-Rudman Commission (1998–2001)

The U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century (Hart-Rudman Commission) was given three tasks: "First, to analyze the emerging international security environment; Next, to develop a U.S. national security strategy appropriate to that environment; Finally to assess the various security institutions for their current relevance to the effective and efficient implementation of that strategy, and to recommend adjustments as necessary."[92] The remainder of this section will search for any focus on CBRN terrorism within the commission's findings.

As a result of their study, the Hart-Rudman Commission found 14 major themes and implications for the world through 2025. First and foremost was, "America will become increasingly vulnerable to hostile attack on our homeland, and our military superiority will not entirely protect us."[93] Within this theme, the commission found that "States, terrorists, and other disaffected groups will acquire weapons of mass destruction and mass disruption, and some will use them. Americans will likely die on American soil, possibly in large numbers."[94] Other obsessive language within the report is the declaration that "the United States should assume that it will be a target of terrorist attacks against its homeland using weapons of mass destruction. The United States will

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[91] Gilmore Commission, 37.

[92] The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century (Hart-Rudman Commission), "New World Coming: American Security in the 21st Century, Supporting Research and Analysis," in *The Phase I Report of the Emerging Global Security Environment for the First Quarter of the 21st Century* (September 15, 1999,), v.

[93] Ibid., 138.

[94] Ibid.

be vulnerable to such strikes."[95] Listed as the second major theme and implication associated with CBRN terrorism is "rapid advances in information and biotechnologies will create new vulnerabilities for U.S. security."[96] The report finds that bioterrorism is the most likely of the CBRN family to be used: "Biological weapons are the most likely choice of means for disaffected states and groups of the 21st century. They are nearly as easy to develop as chemical weapons, they are far more lethal, and they are likely to become easier to deliver."[97] These findings are significant in advancing the obsession theme.

C. PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

President Clinton was fascinated by CBRN weapons through his reading of fiction books on the subject. Some have gone so far as to call Clinton obsessed with CBRN proliferation and terrorism. Claridge finds CBRN terrorism as "...a defining obsession of the Clinton administration..."[98] He blames this fascination on Clinton's reading of the Richard Preston bio-terror novel, *The Cobra Event*."[99] Clinton confirmed this fascination in an interview with the New York Times in 1999 stating, "...I also find that reading novels, futuristic novels—sometimes people with an imagination are not wrong—Preston's novel about biological warfare..."[100] He further calls the Cobra Event impressive because of its credible sources. The novel also had an impact on Congress, with author Richard Preston testifying before Congress on April 22, 1998. During this testimony Preston describes how the far reaching impact of his "...fact-based novel The Cobra Event, which describes a bioterrorism event in New York City, and which I understand President Clinton, Defense Secretary William Cohen, and Speaker Newt

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[95] Ibid., 49.

[96] Hart-Rudman Commission, 138.

[97] Ibid., 50.

[98] Claridge, 133.

[99] Ibid., 134.

[100] The White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Interview of the President by the New York Times," (January 23, 1999,).

Gingrich have all read with interest..."[101] The remainder of this section will examine Clinton speeches and policy documents in search of obsession.

Seth Carus conducted a study of presidential use of the word "WMD" from Truman to George W. Bush. His search examined those papers that were available in the American Presidency Project. Only speeches and press conferences were examined and yielded the following results:

Truman	3
Eisenhower	2
Kennedy	4
Johnson	6
Nixon	1
Ford	0
Carter	1
Reagan	6
Bush	14
Clinton	200+

Table 6. Presidential Use of "WMD" in Speeches[102]

President Clinton had used the term significantly more than his predecessors. Does this equate to obsession, or more likely a president aware of and addressing new threats facing his nation?

WMD rhetoric was transformed into action on November 14, 1994, when President Clinton declared a state of emergency regarding WMD proliferation:

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[101] Richard Preston, "Statement for the Record by Richard Preston before the Senate Judiciary Subcommitte on Technology, Terrorism & Government Information and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence," in *Chemical and Biological Weapons Threats to America: Are we Prepared?* (April 22, 1998,).

[102] W. Seth Carus, "Defining "Weapons of Mass Destruction"," (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, February 2006,), 42.

> I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, find that the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons ("weapons of mass destruction") and of the means of delivering such weapons, constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States, and hereby declare a national emergency to deal with that threat.[103]

Continuing further down this path, Clinton later issued Presidential Decision Directive Number 39 in 1995 stating:

> The United States shall give the highest priority to developing effective capabilities to detect, prevent, defeat and manage the consequences of nuclear, biological or chemical (NBC) materials or weapons use by terrorists. (U) The acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by a terrorist group, through theft or manufacture, is unacceptable. There is no higher priority than preventing the acquisition of this capability or removing this capability from terrorist groups potentially opposed to the U.S. (U)[104]

Even though the president was deeply concerned with CBRN terrorism, obsession is probably not an accurate label for the administration. In a later speech he stated,

> I have been stressing the importance of this issue, now, for some time. As I have said repeatedly, and I want to say again to you, I am not trying to put any American into a panic over this, but I am determined to see that we have a serious, deliberate, disciplined, long-term response to a legitimate potential threat to the lives and safety of the American people.[105]

President Clinton had the responsibility to ensure a system was set up to deal with this emerging threat. An increase in spending to ensure adequate defensive measures were in place was likely viewed as obsessive by some, as spending goes from zero to a large amount. The next section will examine if rhetoric was put into action in the form of national security priorities.

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[103] William Jefferson Clinton, "Executive Order 12938: Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction," (November 14,1994,), 1.

[104] William Jefferson Clinton, "Presidential Decision Directive/NSC-39: U.S. Policy on Counterterrorism," (June 21, 1995), 9.

[105] William Jefferson Clinton, "Remarks by the President to 17th Annual Legislative Conference of the International Association of Fire Fighters," (March 15, 1999).

1. National Security Strategy Documents

Proliferation of WMD was an important element of every National Security Strategy (NSS) from 1990 to 1994. As early as 1990, President Bush recognized the need to "prevent the transfer of militarily critical technologies and resources to hostile countries or groups, especially the spread of weapons of mass destruction and associated high-technology means of delivery."[106] Beginning with President Clinton in 1994, the language began to change to specifically address the threat of terrorism with WMD: "Terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction represents a particularly dangerous potential threat that must be countered."[107] This language was repeated verbatim in the 1995 and 1996 updates to the NSS.[108] In 1997, radical changes to the NSS began concerning the language used to describe the threat of CBRN terrorism.

In 1997, the Clinton Administration called "Weapons of mass destruction the greatest potential threat to global security."[109] Previously proliferation was a major security challenge. Thus, the change from major security challenge to "greatest potential threat to global security," is significant. Proliferation of CBRN weapons appears to be more important than CBRN terrorism. However, Clinton later goes on to state that "danger exists from outlaw states opposed to regional and global security efforts and transnational actors, such as terrorists or international crime organizations, potentially employing nuclear, chemical or biological weapons against unprotected peoples or governments."[110] The following year, the possibility of CBRN terrorism is noted as a special concern.[111] WMD threats to the homeland emerged in the 1998 NSS as a result

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[106] George Herbert Walker Bush, "National Security Strategy of the United States," (Washington, D.C.: The White House, March 1990), 2.

[107] William Jefferson Clinton, "A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement," (Washington, D.C.: The White House, July 1994), 8.

[108] William Jefferson Clinton, "A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement," (Washington, D.C.: The White House, February 1995), 10; William Jefferson Clinton, "A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement," (Washington, D.C.: The White House, February 1996), 16.

[109] William Jefferson Clinton, "A National Security Strategy for a New Century," (Washington, D.C.: The White House, May 1997), Section II.

[110] Ibid.

[111] William Jefferson Clinton, "A National Security Strategy for a New Century," (Washington, D.C.: The White House, October 1998), 6.

of Clinton's Presidential Decision Directive 62 that established policy and responsibilities for CBRN terrorist attacks on U.S. soil.[112] Prior to 1998, CBRN terrorism threats to the U.S. were not addressed. Little changed in the 1999 NSS, but a new buzzword emerged—the nexus between terrorism and proliferation.[113] Evolution within the multitude of NSS' during the 1990s was shown above, but what does this mean relative to obsession with CBRN terrorism?

National Security Strategies provide general strategic guidance to government agencies and the general public. If the administrations were obsessed with CBRN terrorism, it would have gotten higher priority within these documents. In the final NSS before 9/11, the 1999 NSS identified the following list of threats in order: Regional or state-centered threats, transnational threats (includes terrorism), spread of dangerous technologies, failed states, foreign intelligence collection, and environmental health threats.[114] Had policymakers been obsessed with CBRN terrorism, the threat would have been placed higher than the traditional conflicts of the century in terms of threats to U.S. interests.

D. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Every year the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) provides a report to the President and Congress on Department of Defense (DoD) capabilities. This report includes strategic guidance from the SECDEF reiterating the President's National Security Strategy and includes a list of U.S. vital interests. The table below summarizes the priorities listed by these documents from the 1990s. [115]

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[112] William Jefferson Clinton, "A National Security Strategy for a New Century," (1998), 19.

[113] William Jefferson Clinton, "A National Security Strategy for a New Century," (Washington, D.C.: The White House, December 1999), iv.

[114] Ibid., 2–3.

[115] See the 1995–2001 reports from the Secretaries of Defense, William J. Perry and William Cohen, *Annual Report to the President and Congress*, (Washington, D.C.).

1995 Perry	1996 Perry	1997 Cohen	1998 Cohen	1999 Cohen	2000 Cohen	2001 Cohen
Regional Conflict	Regional Conflict	Regional Conflict	Regional Conflict	Large Scale Aggression	Large Scale Aggression	Cross Border Conflict
Internal Conflict	Internal Conflict	Internal Conflict	Failed States	Flow of Dangerous Technology	Internal Conflict	Internal Conflict
WMD Acquisition/use	WMD Acquisition/use	WMD Acquisition/use	Transnational Dangers	Transnational Dangers	Development of Dangerous Military Technology	Proliferation
Threats to Democracy	Threats to Democracy	Threats to Democracy	Proliferation of dangerous Technology	Threats to the Homeland	Transnational Threats	Transnational Threats
Subversion of friendly governments	Subversion of friendly governments	Subversion of friendly governments		Failed States	Humanitarian Disaster	Humanitarian Disaster
Terrorism	Terrorism	Terrorism		Asymmetric Weapons		
Threats to prosperity	Threats to prosperity	Threats to prosperity				
Environmental Change	Environmental Change	Environmental Change				
Drugs	Drugs	Drugs				
	International Crime	International Crime				

Table 7. SECDEF Priorities 1995–2001

While the individual issues of terrorism and counterproliferation appear within the priorities of the DoD, CBRN terrorism does not appear in the top concerns. That is not today that they were not concerned, when Secretary of Defense William Cohen took over from William Perry, he noted that "in particular, the nexus of such lethal knowledge and the emergence of terrorist movements dedicated to massive casualties represents a new paradigm for national security."[116] CBRN terrorism was just one of many national security concerns of the DoD, but their actions relevant to the threats did not constitute obsessive behavior.

E. CONGRESS

The 1980s were filled with a string of terrorist attacks on U.S. interests with the most significant attacks occurring in the 1983 Beirut bombings of the U.S. Embassy and Marine barracks. Following the attacks, two commissions were formed to investigate. Admiral Long chaired one of these commissions within the DOD, recommending a more proactive approach to counterterrorism.[117] The other commission chaired by former CIA director Inman recommended improvements to security of State Department facilities abroad. Congress was affected by these reports, reinvigorating "two existing but largely quiescent interagency bodies, the Interagency Intelligence Committee on Terrorism and the Interagency Group on Terrorism."[118] This renewed interest on terrorism led to the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) being tasked to "study the state of research and development into technologies that could be of use in countering terrorism."[119] The remainder of this section will review those OTA reports in search of obsession with CBRN terrorism.

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[116] William S. Cohen, *Annual Report to the President and Congress* 1998 (Washington, D.C., 1998), Chapter 1.

[117] Office of Technology Assessment U.S. Congress, *Technology against Terrorism: The Federal Effort* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991), 1.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid., 3.

1. Congressional Office of Technology Assessments

The first study by the OTA examined technology related to counterterrorism, specifically focused on explosives detection for airline security. Also studied, was the level of coordination between the many federal agencies within the counterterror field. Findings from the study were released in the spring of 1991. Two of the five findings were concerned with the lack of budgeting for research and development of emerging explosives detection devices. The other three findings were concerned with current explosives screening devices. Interestingly, the fifth recommendation advocated more than just a technological approach, but enhanced "passenger screening, could play a strong role in improving security in commercial air travel."[120] Concerns over terrorists employing chemical or biological weapons also emerged in the first OTA study.

OTA researchers noted, "While little, if any terrorist activity has yet been manifest in the chemical or biological arenas, most observers agree that the technical capability for designing weapons based on these agents is not beyond the abilities of a large number of currently active terrorist organizations."[121] On nuclear terrorism, the report believes the probability of a nuclear terrorism incident is low.[122] They find the odds of a chemical or biological attack by terrorists "are perhaps even or slightly higher."[123] Fears of CBRN terrorism were fueled by comments from Iranian President Rafsanjani where he urged "Islamic Fighters" to fully equip themselves "both in the offensive and defensive use of chemical, bacteriological, and radiological weapons."[124] A known state sponsor of terrorism, who had been involved in terrorist acts against the U.S., in possession of a CBRN program constituted a real threat to U.S. national security. This led the OTA to the conclude, "There is a very real possibility of attacks using

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[120] Office of Technology Assessment U.S. Congress, *Technology against Terrorism: The Federal Effort*, 10.

[121] Ibid., 13.

[122] Ibid., 20.

[123] Ibid., 21.

[124] Ibid., 22.

chemical or biological weapons of mass destruction in the near future."[125] However, this is only one of nine conclusions the study reaches on the future of terrorism. Once again, CBRN terrorism was a concern, but only one of many.

A subsequent report issued in 1992, followed up on the 1991 report and focused on four areas not covered by the previous report including: bio-terror threat, cooperation in counterterrorism research and development, aviation security, and a human factors approach to aviation security.[126] A section devoted to "Terrorism and Biological Weapons" found that "U.S. targets are vulnerable to a biological attack."[127] Recommendations were made to develop detection equipment and vaccines for known biological agents. Overall, the report issued ten findings: one dealing with the chemical and biological terrorism threat, one concerning interagency communication and coordination, two dealt with aviation security, and six with an integrated human factors approach to security.[128] Of these ten findings, eight were focused on aviation security as the threat flavor of the day because of the aircraft bombing entering the mainstream terrorist arsenal during the late 1980s. Thus, this report was more concerned with aviation security than CBRN terrorism.

Another OTA report entitled, *Proliferation of WMD: Assessing the Risk* was issued in 1993. The purpose of this report was "to assist Congress in its efforts to strengthen and broaden U.S. policies to control the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."[129] CBRN terrorism is not addressed in the report, but it does focus on an issue central to CBRN terrorism, proliferation.[130] More CBRN weapons on the market increases the risk that terrorist groups could acquire them. No CBRN terrorism focus is evident in this final OTA report on issues linked to CBRN terrorism.

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[125] Office of Technology Assessment U.S. Congress, *Technology against Terrorism: The Federal Effort,* 28.

[126] Office of Technology Assessment U.S. Congress, *Technology against Terrorism: Structuring Security* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), 4.

[127] Ibid., 44.

[128] Ibid., 5–13.

[129] Office of Technology Assessment U.S. Congress, *Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: Assessing the Risks,* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), iii.

[130] Ibid., 71.

F. STATE DEPARTMENT

The State Department publishes an annual assessment of terrorist groups and state sponsors. According to the State Department website, "U.S. law requires the Secretary of State to provide Congress, by April 30 of each year, a full and complete report on terrorism with regard to those countries and groups meeting criteria set forth in the legislation."[131] In 1999, the report started to include a special inset devoted to WMD terrorism, listed behind the state sponsors of terrorism (prior to 1999, this insert did not exist). This first report notes the increased possibility of WMD terrorism, but states most terrorists will focus on conventional weapons with some attempting to acquire CBRN weapons.[132] Following in the 1999 reports footsteps, the 2000 report contained a WMD insert that noted the threat "remained real," and that bin Laden sought CBRN capabilities.[133] The 2001 Report was submitted after 9/11 and continued to report on WMD terrorism under the new label of CBRN terrorism. CBRN terrorism concerns were elevated following 9/11 with the State Department report noting, "In the wake of these unprecedented attacks, terrorists increasingly may look to use chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) materials—many of which can cause significant casualties—to rival the events of September 11."[134]

G. CONCLUSION

In the 1999 Council on Foreign Relations study, Editor John Reilly noted, "In a democracy we expect policy to be generally congruent with public opinion."[135] A review of public opinion prior to 9/11 shows a public deeply concerned with CBRN terrorism and terrorism in general. Obsession is a difficult threshold to cross, where rhetoric must meet with reality. Commissions in search of direction for national security and counterterrorism policy found terrorism and proliferation to be significant threats to the

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[131] http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/index.htm

[132] U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1999* (Washington, D.C., 1999), 36.

[133] U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000* (Washington, D.C., 2000), WMD Insert.

[134] U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001* (Washington, D.C., 2002), 66.

[135] The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, "American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy 1999," 37.

U.S., but they were not obsessed with CBRN terrorism. They found a hole in our policy and defense regarding CBRN weapons and terrorism. In response policymakers shifted assets to forge a previously non-existent capability.

If obsession with CBRN terrorism did not exist prior to 9/11, perhaps 9/11 was a catalyst for such an obsession. In the wake of the attack, national security documents began to emerge that were previously nonexistent, such as the National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction. This document noted, "Weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—nuclear, biological, and chemical—in the possession of hostile states and terrorists represent one of the greatest security challenges facing the United States."[136] This will be discussed in further detail in the final chapter.

[136] George W. Bush, "National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction," (December 2002), 1.

V. INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, intelligence agencies faced a barrage of criticism for failing to prevent the attack. The 9/11 Commission found three intelligence failures within the overall imagination failure. First, was a failure to understand the nature and severity of the terrorist threat. Next, they discovered "...fault lines within our government--between foreign and domestic intelligence, and between and within our agencies..."[137] Finally, they found a failure to share information between the various intelligence agencies. The failure of not understanding the threat has been widely debated and will most likely never be agreed upon. Failures attributed to barriers and information sharing are not new failures, numerous commissions and studies have highlighted them during the 1990s. The 9/11 Commission found much of the imagination failure related to the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) process, which they found to have been inadequately updated prior to 9/11. They view this product as the vehicle that might have highlighted an increased threat, and thus increased prevention measures potentially foiling the attack. Another main focus of the 9/11 Commission Report was the failure to analyze how aircraft might be used as a weapon. What is missing from most analysis is an understanding of what intelligence agencies were focused on prior to the attacks. Were they preoccupied by CBRN terrorism? As discussed in the literature review, the 9/11 Commission made a vague indication that this might have been the case, but did not provide any support to this claim.

This chapter will start with an examination of intelligence reform prior to 9/11, in an attempt to analyze whether the intelligence community (IC) was too focused on CBRN terrorism. The second portion of this chapter will examine the annual threat hearing before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. IC leadership presents their views of likely threats to national security in this annual testimony. One finding of this

[137] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, xvi.

research is that the concern with CBRN terrorism was growing in the community prior to 9/11, but they were not obsessed. In fact, they had too many issues and not enough assets to be obsessed with any one area.

A. INTELLIGENCE COMMISSIONS

The previous chapter analyzed commissions during the 1990s that recommended changes to national security policy. Amy Zegart studied 12 commissions dealing with intelligence, law enforcement, and counterterrorism reform. Commissions with an intelligence focus will be examined in this section to determine whether the IC was obsessed with CBRN terrorism, as the 9/11 Commission obscurely hints at.

1. Aspin-Brown Commission

As a result of the fall of Communism and the Ames espionage case, Congress chartered the commission in October of 1994 to review the IC.[138] The collapse of the Soviet Union caused many to ask the question, do we still need intelligence. Commissioners were tasked with answering this question, and with how to improve the system's efficiency and effectiveness.[139] Did the Aspin-Brown Commission focus the IC on CBRN terrorism?

A total of 39 recommendations (38 intelligence and one non-intelligence) were made by the Aspin-Brown Commission. Only one recommendation was related to CBRN terrorism:

> The Commission recommends that the President by Executive Order reaffirm that global criminal activities such as terrorism, narcotics trafficking, organized crime, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are national security matters and require a coordinated, multi-agency response. A law enforcement approach alone is inadequate.[140]

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[138] Commission on the Roles and Capabilities of the United States Intelligence Community (Aspin-Brown Commission), "Preparing for the 21st Century: An Appraisal of U.S. Intelligence," (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1996), xv.

[139] Ibid., xi.

[140] Ibid., 39.

Key issues related to CBRN terrorism, terrorism and proliferation were linked to national security matters. As these issues emerged, they faced competition from a wide variety of other national security issues. CBRN terrorism is but one area of focus for the IC, not the most important. Aspin-Brown and the other commissions were focused on many issues, as shown by the total number of recommendations, and the remainder of these commissions will be more narrowly examined for where CBRN terrorism fits within the priorities for intelligence collection.

2. Council on Foreign Relations

This independent commission notes up front, "The end of the Cold War has not ushered in an age of peace and security."[141] As a result, they look to prioritize U.S. intelligence collection in the following order: "status of nuclear weapons and materials in the former Soviet Union"; Iraq, Iran and North Korea; terrorism against the U.S.; unconventional weapons proliferation; and China.[142] Proliferation and terrorism make up a majority of the priorities outlined by the commission, especially considering the "rogue" status given to Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. It is significant that a major focus is given to issues related to CBRN terrorism, but proliferation seems to be given the most focus.

3. IC21: The Intelligence Community in the 21st Century

Unlike the Council on Foreign Relations study, IC21 found the post-Cold War environment less threatening: "U.S. national security interests are less threatened than at any time since 1940."143 Thus, the committee found it critical to review national security priorities during this period of relative calm. IC21's goal was to "define the type of intelligence community that will best meet U.S. national security needs into the next

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[141] Council on Foreign Relations, "Making Intelligence Smarter," *Task Force Report 7* (1996): 4.

[142] Ibid., 5.

[143] House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, "IC21: Intelligence Community in the 21st Century," (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1996), CH 1, Section II.

century."[144] Zegart counted 75 findings within the IC21 report; most of them are inapplicable to this thesis. Of interest is Section III, which deals with the intelligence requirements process. IC21 found that the IC had adapted to meet the challenges in the post-Cold War environment, but warned of problems within the current process for identifying and prioritizing intelligence needs. This "needs process" is derived from multiple sources including PDD-35 and Strategic Intelligence Reviews and will be discussed in further detail below.

4. National Performance Review

President Clinton directed a sweeping review of the U.S. government in 1993. In his announcement of the program he stated, "Our goal is to make the entire federal government both less expensive and more efficient, and to change the culture of our national bureaucracy away from complacency and entitlement toward initiative and empowerment. We intend to redesign, to reinvent, to reinvigorate the entire national government."[145] As part of this government wide review, the IC was examined and recommendations were made on issues such as organization, integration, and customer service. The only applicable work to this thesis is an ironic premonition. It notes that a diminishing IC "can no longer afford to prepare for worst-case scenarios. Risk management, rather than worst-case scenarios, must drive the setting of priorities and allocation of resources."[146] No evidence of obsession exists in this report, but it warns against such behavior that many accused the Clinton administration of exhibiting.

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[144] Ibid., CH 1, Section II.

[145] National Performance Review, "From Red Tape to Results: Creating a Government That Works Better and Costs Less," (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, September 7, 1993), 1.

[146] National Performance Review, "The Intelligence Community: Accompanying Report of the National Performance Review," in *From Red Tape to Results: Creating a Government that Works Better and Costs Less* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, September 1993), 1.

5. National Institute for Public Policy

This 1997 report was an independent review of the IC and notes up front that "it is not concerned with whether more intelligence attention should be put on the Third World, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, Russia, or economic affairs." Thus, it is inapplicable to this thesis.

6. Twentieth Century Fund Task Force

The Twentieth Century Fund is a "not-for-profit and nonpartisan" organization that was founded in 1919 to sponsor and supervise timely analysis of "economic policy, foreign affairs, and domestic political issues."[147] One purpose of this study was to answer the question, "How has the mission changed?"[148] Task force members found that military needs were dominating the IC and they recommended balance between military and civilian intelligence needs. They found that an increased focus on economic intelligence was needed. Proliferation and terrorism are mentioned as a reflection of the President's National Security Strategy, but there is no focus on either topic in the commission's findings.

B. NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

President Clinton, as a means to prioritize intelligence collection, issued presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 35. While the PDD is still classified, former National Security Advisor Anthony Lake described the process. He stated that PDD-35 "formally established our top intelligence priorities and placed terrorism among them, led only by intelligence support for our troops in the field and a small number of states that posed an immediate or potential threat to the United States."[149] The 9/11 Joint Inquiry by

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[147] Twentieth Century Fund, *In from the Cold: The Report of the Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on the Future of U.S. Intelligence* (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1996), iv.

[148] Ibid., vi.

[149] Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, "Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities before and after the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001," (Washington, D.C.: December 2002), 48.

the House and Senate criticized the PDD-35 process because it "was never effectively adapted before September 11 to meet the changing nature of the threat, despite specific language in the document that required an annual review."[150] As certain priorities began to rise, lesser priorities were never downgraded and resources were inadequate to cover all of the taskings. Faced with an overwhelming number of taskings it would be difficult to argue that the IC was obsessed with any area of interest. Or, as the Joint Inquiry identified, everything was a priority and the IC was obsessed with everything, because the intelligence consumer "wanted to know everything about everything all the time."[151] One way of establishing priorities was through the use of Strategic Intelligence Reviews (SIRs).

1. Strategic Intelligence Reviews

The National Intelligence Council (NIC) first published SIRs in May of 1994. These documents examined near term intelligence needs (12–18 months) including "issues, priorities, and gaps for various geographic regions and transnational issues" in an effort to efficiently allocate collection resources.[152] SIRs also identified enduring needs (3–7 years), for budget allocation. Most of these documents are classified, but the declassified 1998 SIR on International Organized Crime gives some insight on the 20 areas of interest to the IC. Topics for 1998 SIRs included: arms control; counterintelligence; counternarcotics, counterterrorism; denial and deception; economics, environmental, multilateral, and humanitarian interests; force modernization; international organized crime; nonproliferation; science and technology, strategic military

[150] Ibid., 49.

[151] Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, "Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities before and after the Terrorist Attacks of September," 49.

[152] House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, 92-93.

forces, support to diplomatic operations, support to military operations; East Asia; Europe; Latin America; Near East and South Asia; Russia and Eurasia; Sub-Saharan Africa.[153]

Of these 20 topics, only counterterrorism and nonproliferation are easily identifiable as related to CBRN terrorism. The SIR on International Organized Crime identifies smuggling of nuclear materials or WMD as a threat to U.S. interests. Without access to the other SIRs, it is impossible to determine how much attention was paid to CBRN terrorism issues. The wide variety of SIRs shows how many different directions the IC was going in, and points further away from obsession.

2. Annual Threat Assessments

Every year the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) conducts a review with the IC in order to review and prioritize national security threats. Testifying annually before the committee are the CIA Director, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Director, and a representative from the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR). The importance of this meeting is highlighted in the opening statement of the SSCI vice chairman Senator Kerrey, "This annual public review of the threats is probably our most important hearing. It sets the context for the resource decisions we will make in the intelligence budget. But even more important, it informs the public that there are still threats to the Nation..."[154] Threats and their relative priorities are important element of where the IC was focused prior to 9/11. This section will analyze the threat assessments provided to the SSCI in the years leading up to 9/11, in an effort to see if an obsession with CBRN terrorism existed within the IC. These threats evolved over the course of available data from 1996–2001. They show an intelligence community concerned with proliferation and terrorism, as well as a variety of other threats, and thus unable to be obsessed with anything.

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[153] National Intelligence Council, "Annual Strategic Intelligence Review: International Organized Crime," (Washington, D.C.: Director of Central Intelligence, April 1998).

[154] Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "Current and Projected National Security Threats to the United States," (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, February 5, 1997), 2.

1. 1996

In his 1996 testimony to Congress on current and projected threats to national security, CIA Director John Deutch identified a multitude of threats. They included: great power metamorphosis in Russia and China; rogue nations (Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya); transnational issues (drugs, terrorism, crime, WMD); economic interdependence; and humanitarian crisis and ethnic turmoil.[155] A clear prioritization of these issues is not given by the director, but concerning transnational issues he states: "Of the transnational issues, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and advanced conventional weapons systems pose the gravest threat to national security and world stability."[156] The tone of the hearing still considers regional powers and rogue states as the greatest security threat to the U.S. However, Deutch also notes that the potential for CBRN terrorism will increase over time as dual-use technology spreads.[157]

At the conclusion of the 1996 hearing, the IC was charged with answering 46 questions by the SSCI. Of these 46 questions, only two dealt with CBRN terrorism ("The foreign terror threat to the United States" and "Threat of terrorist biological, chemical, or radiological weapon"). The issues of concern for the Senate committee were wide-ranging and thus point away from obsession. Proliferation and traditional threats received more focus than CBRN terrorism.

2. 1997

Tenet identifies five critical challenges for the next century in his 1997 testimony before the SSCI: transformation within Russia and China, rogue states, transnational issues (proliferation and terrorism), regional hotspots, and humanitarian

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[155] Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "Current and Projected National Security Threats to the United States and Its Interests Abroad," (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, February 22, 1996), 5.

[156] Ibid., 8.

[157] Ibid., 10.

crisis.[158] Despite the leadership change at the top within the CIA, with an appearance as the number three threat, it is hard to argue that the IC was more concerned with terrorism or proliferation. It is interesting to note that the CIA rated the WMD terrorism threat as "low but increasing."[159] DIA Director General Hughes also calls the threat negligible: "While advanced and exotic weapons are increasingly available, their employment is likely to remain minimal."[160]

3. 1998

Priorities began to change in 1998. Tenet listed five challenges to the U.S.: transnational issues; Russian and Chinese transformation; regional troublemakers; regional hotspots; and humanitarian challenges.[161] Within transnational issues, proliferation is the greatest threat. This is followed by economic instability in Asia and terrorism. On proliferation, Tenet states "when proliferation links up with terrorism, we could face a high-order threat."[162] It is important to note that transnational issues have started to replace traditional threats as the most dangerous national security threat. During the question and answer portion of the hearing, Director Tenet specifically addresses the potential of chemical or biological attacks on U.S. soil. The SSCI specifically asks the IC the following question:

> What is the likelihood that the US will be subjected to a biological or chemical attack within the next 2–5 years? 5–10 years? How is this attack likely to be carried out? Do you consider a BW/CW attack against the US as more likely than a ballistic missile attack against the US? How difficult is it for a group to construct and deliver an effective chemical weapon? A

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158 Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "Current and Projected National Security Threats to the United States," (1997), 4.

159 Ibid., 94.

160 Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "Current and Projected National Security Threat," (1997), 13.

161 Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "Current and Projected National Security Threats to the United States," (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, January 28, 1998), 13–19.

162 Ibid., 5.

> biological or radiological weapon? A nuclear device? What existing groups now have or are seeking such a capability?[163]

In response, the CIA concludes that terrorist groups are increasingly interested in CBRN weapons. They estimated the conventional and unconventional international terrorist threat as significant, but stated "terrorists probably will continue to favor conventional tactics."[164] Finally, they judged "that the potential for terrorists to use or attempt to use WMD or chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) materials is increasing."[165] Not all of the questions were answered in this open session, and were perhaps answered in the classified closed-door session. In analyzing these CIA estimates, it is hard to arrive at obsession when they assessed that terrorists would stick to their favorite weapons, the gun and bomb. The FBI arrived at a slightly more alarming conclusion.

The FBI assessed that "it is very likely that there will be continued instances of WMD use in the United States in the next 2–5 years..."[166] They noted a disturbing trend of an increased interest in CBRN materials, specifically biological agents. In their final analysis, the FBI notes the difficulty in assigning a probability to the likelihood of an attack in five to ten years, but concludes the "prospect of such an incident occurring in the U.S. as we reach the millennium in the United States is increasing."[167] However, just like the CIA, they "still believe that conventional terrorist weapons and methods, i.e., bombings, use of firearms and kidnappings are still the primary methods of operations by terrorists."[168] From this conflicting analysis,

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[163] Ibid., 148.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "Current and Projected National Security Threat," (1998), 148.

[166] Ibid., 162.

[167] Ibid.

[168] Ibid., 163.

it is difficult to assign obsession to the FBI. Their alarmist attitudes might have been a function of the large number of chemical terrorism hoaxes they were investigating during this time period.

4. 1999

Director Tenet outlined similar priorities to the previous year: WMD proliferation; terrorism; narcotics and organized crime; information warfare and the Year 2000 bug; Russia and China; and regional troublemakers. On terrorism, Tenet spoke of two specific concerns, Bin Laden and the acquisition of CBRN weapons by terrorist groups.[169]

5. 2000

Tenet's threat picture remained the same from 1999. He updated his concern over WMD proliferation, noting "the picture I drew last year has become even more stark and worrisome."[170] Bin Laden was now addressed as the greatest terror threat, and Tenet was concerned over Bin Laden's strong interest in chemical weapons. Tenet acknowledges that of the more than 24 renditions of terrorists during 1999 that they still rely only on conventional weapons.[171]

6. 2001

In the final update prior to 9/11, CIA Director George Tenet testifies to the difficulties facing the intelligence community of having too many things on their plate and having to prioritize them. As a result he states, "For me, the highest priority must invariably be on those things that threaten the lives of Americans or the physical security of the United States. With that in mind, let me turn first to the challenges posed by

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[169] George J. Tenet, "Statement of the Director of Central Intelligence before the Senate Armed Services Committee," in *Current and Projected National Security Threats* (February 2, 1999), 4.

[170] Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "Current and Projected National Security Threats to the United States," (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, February 2, 2000), 10.

[171] Ibid., 12.

international terrorism."[172] Terrorism had become the number one concern of the CIA. During the question and answer section of the hearing, Tenet is specifically asked by Senator Roberts if terrorism and homeland security should be the number one national security priority, and he answered yes.[173]

DIA Director Admiral Wilson testified to his views on threats to U.S. interests. In his view, the greatest near-term threat to U.S. interests was "a major terrorist attack against United States interests, either here or abroad, perhaps with a weapon designed to produce mass casualties."[174] He also warned of widespread chemical and biological weapons proliferation, and predicted they might be used in a terrorist attack within the next 15 years.[175]

C. NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES

The National Security Act of 1947 (as recently amended) Section 103B directs the production of "national intelligence estimates for the United States Government, including alternative views held by elements of the intelligence community…." National Intelligence Estimates (NIE) are a regular intelligence product tailored for policy makers that provide "analyses of diverse aspects of the world situation, which include the policy objectives and likely actions of other nations, and their military capabilities/potential."[176] NIEs are a vehicle for assisting leaders who create national security policy, and they are referred to by many as the "Intelligence Community's most authoritative written judgment."[177] These estimates incorporate the current situation on a topic and include

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[172] Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "Current and Projected National Security Threats to the United States," (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, February 7, 2001), 3.

[173] Ibid., 51.

[174] Ibid., 15.

[175] SSCI, "Current and Projected National Security Threat," (2001), 18.

[176] Donald P. Steury, "Introduction: Producing National Intelligence Estimates," in *Intentions and Capabilities: Estimates on Soviet Strategic Forces, 1950-1983*, ed. Donald P. Steury (Washington, D.C.: CIA History Staff Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1996), xi.

[177] National Intelligence Council, *National Intelligence Estimate: The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland* 2007, 2.

judgments about the future course of events. Were there any NIEs related to CBRN terrorism prior to 9/11 that might have shown an obsession with CBRN terrorism?

As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, the scope is limited to unclassified documents. Most NIEs are classified, but some are beginning to be declassified. In 1986 an NIE on "The Likelihood of Nuclear Acts by Terrorist Groups" was published. The authors of this NIE judged that the possibility of high-level nuclear terrorism was low to very low.[178] They believed in a "…a somewhat greater possibility that terrorists will engage in those lower level types of nuclear terrorism that are designed mainly to garner publicity or to undermine a government's nuclear or other policies."[179] Specifically they rated the probability of such terrorism as less than even, a number that was predicted in the previous NIE. Without access to subsequent updates to this NIE, it is impossible to assess whether this document might add or detract from an obsession within the IC concerning CBRN terrorism, but clearly the subject was of concern.

D. CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the intelligence community in search of obsession with CBRN terrorism. A central theme in the examination of both intelligence review committees and the threats to national security presented annually by the CIA director was the post-Cold War struggle to identify and prioritize national security threats, and thus intelligence collection priorities. CBRN terrorism was found to be just one of the many issues. Proliferation and terrorism were both major transnational threats, but they still failed to become elevated above traditional major or regional conflict threats.

[178] Director Central Intelligence Agency, *National Intelligence Estimate: The Likelihood of Nuclear Acts by Terrorist Groups,* April 1986, 1.

[179] Director Central Intelligence Agency, 2.

These priorities evolved over the course of the 1990s, but they never managed to capture the number one priority of intelligence agencies. Although an acknowledged important issue that grew, intelligence agencies were not obsessed with CBRN terrorism.[180]

[180] The inherent secret nature of intelligence agencies and their products limited the availability of information. Should these documents become declassified at a later date, this conclusion might be different.

VI. CONCLUSION

A. THESIS ORIGIN

The origin for this thesis began with an interest in *The 9/11Commission Report*. Of particular interest was the imagination failure claim that:

> The head of analysis at the CTC until 1999 discounted the alarms about a catastrophic threat as relating only to the danger of chemical, biological, or nuclear attack—and he downplayed even that, writing several months before 9/11: "It would be a mistake to redefine counterterrorism as a task of dealing with 'catastrophic,' 'grand,' or 'super' terrorism, when in fact these labels do not represent most of the terrorism that the United States is likely to face or most of the costs that terrorism imposes on U.S. interests."[181]

Bruce Hoffman's questioning by the Congressional inquiry furthered the notion that the government might have been obsessed with CBRN terrorism. Obsession was further fueled by Andrew Silke's claim that, "If the failure to mark out the importance of al-Qa'eda was the biggest oversight in research prior to 9/11, the obsession with work on WMD threats—as opposed to more mundane tactics—will likely be judged as the second most significant failing."[182] Intrigued by these comments, a search began to examine whether the U.S. might have been obsessed with CBRN terrorism, and potentially blinded to the more commonplace terrorist techniques such as hijacking and suicide attacks.

While the academic, policymaking, and intelligence communities were concerned with CBRN terrorism, they were not obsessed. Obsessive rhetoric certainly existed concerning CBRN terrorism. However, actions that would have been considered obsessive, such as focusing research, policy, and intelligence assets, was not found.

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[181] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 343.

[182] Silke, "An Introduction to Terrorist Research," in *Research on Terrorism,* 24.

B. ORIGINS REVISITED

The Gilmore Commission concluded that the Aum attack set a precedent for mass destruction.[183] Many believed the Aum attack had broken the taboo on the use of CBRN weapons by terrorists groups. Terrorism expert Brian Jenkins stated, "It breaks a taboo and has psychological import. Others will ask whether they should adopt such tactics. It is now more likely that at least some of them will say 'yes'."[184] If the taboo has been broken, then why have we not been attacked again with CBRN terrorism? Perhaps the pessimistic capabilities proposition outlined by Sprinzak, where any terrorist can build a CBRN weapon in his garage, has been invalidated. Maybe there is an alternative lesson from the Aum attack.

At first glance, the Aum attack seemed to validate the construction portion of the capabilities proposition. A terrorist group was able to successfully manufacture Sarin gas and deploy it. The belief that this alone validates the pessimist point of view is ignorant of several flaws with the Aum attack. First, the group was unable to obtain the maximum level of lethality for the weapon. A pre-9/11 study showed that, "While it is theoretically true that a quart of nerve agent contains about a million lethal doses, the oft-discussed basement terrorist would labor roughly two years to make enough sarin to kill five hundred outdoors and another eighteen years to produce the ton of sarin required to kill ten thousand."[185] Also, the attack was rushed into employment because Aum received warning of an imminent police raid; this prevented the gas from reaching its lethal potential. Twelve deaths do not equal mass destruction.

Second, the employment method was crude, with the cult members punching holes in the bags of Sarin gas with umbrellas. Previous attempts by more technical means were unsuccessful, another point discrediting the capabilities proposition. As

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[183] Gilmore Commission, 9.

[184] David E. Kaplan and Andrew Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World: The Incredible Story of Aum* (London: Hutchinson, 1996), 200.

[185] Amy E. Smithson and Leslie-Anne Levy, *Ataxia: The Chemical and Biological Terrorism Threat and the US Response* (Washington, D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2000), xii.

discussed with biological weapons above, developing weapons is only one step of the process, employing them can be more difficult. All of the Aum attacks and subsequent ineffective anthrax attacks within the U.S. provide evidence to discount the production aspect of the capabilities proposition.

B. ACADEMIA

Academia plays a significant role in policy advice, as well as open-source or all-source intelligence. The fact that Congress questioned terrorism experts such as Bruce Hoffman and others, points to the value of their opinions and research. It is interesting that some thought that a Library of Congress study discussing suicide terrorism with airplanes is cited by a Senator as open-source intelligence, but this highlights a problem that is shown elsewhere in this thesis, that there is more information than can possibly be consumed and analyzed by intelligence and policymakers alike. The link between open-source intelligence and academia is important when one considers that if an intelligence failure existed, then it is likely that an academic one existed as well.

Silke claimed, "Prior to 9/11, nearly six times more research was being conducted on CBRN terrorist tactics than on suicide tactics. Indeed no other terrorist tactic (from car-bombings, hijackings, assassinations, etc.) received anywhere near as much research attention in the run up to 9/11 as CBRN."[186] This thesis showed that Silke's analysis was narrowly focused on the two primary terrorism journals, and should have incorporated the broader field of literature to include other journals and other published works. When this field was widened, it showed an academic community increasingly concerned with CBRN terrorism prior to 9/11, but not obsessed.

C. POLICY

Analysis of the policymaking community started with a search for obsession within the national security reform committees in the 1990s. Within these committees, this research looked to see what politicians viewed as the greatest threats to national

[186] Silke, "Research on Terrorism," 43.

security, and to see where CBRN terrorism was in that hierarchy. Both the Deutch and Gilmore Commissions looked specifically at CBRN terrorism issues, proliferation and CBRN terrorism itself. Because they both had a narrow focus on these issues, they were inherently obsessive. Despite this focus, the Gilmore Commission urged balance between catastrophic threats and conventional terrorist tactics. Of the five commissions, the Hart-Rudman Commission contained the most obsessive WMD terrorism rhetoric, concluding that terrorists will acquire and use WMD and that the government should assume they would target the U.S.

In an attempt to see if CBRN terrorism rhetoric met an obsessive policy reaction this thesis also examined the chief national security strategy documents, the NSS. This examination showed a nation still concerned more with Cold War style threats. However, this threat evolved towards the new century to one more concerned with transnational issues, such as terrorism and proliferation, but they never replaced the top threats of regional conflict or state-centered threats. This way of thinking was also not surprisingly translated to the DoD in their list of security priorities.

Obsession is probably too strong a word for describing the concerns of policymakers. Those who would do so ignore the responsibility of such policymakers to provide security to the citizenry. In the same interview where Clinton discusses his fascination with *The Cobra Event*, Clinton discusses this responsibility. He states, "But to me, it is money well spent. And if there is never an incident, nobody would be happier than me 20 years from now if the same critics would be able to say, 'Oh, see, Clinton was a kook, nothing happened,' I would be the happiest man on earth."[187]

D. INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence agencies were not obsessed with CBRN terrorism. They were concerned with proliferation and terrorism, but these transnational issues never dominated national security interests. Similar to the conclusions reached in the policy

[187] The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Interview of the President by the New York Times," January 23, 1999.

chapter, and perhaps because politicians task them, intelligence agencies never managed to escape post-Cold War mentalities. The greatest threats were still regional conflict and Russia and China. Research in the intelligence area was limited by the availability of information due to the preponderance of classified publications within this field. Only one NIE was available, but the information was dated from 1986. 9/11 and the legislation resulting from the 9/11 Commission report did result in the creation of an additional mandated NIE, "*Annual Report on Threat of Attack on the United States Using Weapons of Mass Destruction*."[188] If this report did not exist before, is it possible that 9/11 was a catalyst for obsession? The last section briefly explores this possibility.

E. 9/11 AS A CATALYST FOR OBSESSION

Although this thesis did not find an obsession with CBRN terrorism prior to 9/11, it did show a trend moving in that direction. 9/11 was a catalyst that triggered further concern and possibly obsession with CBRN terrorism by all three communities. One finding of the 9/11 Commission was, "The greatest danger of another catastrophic attack in the United States will materialize if the world's most dangerous terrorists acquire the world's most dangerous weapons."[189] Congress followed up the 9/11 Commission's recommendations with the, "Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007." This act created the Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and reduced barriers to funding any initiative related to threat reduction or nonproliferation programs.[190] The Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation reached the obsessive conclusion 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

[188] Section 114 [50 U.S.C. 404i] Additional Annual Reports from the Director of National Intelligence, *National Security Act of 1947,* As Amended Through Public Law 110-53, August 3, 2007.

[189] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 380.

[190] Cong., 110th Congress, *Implementing Recommendations by the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007*, August 3, 2007, Section1831.

used in a terrorist attack somewhere in the world by the end of 2013."[191] In a recent progress report assessing the government's performance in addressing the problems identified by the Commission, it was cited that the Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell had publicly endorsed this grave assessment.[192] An assumption that such a catastrophic WMD terrorist attack is inevitable is obsessive. Are the comments by the Congressional commission and DNI evidence that both the policymaking and intelligence communities are currently obsessed with CBRN terrorism? This is a potential area of further research.

[191] Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism, *World at Risk: The Report of the Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), xv.

[192] Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism, *Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism Report Card*, January 2010, 1.

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