

Weapons of Mass Destruction: The New Face of Warfare

Chitra Lele (2013),

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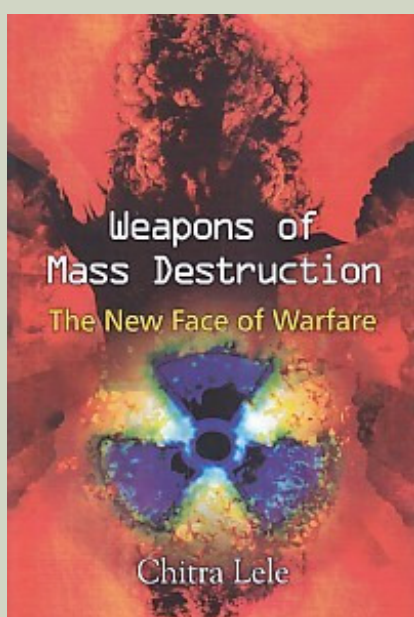
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Summary

The book discusses and highlights the technological perspectives on the WMD debates.



In the recent times world has seen a marked geopolitical shift of power due to exponential rise of some of the emerging economies leading. In order to be perceived as competitive in such order, a country has to be economically as well as militarily strong so as to be able to project its power when necessary. Due to the technological advancement that was accompanied by perception battles on capacity, the post Cold War era saw significant increase in arms race as possession of Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) became near synonymous with deterrence. However, the need for deterrence was soon overpowered by ambitions of hegemony and various states started using WMD as a means of projection of power. The upsurge in the number and sophistication of WMD has altered the security equilibrium of the world; the situation has become much more complex due to the use of WMD by non-state actors. The pertinent issue of WMD and the ensuing debates are the basis of Chitra Lele's timely and comprehensive book *Weapon of Mass Destruction: The new Face of Warfare*.

The author primarily takes a technological perspective of the WMD debate and explains the technical aspects of these weapons in due detail. The book is divided into five parts which draw upon various aspects of history, technology and international security policy agenda. The part one talks about history, various jargons of WMDs and international treaties and protocols. The subsequent parts deal with nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons, each separately, and discuss their types, delivery system, component or chemical use, and various effects and responses. In the new phase of cutting edge technologies, the WMD threat is exceedingly complicated. Acknowledging this issue, the book thoroughly highlights the

vital futuristic ideas that might give a new makeover to the existing WMD by essentially discussing topics like use of nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, cyber weapons like digital warfare and economic warfare. It also raises important concerns with reference to dual-use potential technology such as cyber terrorism and robotics and its impact on the future course of WMD.

Each type of weapon technology is explained in detail focusing on complicated build ups to delivery platforms in a very lucid manner. This gives the reader a concrete idea of technological evolution which can multiply the existing threat. In the last part, the author discusses the dynamics of bio and chemical weapons by fundamentally emphasising various agents that contribute to these kinds of weapons and their potential to be used not only as weapons but also as agents for agro terrorism. This apprehension is indeed an important contemporary issue for global security. Overall, the book is highly readable and is a significant addition to the knowledge and understanding of WMD. There are other important economic, social and political determinants of the WMD debate, the incorporation of which could have made this book more useful to the reader. However, at the end of every part the author has raised many pertinent questions, the answer to which could help shape further research on this subject. Since a full blown nuclear war between the world powers is unlikely, it would have been interesting to know more about inchoate and uncertain risks of WMD if they were to fall into the hands of non-state actors and about possible stand-offs between nuclear-armed regional powers that would decide the future of WMD in such cases.