

Understanding the threats of terrorism with CW

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The Trench

Chemical Weapons and the Middle East

Education day for NGOs and reporters

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The chemical threat spectrum

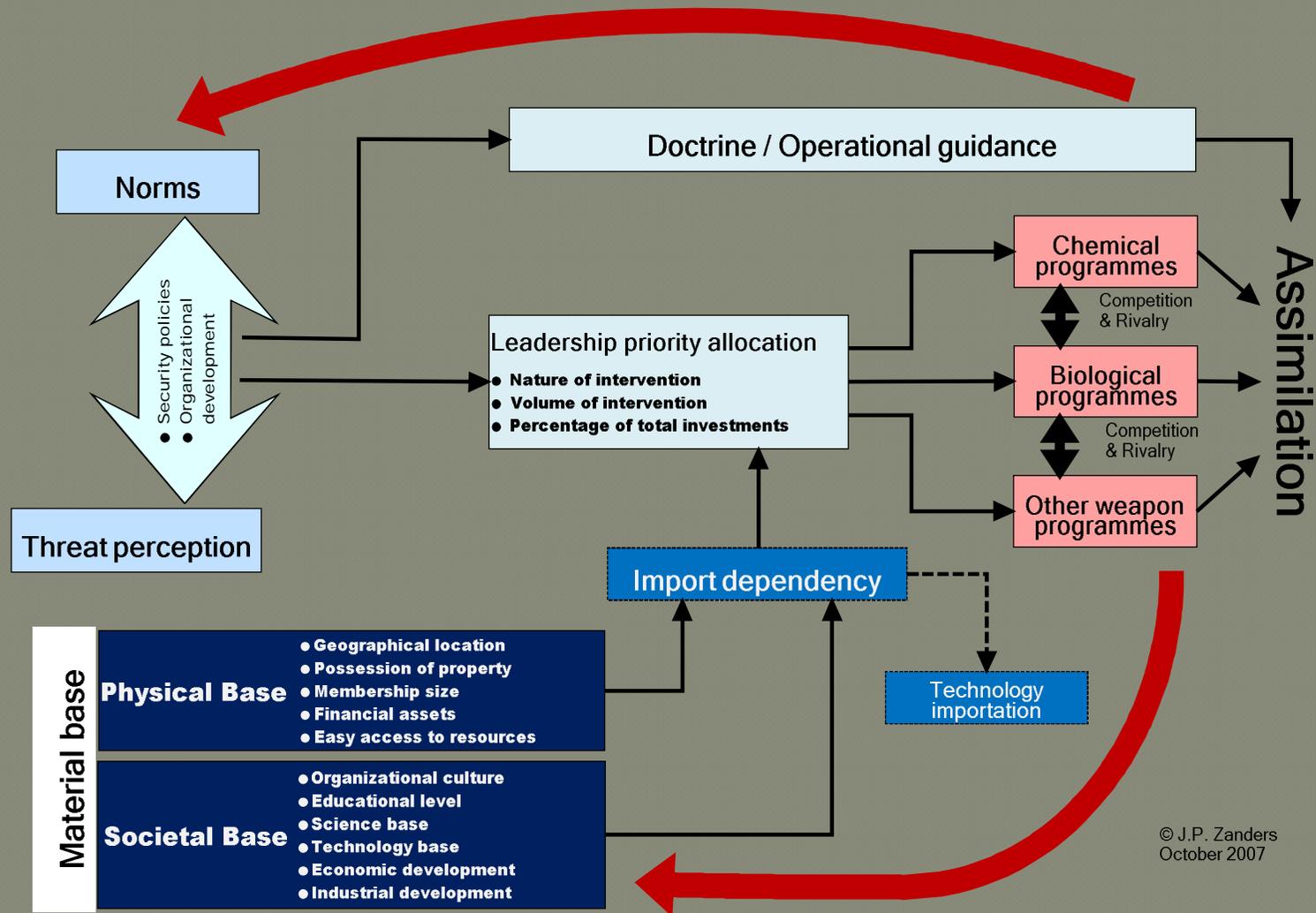
- z War scenarios
- z Terrorism
- z Criminal acts

- z Consideration and availability of different chemical agents
 - Depends on intent
 - Depends on availability
 - Depends on technical skills and structure of the entity

Organising terrorism with biological agents for mass casualties

- *Highly (vertically) integrated organisation*
 - Charismatic leadership
- *Skills required within organisation*
 - Cannot be hired
 - Specialists must be convinced of organisation's ideology
- *Functional specialisation*
 - Different steps in armament dynamic each require specific skills
 - Places burden on recruitment of specialists
 - Absence has major impact on armament dynamic and ability to deploy and use weapons
- *Elaborate preparations needed (large footprint)*
 - Research facilities
 - Testing ranges
 - Production units
- *Logistical burden*
 - Technology acquisition (high import dependency)
 - Weapon deployment
- *Dissemination may be technologically most challenging*

The armament dynamic



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Alternative uses of chemical agents

➤ Against humans

- Potential for mass casualties exists
 - Not necessarily most likely scenario as agents are difficult to acquire
- Off-the-shelf toxicants
 - Poisons for individual assassination
 - Acid attacks
 - Property damage
 - Exploitation of vulnerabilities in the food chain

➤ Economic and societal disruption

- Disruption functioning of utilities, enterprises, public agencies
- Wider range of chemical agents available
 - Several can be commercially obtained (e.g., pepper spray & mace)
- Exploitation of fear and lack of adequate preparations
- Effectiveness of hoaxes

➤ Opportunistic use of industrial toxicants

- E.g., chlorine attacks in Iraq (2007 – 09) and present allegations in Syria

Acuteness of terrorist threat with CW

➤ Proliferation assessments

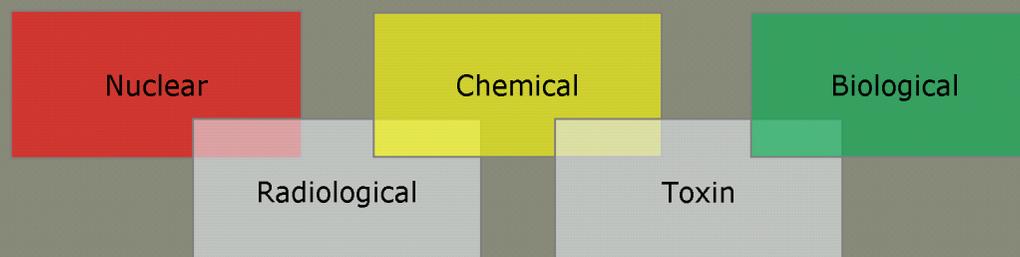
- After 11-09-01: sense of loss of control and manageability of problem
- Heavy manipulation of public information to serve political and institutional interests (official statements, press, novels, etc.)

➤ Vulnerability assessments

- Almost exclusive focus on mass destruction and casualties
 - (Military) agents with potential of greatest destruction or casualties
 - Access to or availability of agents and equipment is important component of threat equation (e.g., ISIL & Iraq)
 - Single massive attack is usually underlying assumption.
- Emphasis on own weaknesses (only known factors)
 - Consequence management
 - Intelligence and detection
- Less debate of other factors in threat equation (many unknowns)
 - E.g., structure of the armament dynamic inside a terrorist organization

CBRN incidents

- z Non-conventional weapon categories



- z Most incidents are in the grey areas
 - Toxins
 - Radiological materials
- z Agents in grey areas are easier to acquire
 - Enable incidents involving individuals; small groupings
 - Opportunity may play a significant role in those incidents

General conclusions

- Future major terrorist strike with CW cannot be excluded
- However,
 - The acquisition process is complex for most destructive agents
 - CW are never acquired alone, but form part of a wider armament dynamic/strategy
 - The armament process is not inevitable
 - Promoting factors
 - Counter-acting factors
 - Paradox: some promoting factors may actually contribute to the failure of the CW acquisition process (impact of feedback loops)
 - All entities that have pursued CBW have self-destructed
- The 'lesser' agents in the armament dynamic
 - Economic or environmental terrorism, assassination, and other (time-) limited goals
 - They come within the capabilities of more groups or individuals
 - Lower demands on operational guidance
 - Acquisition also less demanding
 - Lower need for functional specialisation
 - Less destructive (individual threats vs. societal/existential threats)



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