

# Preface

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Since preparation of *WMD in Asia-Pacific* commenced in 2018, the world has plunged into a global pandemic, experienced unprecedented climate change-induced firestorms and floods, and stands on the precipice of nuclear war in Europe due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The world is now more fractured and less capable of addressing such global existential threats than at the end of the Cold War. Two decades of opportunity to build cooperative security at all levels of international human affairs were squandered, and then the world plunged into accelerating conflict over the last decade.

Many old conflicts deepened while new ones emerged out of the failure to address underlying drivers such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, and outright oppression as authoritarian rulers crushed social movements seeking to address these core issues and exploited division to seize and centralize power while confronting adversaries at home and abroad with threat and violent intervention.

At the same time, many militaries grew in size and strength. The world is awash with armament for sale and military technology is also freely available enabling the rapid diffusion of the latest hardware and software to more nations for local production and deployment, including software, missiles, logistics, and in many cases, nuclear, chemical, or biological warfare capabilities known as “weapons of mass destruction” or WMD—the subject of this book in the Asia-Pacific region.

APLN set out to survey the vast array of such capabilities in the Asia-Pacific, including all types of WMD and to provide an authoritative description of these means of destruction in an accessible format that would be freely available to policy makers and decision-makers. Thus, as each chapter was completed, it was posted immediately rather than waiting for the entire book before publication. Now that all nineteen chapters are complete, they are compiled in this book to give

## *WMD in Asia-Pacific*

scholars, students, journalists and interested readers a benchmark reference. It should be read in conjunction with APLN's previous reference book, *Nuclear Weapons: The State of Play 2015*.<sup>1</sup>

*WMD in Asia-Pacific* covers all types of WMD—admittedly with a focus on nuclear weapons as the most dangerous of these capacities. It includes all the states possessing such capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region. It provides the necessary historical perspective to understand why WMD is so widespread. And it is multifaceted in that it covers not only the systems themselves, but provides windows into how each party views their particular insecurities that drove them acquire and deploy WMD.

Fortunately, the book does not dwell only on the bad news about WMD in each conflict in the region and at the global level affecting the region. It also provides some waypoints on how to navigate out of the security dilemmas involving WMD in each conflict, and also some novel suggestions for new approaches to controlling WMD in the Asia-Pacific region.

Adoption of urgent risk reduction measures, resumption of arm control dialogues and agreements, and progress on nuclear disarmament in each WMD-laden conflict are now extremely urgent--and also essential to reduce tension so that states can respond cooperatively to humanity's other interlinked existential threats, climate change and pandemics.

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- Marty Natalegawa,  
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<sup>1</sup> Free download: <https://cnnd.crawford.anu.edu.au/publication/cnnd/5328/nuclear-weapons-state-play-2015>.