Our Own Worst Enemy? : Institutional Interests and the Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Expertise Wins Top Public Administration Prize

A book examining the relationship between the policy process and an important U.S. nuclear nonproliferation initiative won high praise and top honors by capturing the National Academy of Public Administration’s 2012 Louis Brownlow Book Award. Sharon K. Weiner’s *Our Own Worst Enemy? : Institutional Interests and the Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Expertise* will receive the prestigious award on Thursday, November 15, at the Academy’s Fall Meeting in Washington, DC.

*Our Own Worst Enemy? : Institutional Interests and the Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Expertise* was chosen because it makes an outstanding contribution to the literature of public administration in an area of contemporary interest to practitioners and scholars in this field. It uses detailed analysis of the design, implementation, and evolution of critical U.S. nonproliferation programs over a twenty year period to provide new insights and original ideas about the role and behavior of governmental institutions and programs in the area of national security. The Committee concluded that the book’s message should serve to raise important questions for decision-makers and scholars interested in understanding and improving policymaking and implementation processes in the area of U.S. national security policy.

In her work, Weiner examines the troubled experience of U.S. programs set up in the U.S. Departments of Defense, State, and Energy at the end of the Cold War to redirect the former Soviet nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons complex and to stem possible proliferation especially of nuclear weapons expertise. Through extensive archival work and hundreds of interviews with government officials and weapons scientists in four countries, Weiner provides the first comprehensive analysis of the institutional interests and dynamics of the government departments and programs charged with preventing the spread of weapon expertise. She shows in particular how over two decades these national security programs were influenced by the character of the policy making process and the interests, history, and missions of the organizations that were involved, and how these institutions tried to adapt to meet new demands.

Sharon K. Weiner is Associate Professor and Director of the Doctoral Program at the School of International Service at American University, Washington DC. The work on this book was supported by a fellowship at Princeton University’s Program on Science and Global Security, a “Scholar of Vision” award by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, a research and writing
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2012 Brownlow Book Award Committee Chair Academy Fellow Dr. Norman J. Johnson, an Executive in the Office of the President at Wilberforce University in Ohio, was joined on the committee by Academy Fellows Dr. Nanette M. Blandin, Consulting Associate, Isaacson, Miller and Adjunct Professor of Organizational Science, George Washington University; Dr. Joel D. Aberbach, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Public Policy, Center for American Politics and Public Policy, University of California, Los Angeles; and Dr. Christopher Hood, Gladstone Professor of Government, All Souls College, University of Oxford, England.

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Copies of Our Own Worst Enemy?: Institutional Interests and the Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Expertise may be ordered from The MIT Press by calling (800) 405-1619 or emailing mitpress-orders@mit.edu.

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