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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
-Counselor and-Chairman
Policy Planning Council
Washington

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June 10, 1968

TO: The Secretary
THROUGH: S/S *DAK*
FROM: S/P - Henry Owen *HO*
SUBJECT: After NPT, What? - INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

Attached for your reading, is a short but interesting paper by Dr. Rosecrance of S/P on prospects for proliferation and US policy options in the aftermath of NPT. It suggests a general strategy, rather than any specific urgent action. Its general conclusions are:

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1. Prospects: Nuclear proliferation will continue under NPT. Some countries will go nuclear; others will develop their peaceful nuclear progress to the point where a bomb option can be exercised in short order. The US has limited leverage to prevent, or retard, these trends - partly because the incentives for a nuclear capability are as much related to status and prestige as to security.

2. Policy: To the extent that the US does have leverage to slow down nuclear spread, it can best exert that leverage:

- by maintaining an evident willingness to fulfill US security commitments in LDC's;
- by helping countries which face a non-nuclear threat (Israel) to maintain the conventional forces needed to give them a reasonable sense of security;
- by helping countries which face a nuclear threat (India, Japan) with defensive nuclear systems (ABM's), if they press strongly for same and if all the complex problems involved can be resolved (an improbable assumption, to say the least, in the case of India).

CC: U - Under Secretary Katzenbach
M - Mr. Rostow
G - Mr. Bohlen

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No. 53

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
POLICY PLANNING COUNCIL

AFTER NPT, WHAT?



May 28, 1968

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AFTER NPT, WHAT?

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May 28, 1968

AFTER NPT, WHAT?Introduction

After the NPT has been signed and ratified, there will remain many pressures to "go nuclear." Certain important national actors will not sign the treaty; the Chinese nuclear program will go forward apace with security implications for several non-nuclear countries including Japan, India, and Australia. Despite the worldwide benefits that may accrue in slowing down the overt nuclear arms spread, moreover, many nations will develop their peaceful programs to the point where a bomb can be assembled and detonated in short order.

The United States has limited influence on this process. Legally, states are entitled under the NPT to proceed a considerable distance toward satisfying the requirements of a potentially military nuclear program. Nor can we be sure that states will not withdraw from the treaty as their neighbors reveal or augment bomb capabilities. This is true partly because one of the major motivations for nuclear status is prestige, not security. Further U.S. arrangements to provide for the security of a non-nuclear power could make it seem more dependent, thus reducing its prestige. A national nuclear program, on the other hand, is often seen by its possessor to enhance national status.

The United States should nonetheless stand ready to help where it can, consistent with its own interest. This would not mean an extension of security guarantees. It could mean assistance to conventional forces; or possibly extend to cooperative provision of defensive nuclear forces on a joint basis, with U.S. retention and control of warheads and a veto on firing arrangements. It should also recognize that a major retraction or withdrawal of U.S. presence and influence around the world could only accelerate the development of national nuclear capabilities.

I. NuclearSECRET

I. Nuclear "Pregnancy"

Even after the NPT is signed and ratified, nations will be allowed to proceed with peaceful nuclear power programs that may have implicit military objectives. It is no longer necessary to point out that the basic "secrets" of bomb technology and manufacture are already widely known. Production reactors, chemical separation plants, even detonation mechanisms are already well understood by a considerable number of states. Broadly speaking, the nations with the most developed peaceful programs will be nearest to a military bomb capability. It is therefore possible for a nation to proceed a considerable distance toward a bomb capability, to achieve an advanced state of nuclear "pregnancy", while remaining within the strictures of the NPT.

Just how far a state may go is partly indicated in the following hypothetical examples:

A. It has already been established that a state may stockpile Plutonium 239 or U-233 without violating international or bilateral agreements on peaceful use. The stockpile itself, of course, must be under safeguards; its accumulation, on the other hand, may be explained and justified by the need to accumulate fuels for advanced reactors.

B. It is likely, that a number of states will experiment with fast reactor assemblies. Under certain circumstances experimentation with such assemblies will give knowledge relevant to bomb assemblies.

C. It is possible that some states will try to develop implosion techniques using conventional explosives. While such techniques could not be used on a fissionable core, considerable information concerning the compressing impact of implosion could be given by experiments using natural uranium. These experiments might be justified as giving information on physical states of elements of high atomic weight under various external constraints.

D. It

D. It is fully recognized that Article III Paragraph 2 of the NPT "does not deal with such military applications of nuclear energy as nuclear propulsion of warships. Therefore, nothing in the treaty would prohibit the provision of nuclear fuel for this purpose, nor would this activity be subject to safeguards prescribed in Article III of the draft treaty which provides for the application of safeguards on all source of special fissionable materials in all peaceful nuclear activities within the territory of any non-nuclear weapon party, under its jurisdiction or carried out under its control anywhere." (State 130374.) Since the safeguards of the Treaty only apply to "peaceful" activities, experiments with nuclear propulsion for warships may proceed unabated. It is possible, though unlikely, that a state might use reactors on a military vessel for nuclear production purposes.

The construction of an experimental or prototype nuclear explosive device would be covered by the term "manufacture" as would the production of components which could only have relevance to a nuclear explosive device," (State 162721) and would be prohibited under the treaty. Work on components which could be justified in other terms, however, would not be prohibited.

After the NPT, many nations can be expected to take advantage of the terms of the treaty to produce quantities of fissionable material. Plutonium separation plants will be built; fast breeder reactors developed. It is possible that experimentation with conventional explosives that might be relevant to detonating a nuclear bomb core may take place. In this way, various nations will attain a well-developed option on a bomb. A number of nations will be able to detonate a bomb within a year following withdrawal from the Treaty; others may even shorten this period. In the Far East at least, the progress of the Chinese nuclear effort will stimulate the nuclear programs of India, Japan and Australia; each of these nations may be expected to put itself in a position to achieve a bomb within months of withdrawal from the NPT.

II. Limited

II. Limited U.S. Leverage

The United States has limited leverage to halt or slow down future proliferation. This is true for a number of reasons:

A. As has been pointed out, states may proceed quite far toward a nuclear capability even under the NPT.

B. Attempts to develop an international consensus against further spread have had the paradoxical impact, at least in some cases, of making states more reluctant to give up the benefits of nuclear status.

C. The attempt to foreshadow penalties on states who go nuclear or withdraw from the NPT could well turn out to be counterproductive:

1. The threatened withdrawal of economic or military aid programs would be likely to have minimum effect.

2. Advance indication that states which go nuclear could lose their security guarantee could have the perverse impact of hastening national nuclear forces. U.S. guarantees could be cast into doubt.

D. There is some evidence that status and prestige are as important in fostering proliferation as security motivations. It is therefore not clear that the maintenance of existing U.S. guarantees or the extension of new ones will reliably proscribe further nuclear spread. The French after all, decided to go nuclear despite the NATO guarantee. There are political and international pressures for further proliferation in Asia and the Pacific despite U.S. deterrence of China. Indeed, further U.S. arrangements to provide for the security of non-nuclear powers could make them seem more dependent on the United States. This could have the ultimate impact of strengthening their incentives for a national nuclear capability.

Given

Given the strides toward a military nuclear program which can be made consistent with NPT, given also the developing resistance to US-Soviet attempts to halt the spread, the United States has limited leverage to slow down or control the proliferation process.

III. The Use of U.S. Leverage

There are, nonetheless, a number of things which the U.S. can do to keep the proliferation process within bounds:

A. Perhaps the most important single factor deterring widespread proliferation is the U.S. presence. If the U.S. were radically to change its base structure, or to revamp and retract its political commitments overseas, the pressures toward proliferation would increase many fold. In those areas of the globe where nuclear weapons capabilities are now being contemplated, one of the major imponderables is the future role of the United States. Where U.S. commitments already exist, as in Australia and Japan, there is a measure of uncertainty about how long they will last. In the Middle East, Israel wonders how reliable U.S. support would be. If the United States were not to continue to exert a major role overseas, several nations would likely to decide to protect themselves through nuclear systems of their own. The U.S. presence then has a stabilizing influence on proliferation.

B. The U.S. should not, however, extend a series of bilateral guarantees to potential nuclear states. Such guarantees, unlike the Security Council resolution put forward with the Soviets, could have the impact of committing or involving the United States in the quarrels of third parties; it could have the impact of setting us against the Soviets in some instances. While guarantees would inevitably extend the U.S. presence, and would thereby militate against the nuclear spread, they would also greatly circumscribe our freedom of action. Especially insofar as defended powers wished to specify the conditions under which we would

respond

respond to an attack upon them, the extension of guarantees could be more onerous to us than formal alliance relationships. If, on the other hand, guarantees did not make such formal specifications, they would offer little direct advantage to their possessors beyond what would be conveyed and implicit in the U.S. presence.

C. The U.S. could also assist non-nuclear powers by making available supplies of conventional arms. In certain cases, the incentives to nuclear status are partly dependent upon conventional balances; if these balances are upset, a power might be tempted to acquire nuclear weapons. In certain circumstances, as for example in the Israeli case, the U.S. might help to postpone nuclear decisions by assisting a state's conventional position. Tel Aviv is unlikely to declare for a nuclear capability as long as it has conventional superiority.

D. A final bargaining counter which the U.S. could conceivably offer would be cooperative provision of defensive nuclear systems. Such an arrangement could not be expected to apply to those nations whose ambitions are for greater international status or prestige, for they would reinforce dependence on the U.S. It seems unlikely, moreover, that they would be sought by nations who did not already enjoy the protection of the U.S. alliance; unless American offensive nuclear weapons already furnished a strategic umbrella, defensive nuclear weapons might not be viewed as a sufficient deterrent to attack. Non-aligned powers would therefore be least likely to opt for such an alternative. Where American strategic protection was already a fact of life, however, U.S.-provided defensive nuclear systems could add an additional reinsurance. Further, there may be some foreign publics that would like to benefit from the same type of protection (or even greater protection) than that provided the U.S. by the Sentinel system. Access to such systems, moreover, could have the impact of delaying national capabilities, for they would inevitably tie the U.S. even more closely to the security of the allied state. They might thereby increase the credibility of the U.S. guarantee.

IV. Conclusion

IV. Conclusion

A. The diffusion of nuclear capabilities is not likely to be halted once and for all by the NPT. Even under the NPT nations will proceed to develop their reactor programs to the point where a military nuclear option could be taken up in short order. In some cases, this option will be years; in some cases months; in others even weeks.

B. There is little that the U.S. can do beyond what it has already done to halt the proliferation process. Our assistance to other states will not always be a reliable deterrent to proliferation, because one of the major incentives to proliferation is increased international status and prestige.

C. The United States should nonetheless stand ready to help where it can. This would not mean an extension of security guarantees to other states, implicating the third-area conflicts, and possibly fomenting confrontations with the Soviet Union. It could mean assistance to conventional forces; in special cases it might mean cooperative provision of defensive nuclear systems. Probably the most important counter which the U.S. has to affect proliferation, however, is the American presence. A major retraction of that presence, an opting out, could bring a very rapid spread of nuclear weapons to other powers.

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