

# **The Reputation for Restraint: Explaining U.S. Nonproliferation Choices**

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October 2018

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Abstract**

Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons has been an important objective of the United States since the detonation of the first atomic weapon, but even more so since the end of the Cold War. While Washington has shown some leniency toward allies between the 1950s and 1970s, since then it has engaged in extensive nonproliferation efforts against friends and foes alike. This is because nuclear proliferation has been deemed a security threat for the United States and its allies. However, considering the existential threat, as well as the large shift in the balance of power, nuclear proliferation represents, it has not been met often by the United States with preventive attacks against nuclear facilities. As such, the question at the heart of this dissertation is: what are the determinants of differing U.S. nonproliferation policy choices? More specifically: why, while they nuclearize, are some states targets, and subjects, of preventive attacks whereas others are not? The answer I propose is the following. Preventive attacks are reserved for adversaries of the United States. Allies are generally not targeted with this type of coercive measures because they do not represent an existential threat to Washington. U.S. nonproliferation policy choices are rarely homogeneous and are subject to intensive internal debates. U.S. decision-makers who are averse to a preventive strike against a proliferator will bring attention to the reputation of restraint of the nuclearizing state; a reputation based on a deep-seated normative trust in general deterrence as part of war prevention measures to support any alternatives leading up to nuclearization, in order to demonstrate that the nuclearizing state will not be an unmanageable security threat in the future. If these actors successfully demonstrate past restraint, the possibility of a preventive strike is significantly reduced.

## Résumé

Prévenir la diffusion d'armes nucléaires a toujours été un objectif important pour les États-Unis depuis la détonation de la première bombe atomique. Ce processus a pris de l'ampleur avec la fin de la guerre froide. Washington s'est montré indulgent envers la prolifération nucléaire de ses alliés entre les années 1950 et 1970. Depuis cette période, Washington a plutôt recours à une politique de non-prolifération nucléaire contre les États alliés et ennemis. Ceci est dû à la classification de la prolifération nucléaire comme une menace à la sécurité des États-Unis et de ses alliés ainsi qu'à un changement énorme dans la balance du pouvoir mondial. Par contre, sous ces conditions, il est surprenant que les États-Unis n'aient pas mené plus souvent des attaques préventives contre les installations nucléaires de proliférateurs. La question suivante est donc au cœur de cette dissertation : comment expliquer les différences de politique de non-prolifération des États-Unis? Spécifiquement, pourquoi certains États font-ils les frais d'attaques préventives lorsqu'ils se nucléarisent et d'autres non. Nous proposons la réponse qui suit. D'abord, les attaques préventives sont réservées aux adversaires des États-Unis. Les États alliés ne sont généralement pas ciblés par une attaque préventive parce qu'ils ne représentent pas une menace pour Washington. Ceci ne signifie cependant pas qu'ils ne seront pas la cible de méthodes de contre-prolifération. De plus, les politiques de non-prolifération nucléaire des États-Unis sont rarement homogènes et sont sujettes à d'intenses débats internes. Les décideurs américains qui s'opposent à une attaque préventive attirent souvent l'attention sur la réputation pour la retenue du proliférateur. Celle-ci est fondée sur une confiance normative envers la dissuasion générale comme mesure préventive contre la guerre et l'escalade de conflit. Cette réputation est utilisée pour démontrer qu'un État qui cherche à se nucléariser ne sera pas agressif dans le futur et ne constituera pas une menace existentielle pour les États-Unis. Si ces acteurs sont persuasifs, les éventualités d'attaque préventive sont diminuées de façon significative.

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## Acknowledgments

I am fortunate to be surrounded by amazing individuals who have helped and supported me through my PhD, and the completion of this dissertation.

My supervisor, T.V. Paul, has truly gone above and beyond in his support of my work and me personally. He has offered me much of his time, guidance, and insights. He has provided me with many professional opportunities for which I am extremely grateful. We have had many stimulating and engaging conversations and I learned a lot from our continued interactions. He has provided criticism and tough, but always fair, assessment when needed, and made this project in its current form possible. He is a great mind and a great soul, and I am thankful for how dedicated to my success he has been.

I am also extremely grateful to Vincent Pouliot who has seen every incarnation of this dissertation and provided apt methodological and theoretical feedback. His involvement with this dissertation and my professional development has been far beyond the call of duty. He has provided me with important professional insights which will serve me well moving forward, and has lobbied for me many times. I owe much to him as well. I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Erik Kuhonta. Erik has made me methodologically better, reinforced my beliefs in the importance of qualitative methods, and provided me with opportunities to work on another subject I enjoy tremendously, the nexus between religion and politics. I also want to acknowledge the support and help of Mark Brawley, especially on the professional aspect of academia, as well on the intricacies of NCAA football. I am grateful to all three.

I also want to acknowledge other members of the McGill faculty who provided time and guidance along the way. They include Leonardo Baccini, Juliet Johnson, Lorenz Luthi, Fernando Nunez-Mietz, Hudson Meadwell, Stuart Soroka, Yves Winter, and Juan Wang. Outside of McGill I would like to show appreciation to Alex Debs, Brian Bow, Bob Denemark, Patrick James, Frédéric Mérand, Nuno Monteiro, Julian Schofield, the man responsible for my initial interest in nuclear issues, Frank Harvey, my MA supervisor, Lee Seymour, and Hatan Yonten. I also want to thank David Haglund for serving as external examiner and providing insightful comments.

No dissertation comes to fruition without a strong community of peers sharing in the joy and suffering. In particular, I want to acknowledge Simon Bertrand, David Beitelman, Matthew Castle, Alice Chessé, Colin Chia, Michael Faubert, Ben Foldy, John Mitton, Lou Pingeot, Zarlash Muhammad Razeq, Erik Underwood, proof reader extraordinaire, and my co-author Han Zhen, known to us as Arc. All of them have provided feedbacks, encouragement, and support throughout my six years at McGill. We had a good time. I also want to acknowledge the participating members of POLI 700 for their feedback on my work. I also want to thank my outside proof-readers Julie Bérubé and Patrick Langlois.

I also wish to thank the support of institutions who have funded my research while at McGill. I was supported by the Joseph Armand Bombardier Scholarship from the SSHRC. I've been financially supported through research assistantship by my supervisor, T.V., as well as by grants from the Political Science Department at McGill. I also received awards and support from the Simon Foundation on Nonproliferation and Disarmament Award (with DFAIT), a writing

fellowship through Cérium at UdeM, the Arts travel award at McGill, as well as the Heather Munroe-Bloom Scholarship.

I also want to acknowledge parents and close friends for their support and the needed distraction they provided.

As is tradition, I want to show my deepest gratitude to my fiancée Ada Bun Lim. Nothing written in this dissertation would have been possible without her unflinching support and devotion. She helped me through the course work, research, and writing process, and did so even at times where I was unbearable. Her wits, smile, and warmth has kept me sane all these years. She reminded me many times that the task at hand was not done until it was. The last three months of the writing process we spent studying together, which was incredible help. No amount of thanks can do justice to her contribution to my life and to this work. For all she has done and all I owe, I dedicate this work to her.



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## Abbreviations

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| ABM       | Anti-Ballistic Missile Defense                    |
| ACDA      | Arms Control and Disarmament Agency               |
| BMD       | Ballistic Missile Defense                         |
| ChiComs   | Chinese Communists                                |
| CIA       | Central Intelligence Agency                       |
| CTBT      | Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty                     |
| DPRK      | Democratic Public Republic of Korea               |
| GMD       | Ground-Based Midcourse Defense                    |
| IAEA      | International Atomic Energy Agency                |
| ICBM      | Intercontinental Ballistic Missile                |
| INF       | Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty          |
| IRBM      | Intermediate Range ballistic                      |
| MIRV      | Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle |
| NATO      | North Atlantic Treaty Organization                |
| New START | New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty               |
| NIE       | National Intelligence Estimates                   |
| NPT       | Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty                  |
| NSS       | National Security Strategy                        |
| SLBM      | Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile              |
| SORT      | Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty             |
| START I   | Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty                   |
| STRATCOM  | United States Strategic Command                   |
| THAAD     | Terminal High Altitude Area Defense               |
| UN        | United Nations                                    |
| UNSC      | United Nations Security Council                   |
| WMD       | Weapons of Mass Destruction                       |

## Chapter 1 – Introduction

“There is nothing more foolish than to think that war can be stopped by war. You don’t ‘prevent’ anything but peace.” President Harry Truman.<sup>1</sup>

Since the detonation of the first atomic weapon, and even more so since the end of the Cold War, preventing the spread of nuclear weapons has generally been an important objective of the United States. While Washington showed some leniency toward allies between the 1950s and 1970s, with the release of the Gilpatric Committee report it has engaged in more rigorous nonproliferation efforts against friends and foes alike.<sup>2</sup> This is because nuclear proliferation has been deemed a security threat for the United States and its allies. However, considering the existential threat, as well as the large shifts in the balance of power that result from nuclear proliferation, the United States (U.S.) has not often met this threat with preventive attacks against nuclear facilities. Instead, the U.S. has used institutional mechanisms, sanctions, and positive inducements to fight the proliferation of nuclear weapons.<sup>3</sup> What are the determinants of U.S. nonproliferation policy choices? More specifically: why are some states targets, and subjects, of preventive attacks while they nuclearize whereas others are not? Moreover, why are preventive attacks against emerging nuclear powers so rare considering how large of a shift in the balance of power nuclearization represents? There have been only two examples of strikes in peace time by Washington despite

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<sup>1</sup> Harry S, *Memoirs of Harry S Truman 1946–1952, Years of Trial and Hope* (New York: Smithmark Publishers, 1954), 359.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas L. Miller, *Stopping the Bomb: The Sources and Effectiveness of US Nonproliferation Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Yager and Richard Betts, *Nonproliferation and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Inst Press, 1980); Etel Solingen. *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Jeffrey W. Knopf, ed., *Security Assurances and Nuclear Nonproliferation* (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, 2012).

numerous threats of doing so: the 1998 bombing and the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The answer I propose is the following: U.S. nonproliferation policy choices are rarely homogeneous and are subject to intense internal debates. U.S. decision-makers who are averse to a preventive strike against a proliferator will bring attention to the reputation of restraint of the nuclearizing state; a reputation based on a deep-seated normative trust in general deterrence as a part of war prevention measures to support any alternatives leading up to nuclearization, in order to demonstrate that the nuclearizing state will not be an unmanageable security threat in the future. If these actors successfully demonstrate past restraint, the possibility of a preventive strike is significantly reduced.

This argument matters because it places itself at the heart of important debates in international relations in general, and security studies in particular. There is a dearth of scholarship in the nuclear proliferation literature as to why states choose their differing policy responses to proliferation.<sup>4</sup> While often discussed, preventive attacks are rarely preferred to other types of bargaining. Second, despite claims to the contrary, deterrence remains a cornerstone of states' response to nuclear issues. This is of particular relevance for the current U.S. agenda of nuclear nonproliferation. As long as deterrence remains the backbone of most nonproliferation measures, we may continue to see new nuclear powers, and decision-makers will continue to pay but lip-service to the global zero agenda.<sup>5</sup> Third, the argument presented here highlights important

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<sup>4</sup> A recent example is Matthew Kroenig, "Force or Friendship? Explaining Great Power Nonproliferation Policy," *Security Studies* 23, no. 1 (2014): 1-32.

<sup>5</sup> T.V. Paul, "Disarmament Revisited: is Nuclear Abolition Possible?" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 35, no. 1 (2012): 149-169; Steven E. Miller and Scott D. Sagan, "Nuclear Power without Nuclear Proliferation?," *Daedalus* 138, no. 4 (September 2009): 7-18; Scott D. Sagan, "Shared Responsibilities for Nuclear Disarmament," *Daedalus* 138, no. 4 (September 2009): 157-68; Francis J. Gavin, "Same As It Ever Was: Nuclear Alarmism, Proliferation, and the Cold War," *International Security* 34, no. 3 (January 2010): 7-37; Michael E. O'Hanlon, *A Skeptic's Case for Nuclear Disarmament* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2013); Nik Hynek and Michal Smetana, eds., *Global Nuclear Disarmament: Strategic, Political, and Regional Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2016).

problems in the current bargaining literature based on rational choice logic. When actors perform strategic actions, their calculations are based on how they perceive the motives of the other to be *from their own context as if they lived in different worlds*. The argument made here is more social: bargaining actors rely on heuristics to be able to come to terms, and these rules of thumb are contextual. Intentions as capabilities is one heuristic but many others exist, including reputation as argued in this dissertation. Finally, this dissertation highlights how bargaining is a social struggle where individual actors vie to sell their policy preferences over others.

This chapter will cover the following grounds. First, it will discuss the existing literature on U.S. nonproliferation decisions and choice. Second, it will discuss the menu for choice of U.S. nonproliferation policies and discuss their relative effectiveness. Third, I will engage with the literature on preventive attacks. Fourth, I will provide a brief overview of the argument presented in this dissertation and I will engage with the role of reputation in international relations. I conclude with a brief overview of the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

## **1. Explaining U.S. Non-Proliferation Efforts**

The United States has perhaps been the most active actor in the international system when it comes to non-proliferation, and it has opposed nuclear proliferation from the beginning of the atomic age for a variety of reasons. John F. Kennedy, in 1963, provided perhaps the best rationale to explain the logic behind U.S. nonproliferation policies:

There are indications because of new inventions, that 10, 15, or 20 nations will have a nuclear capacity, including Red China, by the end of the Presidential office in 1964. This is extremely serious. There have been many wars in the history of mankind and to take a

chance now and not make every effort that we could make to provide for some control over these weapons, I think, would be a great mistake.<sup>6</sup>

This statement by President Kennedy represents well the case made by nuclear pessimists when it comes to the diffusion of nuclear weapons. First, it shows a general disposition against the horizontal spread of nuclear weapons due to a variety of negative externalities. Nicholas Miller has demonstrated how the testing of nuclear devices by Beijing and New Delhi made more salient the problematique of nuclear proliferation and provided the necessary space for decision-makers averse to nuclear proliferation to push for their policies. According to Miller, this explains why we see, from the 1970s onwards, fewer nuclear side-deals with allies and a one-size-fits-all nonproliferation agenda.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, the more weapons there are in the international systems, the greater likelihood there is of catastrophic escalation of conflict and eventual nuclear use.<sup>8</sup> The presence of more nuclear weapons increases the risk of an unwanted nuclear war, either globally, but more realistically regionally between smaller nuclear powers.<sup>9</sup> Frank Gavin, for example, has argued that the risk of nuclear escalation was at the forefront of U.S. nonproliferation thinking. Citing the Gilpatric Report directly he writes “As additional nations obtained nuclear weapons, our

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<sup>6</sup> John F. Kennedy Speeches, “Face-to-Face, Nixon-Kennedy” Vice President Richard M. Nixon and Senator John F. Kennedy Third Joint Television-Radio Broadcast, October 13, 1960,” *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, [https://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/3rd-Nixon-Kennedy-Debate\\_19601013.aspx](https://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/3rd-Nixon-Kennedy-Debate_19601013.aspx). (assessed October 16, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*, Chapter 1.

<sup>8</sup> For a strong review of the literature on preventive war and nuclear proliferation see David J. Karl, “Proliferation Pessimism and Emerging Nuclear Powers,” *International Security* 21, no.3 (Winter 1996/97); Peter D. Feaver, “Optimists, Pessimists, and Theories of Nuclear Proliferation Management: Debate,” *Security Studies* 4, no. 4 (1995): 754-772; Scott D. Sagan, “The Perils of Proliferation in South Asia,” in *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances*, ed. Michael R. Chambers (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002); Miller, “Stopping the Bomb.”

<sup>9</sup> Michael D. Intriligator and Dagobert L. Brito, “Nuclear Proliferation and the Probability of Nuclear War,” *Public Choice* 37, no. 2 (1981): 247–60; Lewis A. Dunn, *Containing Nuclear Proliferation*, Adelphi Papers (London: Brassey’s for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1991); Daniel. Frei and Christian. Catrina, *Risks of Unintentional Nuclear War* (Totowa, N.J.: Allanheld, Osmun and Co. :, 1983).

diplomatic and military influence would wane, and strong pressures would arise to retreat to isolation to avoid the risk of involvement in nuclear war.”<sup>10</sup> Beyond the possibility of war, the quotes above by Kennedy and Gavin showcases how : the United States sought to restrain access to nuclear weapons because it did not want its coercive power to be hampered by the acquisition of nuclear weapons by others. Nuclear weapons are great equalizers of force, and their destructive potential might reduce the strategic pool of options the U.S. has available to deal with adversaries.<sup>11</sup> As such, Kroenig has argued: “states oppose nuclear proliferation to states over which they can project power because proliferation in those situations constrains their military freedom of action,” alternatively, a state could help a proliferator if these constraints are low or non-existent.<sup>12</sup>

This nonproliferation calculus is also been applied in cases of asymmetric relative power. James Wirtz has shown that with the end of the Cold War, the possibility of nuclear war involving weaker power became an important threat to counter for Washington.<sup>13</sup> It has been argued that smaller states smaller states that acquired nuclear weapons might have incentives to use them in a conflict, especially in an asymmetrical conflict against a stronger conventional adversary.<sup>14</sup> Or, by

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<sup>10</sup> Gavin, “Strategies of Inhibition,” 22. On nonproliferation and U.S. global influence see Andrew J. Coe and Jane Vaynman, “Collusion and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime,” *The Journal of Politics* 77, no. 4 (October 2015): 993-997.

<sup>11</sup> T.V. Paul, “Great equalizers or agents of chaos? Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Emerging International Order,” in T.V. Paul and Hall, John A., *International Order and the Future of World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 373-392; Gavin, “Strategies of Inhibition,” 22–24; Michael C. Horowitz, *The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2010). Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation*; Brown and Kaplow, “Talking Peace, Making Weapons;” Richard Betts, “Universal Deterrence or Conceptual Collapse? Liberal Pessimism and Utopian Realism,” in Victor A. Utgoff ed. *The Coming Crisis: Nuclear Proliferation, U.S. Interests, and World Order* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 51-85.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Kroenig, “Force or Friendship? Explaining Great Power Nonproliferation Policy,” *Security Studies* 23, no. 1 (January 2014): 2–3; Kroenig, “Exporting the Bomb: Why States Provide Sensitive Nuclear Assistance.”

<sup>13</sup> James J. Wirtz, “Counter Proliferation, Conventional Counterforce and Nuclear War,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 23, no. 1 (March 2000): esp. 11–19.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Lanoszka and Thomas Leo Scherer, “Nuclear Ambiguity, No-First-Use, and Crisis S-tability in Asymmetric Crises,” *The Nonproliferation Review* 24, no. 3–4 (May 4, 2017): 343–55.

possessing nuclear weapons they will increase their asymmetrical deterrence capabilities.<sup>15</sup> The common example for this stance focuses on the India-Pakistan rivalry, or the potential conflict scenarios between the United States and North Korea.

Following the end of the Cold War an entire literature appeared debating the possibility of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists, and how this new state of affairs conditioned nonproliferation effort toward states said to sponsor terrorism, including Iran, Pakistan, and Libya among others.<sup>16</sup> Credence was given to the seriousness of the threat as Osama bin Laden sought access to a nuclear device starting at least in the early 1990s, and other groups including Aum Shinrikyo and Daesh have sought to buy a bomb.<sup>17</sup> More importantly, the A.Q. Khan network demonstrated how easy it was to buy and sell nuclear technology including blueprints for warheads, uranium enrichment facilities, and uranium.<sup>18</sup> The potential damage of one weapon detonated in a densely populated center is enough to justify the threat level. As such, the United States has strengthened its nonproliferation efforts in order to reduce the likelihood of this type of transfer from occurring.

This overarching argument does not come without some limitations, however. On the one hand, optimists argue that nuclear proliferation is not particularly destabilizing for the international system. Since nuclear weapons strengthen nuclear deterrence, more nuclear weapons mean a more

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<sup>15</sup> T.V. Paul and Jean-Francois Belanger, "Asymmetrical Deterrence: How the Weak Deters the Strong," Working Paper 2018. McGill University. On asymmetric conflict see also Professor T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Graham T. Allison, *Nuclear terrorism: the risks and consequences of the ultimate disaster* (New York: Robinson Publishing M/D, 2006); Charles D. Ferguson and William C. Potter, *The Four Faces of Nuclear Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2012); Matthew Bunn and Anthony Wier, "The Seven Myths of Nuclear Terrorism," *Current History* 104, no.681 (April 2005): 9; Brecht Volders and Tom Sauer, eds., *Nuclear Terrorism: Countering the Threat* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> Graham Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe* (New York: Macmillan, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> Gordon Corera, *Shopping for Bombs: Nuclear Proliferation, Global Insecurity, and the Rise and Fall of the A.Q. Khan Network*, 1 edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).



stable international system as it would curb adventurist and risk-prone foreign policies.<sup>19</sup> The argument is predicated on the effect of nuclear weapons: since they can deliver massive punishment, states are not likely to escalate conflicts to general war. This is the stability-instability paradox: no large-scale conflicts but the possibility of limited engagements.<sup>20</sup> As such, only limited escalation, and by definition limited victory, is possible.<sup>21</sup> Hence, the diffusion of nuclear weapons should not be seen as a problem, but a solution.

However, the policy and scholarly response to this argument has always been the possibility of deterrence failure. As Brodie stated, deterrence has to be almost absolute in the nuclear age “allowing for no breakdowns ever” as failure comes at an incredible cost.<sup>22</sup> The response from advocates against more proliferation has been that no strategy works one hundred percent of the time. Deterrence is no different. However, even if the strategy was to hold in ninety-nine percent of the cases, the 1 percent would have catastrophic results.<sup>23</sup> As such, limiting the diffusion of nuclear weapons and engaging in arms control remains the best solution to avoid the possibility of nuclear war.

As such, the nuclear dominoes argument, while persuasive, has some issues of its own.<sup>24</sup> While presidents like John F. Kennedy were ardent advocates of nuclear nonproliferation, others

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<sup>19</sup> Bernard Brodie. *The Ultimate Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1946); Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth Waltz. *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997); Kenneth N. Waltz, “Why Iran Should Get the Bomb: Nuclear Balancing Would Mean Stability,” *Foreign Affairs* 91, no.4 (2012): 2-4; John J. Mearsheimer, “The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993):50-66

<sup>20</sup> Glenn Herald Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better.*; Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution.*; Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015); Rauchhaus, “Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis: A Quantitative Approach.”

<sup>22</sup> Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age*, 272.

<sup>23</sup> Scott D. Sagan, “The Perils of Proliferation: Organization Theory, Deterrence Theory, and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons,” *International Security* 18, no. 4 (1994): 66–107.

<sup>24</sup> For a more detailed critique see Jean-Francois Belanger, “Book review: Stopping the Bomb,” *The Nonproliferation Review*, Forthcoming.

were not as invested. President Lyndon Johnson was in favor of a nuclear Japan and South Korea in order to counter-balance the nuclearization of China.<sup>25</sup> Nixon, for example, was reluctant to force states into ratifying the Nonproliferation Treaty because he wanted to maintain some flexibility.<sup>26</sup> Reagan, in order to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan, certified to Congress that Pakistan was not seeking nuclear weapons at a time when he knew that they were.<sup>27</sup> While Israel and Pakistan did not test their nuclear weapons during this period, which may have reduced some of the impact that their nuclearization may have had,<sup>28</sup> the universalism of U.S. nonproliferation policies can be questioned.

Second, there are indications that states do not always value their conventional superiority above other interests. The historical record contains many cases where a state helped a proliferator even when they could project power onto it. The Soviet Union provided tremendous help to the Chinese program until 1959.<sup>29</sup> France provided help to Israel.<sup>30</sup> Israel, in turn, provided nuclear assistance to South Africa.<sup>31</sup> Returning to the United States, it did provide assistance to the UK, a country vulnerable to American influence.<sup>32</sup> Julian Schofield has tested the link between export of nuclear weapons and nuclear technology to allies and found that the U.S. was more likely to

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<sup>25</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XI, Arms Control and Disarmament*, eds. Evans Gerakas, David S. Patterson, and Carolyn B. Yee (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1997), document 50.

<sup>26</sup> Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*, 70–71.

<sup>27</sup> The National Security Archives, “New Documents Spotlight Reagan-Era Tensions over Pakistani Nuclear Program.” Briefing Book 377, 27 April 2012, Notes to document 23. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb377/> (assessed September 27, 2018).

<sup>28</sup> Or Rabinowitz, *Bargaining on Nuclear Tests: Washington and Its Cold War Deals* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2014); Or Rabinowitz and Nicholas L. Miller, “Keeping the Bombs in the Basement: U.S. Nonproliferation Policy toward Israel, South Africa, and Pakistan,” *International Security* 40, no. 1 (July 2015): 47–86.

<sup>29</sup> Viktor M. Gobarev, “Soviet Policy toward China: Developing Nuclear Weapons 1949–1969,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 12, no. 4 (December 1999): 1–53.

<sup>30</sup> Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> Peter Liberman, “The Rise and Fall of the South African Bomb,” *International Security* 26, no. 2 (2001): 45–86; Peter Liberman, “Israel and the South African Bomb,” *The Nonproliferation Review* 11, no. 2 (2004): 46–80.

<sup>32</sup> Julian Schofield, *Strategic Nuclear Sharing* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

provide assistance to states it believed it could control and force into dependency rather than states who were more independent.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, the U.S. did try to minimize the diffusion of nuclear weapons among its allies by putting in place the Atoms for Peace program. The program was meant to help the development of civilian nuclear energy at the price of refraining from developing a weaponized program.<sup>34</sup> While there is no doubt that the U.S. would rather not be constrained in its actions, the historical record does contain periods in which this logic was not the primary driver of nonproliferation policies.

Third, how likely is it that a state would provide a non-state actor with nuclear weapons? On the one hand, terrorist groups' loyalties are fickle. A state sponsoring a terrorist group with a nuclear device would have to think twice as disagreement in the future is possible. The device could be used against them.<sup>35</sup> More importantly, Lieber and Press have shown how Washington has a strong track record when it comes to identifying groups responsible for conventional terror attacks. Since nuclear terrorism would most likely be used as a proxy to deliver a secret attack against a rival, a high likelihood of being discovered should be sufficient to dissuade a sponsor from providing a nuclear device to a terrorist group.<sup>36</sup>

### **Nonproliferation Policies: The U.S. Menu for Choice**

The United States overtime has developed an important array of policies and options when it comes to nuclear nonproliferation. This vast array of policies is designed to counter the desire for nuclear weapons in the first place, or try and stop acquisition once it has begun. The desire to

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<sup>33</sup> Schofield, *Strategic Nuclear Sharing*.

<sup>34</sup> For the link between civilian assistance and nuclear weapons see Matthew Fuhrmann, *Atomic Assistance: How "Atoms for Peace" Programs Cause Nuclear Insecurity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> Robin M. Frost, *Nuclear Terrorism after 9/11*, Adelphi Papers, No. 378 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, December 2005)

<sup>36</sup> Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, "Why States Won't Give Nuclear Weapons to Terrorists," *International Security* 38, no. 1 (July 2013): 80–104.

increase one's security has long been the dominant cause of nuclear proliferation.<sup>37</sup> The destructive capacity of nuclear weapons can deter aggression from rivals and adversaries and provide territorial security.<sup>38</sup> Scott Sagan, however, brought attention to additional sources of demand for nuclear weapons, including security, including domestic demand and the status seeking behavior.<sup>39</sup> Domestic demands for nuclear weapons includes groups and individuals within government seeking nuclear weapons for purposes having to do with internal agenda, including economic policies, leaders preferences, agencies parochial interests, or a skewed view of international security.<sup>40</sup> The status seeking argument, in turn, argues that the bomb becomes an identity marker

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<sup>37</sup> William Epstein, "Why States Go—And Don't Go—Nuclear," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 430, no. 1 (March 1977): 17; Bradley A. Thayer, "The Causes of Nuclear Proliferation and the Utility of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime," *Security Studies* 4, no. 3 (1995): 465; Mark S. Bell, "Examining Explanations for Nuclear Proliferation," *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (September 2016): 520–29.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons : More May Be Better* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981); Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Robert Powell, *Nuclear Deterrence Theory : The Search for Credibility* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Vipin Narang, "Posturing for Peace? Pakistan's Nuclear Postures and South Asian Stability," *International Security* 34, no. 3 (January 2010): 38–78; Vipin Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict* (Princeton University Press, 2014); Alexandre Debs and Nuno P. Monteiro, *Nuclear Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 37–53; Whether nuclear weapons have an effect on crisis escalation other than deterrence remains contested in the literature. On the topic see Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 18; Daniel S. Geller, "Nuclear Weapons, Deterrence, and Crisis Escalation," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 34, no. 2 (1990): 291–310; Kyle Beardsley and Victor Asal, "Winning with the Bomb," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 2 (April 2009): 278–301; Matthew Kroenig, "Nuclear Superiority and the Balance of Resolve: Explaining Nuclear Crisis Outcomes," *International Organization* 67, no. 01 (January 2013): 141–71; John Mueller, "The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons: Stability in the Postwar World," *International Security* 13, no. 2 (1988): 55; Todd S. Sechser, "Goliath's Curse: Coercive Threats and Asymmetric Power," *International Organization* 64, no. 04 (October 2010): 627–60; Todd S. Sechser and Matthew Fuhrmann, "Crisis Bargaining and Nuclear Blackmail," *International Organization* 67, no. 01 (January 2013): 173–95; Robert Rauchhaus, "Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis: A Quantitative Approach," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 2, (2009), 258-277; Mark S. Bell and Nicholas L. Miller, "Questioning the Effect of Nuclear Weapons on Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 1 (February 2015): 74–92; Michael Horowitz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons and International Conflict: Does Experience Matter?," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 2 (April 2009): 234–57; Todd S. Sechser and Matthew Fuhrmann, *Nuclear Weapons and Coercive Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>39</sup> Scott D Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1997): 54–86.

<sup>40</sup> Etel Solingen, *Nuclear Logics: Contrasting Paths in East Asia and the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Jacques E. C. Hymans, *Achieving Nuclear Ambitions: Scientists, Politicians and Proliferation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Målfred Braut-Hegghammer, *Unclear Physics: Why Iraq and Libya Failed to Build Nuclear Weapons* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016); Andrew Moravcsik,

of great powers: having nuclear weapons means you are now part of the select club of nuclear powers, which is often linked to the great power club. Nuclear weapon programs serve symbolic functions reflecting leaders' perceptions of appropriate and modern behavior while increasing the international status of the state.<sup>41</sup> Alternatively, the demand for nuclear weapons is also linked to the availability of nuclear technology. States who have access to the required technology and material to linked to the production of nuclear weapons are more likely to proliferate under duress.<sup>42</sup> As such, the U.S. nonproliferation apparatus has been built, and should be designed to address most causes of proliferation to reduce its spread.

There is evidence that the United States has been successful overall in this objective.<sup>43</sup>

Table 1.1 highlights the menu of choice that the United States has used to curb proliferation towards adversaries and allies alike.

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"Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics: Erratum," *International Organization* 52, no. 01 (December 1998): 513-553; Christopher Way and Jessica LP Weeks, "Making It Personal: Regime Type and Nuclear Proliferation," *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no. 3 (2014): 705-719; Matthew Fuhrmann and Michael C. Horowitz, "When Leaders Matter: Rebel Experience and Nuclear Proliferation," *The Journal of Politics* 77, no. 1 (January 2015): 72-87; Jacques E C Hymans, "Veto Players, Nuclear Energy, and Nonproliferation," *International Security* 36, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 154-89; Scott D Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1997): 54-86; Scott D. Sagan, "The Causes of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation," *Annual Review of Political Science* 14, no. 1 (June 15, 2011): 225-44; Scott D. Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation: Organization Theory, Deterrence Theory, and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons," *International Security* 18, no. 4 (1994): 66-107.

<sup>41</sup> Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb," 1997, 73-76; Jacques E. C Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). On the role of status in international relations see Deborah Welch Larson, T.V. Paul, and William C. Wohlforth, "Status and World Order," in T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth, eds., *Status in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). scholars in this branch of proliferation studies have argued that status markers have changed with the creation of the nonproliferation regime, and more specifically, the ratification of the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968. The treaty in itself has helped, according to this argument, to remove the prestige associated with nuclear weapons and replace it with non-proliferation norms as a marker of status and identity. On this argument see Maria Rost Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms: Why States Choose Nuclear Restraint* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009); Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 337-38.

<sup>42</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann, "Spreading Temptation: Proliferation and Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation Agreements," *International Security* 34, no. 1 (2009): 8-10; Matthew Fuhrmann, "Spreading Temptation: Proliferation and Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation Agreements," *International Security* 34, no. 1 (2009): 8-10.

<sup>43</sup> Scott Sagan, Kenneth Waltz, and Richard K. Betts, "A Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster?," *Debate Hosted by the Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, February 8, 2007* 60, no. 2 (April 15, 2007); Gaving, "Strategies of Inhibitions," Miller, "Stopping the Bomb."

**Table 1.1: U.S. Nonproliferation Menu of Choice**

|  | <b>Allies</b>   | <b>Strategic Partners</b>   | <b>Adversaries</b>   |
|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Methods of<br/>Nonproliferation</b> | <u>Diplomacy</u><br>Involvement in<br>nonproliferation<br>Institutions. Ex. NPT,<br>IAEA) | <u>Diplomacy</u><br>including Involvement<br>in nonproliferation<br>Institutions. Ex. NPT,<br>IAEA) | <u>Diplomacy</u><br>including<br>involvement in<br>nonproliferation<br>Institutions. Ex. NPT,<br>IAEA) |
|  | <u>Negative Inducement</u><br>Abandonment   | <u>Negative Inducement</u><br>(Abandonment)   | <u>Sanctions</u><br>1970s onwards  |
|  | <u>Positive Inducements</u><br>Economic and Military<br>Aid                               | <u>Positive Inducements</u><br>(Economic and Military<br>Aid)                                       | <u>Preventive Attack</u>   |
|  | <u>Security Guarantees</u><br>including nuclear umbrella                                  | <u>Security Guarantees</u><br>(including nuclear<br>umbrella)                                       | <u>Missile Defense</u>   |
|  | <u>Sanctions</u><br>1970s onwards   | <u>Sanctions</u><br>1970s onwards   |  |

An important aspect of the U.S. nonproliferation apparatus is negative inducement, which includes the use of sanctions. Despite previous arguments to the contrary, scholars have demonstrated how U.S. sanctions have helped curb proliferation, especially in states that were benefitting from military and economic aid from the hegemon.<sup>44</sup> This argument is contingent on dependency: if the aid package offered by the United States is particularly important to the proliferator, threats of losing access through sanctions increases the cost of proliferation and decreases the odds of (continued) proliferation. Cases such as South Korea and Taiwan are exemplars of this logic.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Miller, “The Secret Success of Nonproliferation Sanctions”; Etel Solingen, *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>45</sup> Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*, Chapter 5.

Specifically, on military dependency, Gerzhoy has demonstrated how the United States was able to keep West Germany non-nuclear by threatening to abandon its ally militarily and economically.<sup>46</sup>

The U.S. does not only rely on negative inducements to counter nuclear proliferation. Positive inducement have been an important tool for Washington as well.<sup>47</sup> Celia L. Reynolds and Wilfred T. Wan have shown that while positive inducements are not used as much as sanctions, they have been shown to be effective as in the case of Libya for example.<sup>48</sup> Ariel Levite shows how the extension of security guarantees through NATO helped curb proliferation along with direct bilateral guarantees to Japan, Australia, and others by extending its nuclear umbrella.<sup>49</sup> When it was not able to prevent proliferation altogether, the U.S. was able to stop nuclearizing states, including South Africa, Israel, and Pakistan, from performing a nuclear test, which scholars argued reduced further incentives for horizontal proliferation.<sup>50</sup> Especially in the case of Pakistan, the United States offered transfer of military items including fighter jets to counter the demand for proliferation.<sup>51</sup> Miroslav Nincic, however, argues that positive inducements need to be appropriately tailored to the needs of the relevant domestic actors the U.S. if they are to work.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Gerzhoy, "Alliance Coercion and Nuclear Restraint."

<sup>47</sup> Robert J. Reardon, "Nuclear Bargaining: Using Carrots and Sticks in Nuclear Counter-Proliferation," PhD Dissertation, MIT University, 2010. On the use of positive inducements in general see Yoav Gortzak, "How Great Powers Rule: Coercion and Positive Inducements in International Order Enforcement," *Security Studies* 14, no. 4 (October 2005): 663–97; Miroslav Nincic, "Getting What you Want: Positive Inducements in International Relations," *International Security* 35, no. 1 (Summer 2010): 138–183.

<sup>48</sup> Celia L. Reynolds and Wilfred T. Wan, "Empirical Trends in Sanctions and Positive Inducements in Nonproliferation," in *Sanctions, Statecrafts, and Nuclear Proliferation*, ed. Soligen

<sup>49</sup> Levite also shows how Washington came very close to denuclearization with Brazil in the mid-1970s when the Ford Administration offered a strong military aid package. The deal was eventually leaked and Brazil decided to walk back its agreement. It still demonstrate the effectiveness of positive inducement. Ariel E. Levite, "Never Say Never Again: Nuclear Reversal Revisited," *International Security* 27, no. 3 (Winter2002/2003 2002): 76–80,

<sup>50</sup> Rabinowitz and Miller, "Keeping the Bombs in the Basement"; Rabinowitz, *Bargaining on Nuclear Tests*.

<sup>51</sup> Feroz Khan, *Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, 2012).

<sup>52</sup> Miroslav Nincic, "Positive Incentives, Positive Results? Rethinking US Counterproliferation Policy," in *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation*, ed. Soligen, esp. 152–153.

Moreover, the development of missile defense systems for allies has worked as positive inducement as well. The development of the Aegis system and the scheduled THAAD system can help protect Japan and South Korea which reduces the likelihood they will seek nuclear weapons.<sup>53</sup> Alternatively, it was hypothesized it was aimed at deterring smaller proliferators by reducing the effectiveness of their nascent capability, hence increase the cost of proliferation.<sup>54</sup>

Against adversaries and non-allied states, the U.S. was able to develop a strong export control group in order to restrain the diffusion of nuclear technology.<sup>55</sup> William Burr highlights the efforts of Henry Kissinger as determinant in the development of the group, but also its success by making the acquisition of nuclear material harder.<sup>56</sup> Pierre Lellouche adds to this point when he argues: “perhaps the single most important achievement of the Ford and Carter administrations’ foreign nuclear policies has been the triggering of an awareness in Europe of the fact that the exporting of nuclear materials and equipment is a special business.”<sup>57</sup> However, there are some issues with the group. It has grown in size in recent years, which means it may face difficulties reaching homogenous nonproliferation objectives.<sup>58</sup> According to Braun and Chyba, the existence of outside suppliers makes it more difficult for the group to be effective.<sup>59</sup> The group, however, as

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<sup>53</sup> Jean-Francois Bélanger, “Strategic Stability in the Second Nuclear Age: Towards a BMD Paradigm,” Masters Thesis, Dalhousie University, August 2012.

<sup>54</sup> Frank P. Harvey, *Smoke and Mirrors: Globalized Terrorism and the Illusion of Multilateral Security* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), esp. chapter 1 and 4.

<sup>55</sup> On the past, present, and future of the Nuclear Suppliers Group see Tadeusz Strulak, “The Nuclear Suppliers Group,” *The Nonproliferation Review* 1, no. 1 (September 1993): 2–10; Ian Anthony et al., *Reforming Nuclear Export Controls: The Future of the Nuclear Suppliers Group* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2007); Mark Hibbs, *The Future of the Nuclear Suppliers Group* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011).

<sup>56</sup> William Burr, “A Scheme of ‘Control’: The United States and the Origins of the Nuclear Suppliers’ Group, 1974–1976\*,” *The International History Review* 36, no. 2 (March 15, 2014): 252–76.

<sup>57</sup> Pierre Lellouche, “Breaking the Rules without Quite Stopping the Bomb: European Views,” *International Organization* 35, no. 01 (December 1981): 43.

<sup>58</sup> Richard T. Cupitt and Igor Khripunov, “New Strategies for the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG),” *Comparative Strategy* 16, no. 3 (July 1997): 305–15

<sup>59</sup> Chaim Braun and Christopher F. Chyba, “Proliferation Rings: New Challenges to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime,” *International Security* 29, no. 2 (October 2004): 5–6.



shown either favoritism or reduced effectiveness when it comes to allies. India, for example, has recently been allowed to resume trade relationship with members of the group despite its non-NPT accepted nuclear program.<sup>60</sup> Adversaries of the United States do not enjoy such benefits. Moreover, allies of the U.S. have generally been able to develop enrichment facilities despite restrictions on nuclear exports, which includes Israel, the Netherlands, and France for example.<sup>61</sup>

The United States also participated to the creation of the nonproliferation regime, which became an important part of the U.S. nonproliferation apparatus. While it did not always enjoy the same support in Washington, especially in the 1960s, it has helped create a multilateral institution focused on reducing the spread of nuclear weapons.<sup>62</sup> The literature on the effectiveness of the nonproliferation regime, and in particular the NPT, is divided.<sup>63</sup> On the one hand there is skepticism regarding its impact on proliferation. The realist critique puts emphasis on the epiphenomenality of international regimes, and their subservience to state power to argue the NPT did not causally restrict proliferation; great powers did.<sup>64</sup> In a similar vein, the NPT's effectiveness can only be limited, according to Thayer, because it does not address the security incentives behind nuclear acquisition. While it makes it more difficult to acquire the bomb, a state with a high threat perception will not be automatically deterred.<sup>65</sup> T.V. Paul has argued that nuclear choices are often

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<sup>60</sup> Saira Bano, "India and Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) Membership," *Global Change, Peace & Security* 27, no. 2 (May 4, 2015): 123–37.

<sup>61</sup> R. Scott Kemp, "The Nonproliferation Emperor Has No Clothes: The Gas Centrifuge, Supply-Side Controls, and the Future of Nuclear Proliferation," *International Security* 38, no. 4 (April 2014): 39–78.

<sup>62</sup> Joseph S Nye, "Maintaining a Nonproliferation Regime," *International Organization* 35, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 15–38; Karl Kaiser, "Non-proliferation and Nuclear Deterrence," *Survival* 31, no. 2 (March 1989): 123–36.

<sup>63</sup> Ramesh Thakur, "Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament: Can the Power of Ideas Tame the Power of the State?: Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament," *International Studies Review* 13, no. 1 (March 2011): 34–45.

<sup>64</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (1994): 5–49; Scott D. Sagan, "The Causes of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation," *Annual Review of Political Science* 14, no. 1 (June 15, 2011): 225–44.

<sup>65</sup> Thayer, "The Causes of Nuclear Proliferation and the Utility of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime," 465; Mearsheimer made a similar case while defending nuclear acquisition by the Ukraine. He argued the transition towards a more multipolar world following the end of the Cold War would mean more insecurity globally, increasing the demand for nuclear weapons. The treaty itself did nothing to stop demands do to security uncertainty.

done prior to ratification of the NPT. As such, decisions are made using other considerations.<sup>66</sup> Hymans follows a similar logic, stating that if the NPT had a causal impact on the reduction of proliferation, there should have been more cases prior to its inception, and we should have seen a drastic reduction *ex post facto*.<sup>67</sup>

While critiques are valid, the NPT should not be dismissed out of hand. Despite its shortcomings, the nonproliferation regime has had some positive impacts. The regime has helped establish nonproliferation norms.<sup>68</sup> Norms are important as they dictate force states mindful of their social standing to alter their behavior.<sup>69</sup> It has helped with the diffusion of information regarding nonproliferation practices, and provided an arena for cooperation.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, it provides an environment where states get together and define what nonproliferation is and how it has to be countered. It also provides a multilateral platform to act against proliferators through varied means including export control, safeguards, information sharing, and shaming cheaters and defectors.<sup>71</sup> This is a point acknowledged by some realist as well: the NPT can help reduce the pervasive uncertainty of the international system by fostering some convergence of interests.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, the nonproliferation regime has had some security effect: it has helped keep proliferation low in regionally, therefore reducing the demand for nuclear weapons.<sup>73</sup>

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See John J. Mearsheimer, "The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 60–61, John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 1 (1990): 5.

<sup>66</sup> Paul, *Power Versus Prudence*.

<sup>67</sup> Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation*, 6.

<sup>68</sup> Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*.

<sup>69</sup> Maria Rost Rublee, "Taking Stock of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime: Using Social Psychology to Understand Regime Effectiveness," *International Studies Review* 10, no. 3 (September 2008): 420–50,

<sup>70</sup> Smith, "Explaining the Non-Proliferation Regime."

<sup>71</sup> Trevor McMorris Tate, "Regime-Building in the Non-Proliferation System," *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 4 (November 1990): 399–414; Johnston, "Treating International Institutions as Social Environments."

<sup>72</sup> Zachary S. Davis, "The Realist Nuclear Regime," *Security Studies* 2, no. 3–4 (June 1993): 82–83.

<sup>73</sup> T. V. Paul, "Systemic Conditions and Security Cooperation: Explaining the Persistence of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 16, no. 1 (2003): 135–54.

From a rationalist standpoint, the regime has helped raise the cost of proliferation globally.<sup>74</sup> However, the continued survival of the regime will be determined by the political will put into it by member states.<sup>75</sup> After all, the NPT has been reconvened for perpetuity.<sup>76</sup> While the regime alone would not be able to counter proliferation, it has provided a focal point whereas the demand for nonproliferation could be organized and diffused. However, the failure to reach consensus during the 2015 NPT review process may not bode well for the future.

### **Preventive Attacks and Nonproliferation**

One means of nonproliferation that has been rarely used by Washington, and constitutes the focus of this dissertation, is preventive attacks against nuclear facilities. Table 1.2 shows all cases of preventive attacks against nuclear programs. As we can see, in the universe of cases, Washington only used this means twice in peacetime, in 1998 and 2003 against Iraq. If we broaden the scope of inquiry, Israel conducted two additional preventive attacks, once in 1981 against the Osiraq reactor, and again in 2007 against Syria's nascent nuclear program.<sup>77</sup> As evident, the numbers of preventive attacks are low compared to the cases of proliferation. What explains this?

A qualification here is in order. As Jonathan Renshon aptly puts it, a preventive attack is a subset of the larger concept of preventive war. Importantly: "Preventive strikes are limited in their scope, and are generally not intended to provoke wars, though the possibility of escalation cannot

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<sup>74</sup> Coe and Vaynman, "Collusion and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime," 992–94.

<sup>75</sup> Steven E. Miller and Scott D. Sagan, "Nuclear Power without Nuclear Proliferation?," *Daedalus* 138, no. 4 (September 2009): 7–18.

<sup>76</sup> Tariq Rauf and Rebecca Johnson, "After the NPT's Indefinite Extension: The Future of the Global Nonproliferation Regime," *The Nonproliferation Review* 3, no. 1 (December 1995): 28–42.

<sup>77</sup> Shai Feldman, "The Bombing of Osiraq-Revisited," *International Security* 7, no. 2 (1982): 114–142; Shlomo Nakdimon, *First Strike: The Exclusive Story of How Israel Foiled Iraq's Attempt to Get the Bomb* (New York: HarperCollins Distribution Services, 1987); Uri Bar-Joseph, Michael Handel, and Amos Perlmutter, *Two Minutes Over Baghdad* (London: Routledge, 2003); Amos Harel and Aluf Been, "No Longer a Secret: How Israel Destroyed Syria's Nuclear Reactor," *Haaretz*, 23 March 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/MAGAZINE-no-longer-a-secret-how-israel-destroyed-syria-s-nuclear-reactor-1.5914407>. (Assessed September 15, 2018).

**Table 1.2 – Washington and Preventive Attacks<sup>78</sup>**

| <b>Proliferator</b>       | <b>Preventive Attack Plan</b> | <b>Preventive Attack</b> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Soviet Union/Russ.</b> | 1946*<br>1947*<br>1948*       | —                        |
| <b>UK</b>                 | —                             | —                        |
| <b>France</b>             | —                             | —                        |
| <b>Switzerland</b>        | —                             | —                        |
| <b>Israel</b>             | —                             | —                        |
| <b>Brazil</b>             | —                             | —                        |
| <b>India</b>              | —                             | —                        |
| <b>Sweden</b>             | —                             | —                        |
| <b>Yugoslavia</b>         | —                             | —                        |
| <b>Egypt</b>              | —                             | —                        |
| <b>China</b>              | 1961<br>1963-1964             | —                        |
| <b>Australia</b>          | —                             | —                        |
| <b>Italy</b>              | —                             | —                        |
| <b>Germany</b>            | 1942-1945                     | 1943, 1945***            |
| <b>West Germany</b>       | —                             | —                        |
| <b>South Korea</b>        | —                             | —                        |
| <b>North Korea</b>        | 1994                          | —                        |
| <b>Taiwan</b>             | —                             | —                        |
| <b>South Africa</b>       | —                             | —                        |
| <b>Libya</b>              | —                             | —                        |
| <b>Pakistan</b>           | 1979                          | —                        |
| <b>Iraq</b>               | 1990-1991<br>1998<br>2003     | 1991***<br>1998<br>2003  |
| <b>Iran</b>               | 2012-2014                     | —**                      |
| <b>Algeria</b>            | —                             | —                        |
| <b>Romania</b>            | —                             | —                        |

Notes: \*The United States did not have preventive plans against the Soviet Nascent nuclear program. Plans were drafted afterwards in a bid to deal with a nuclear Soviet Union. \*\*Iran was not militarily attacked by Washington. However, the Obama administration used a cyberattack, Stuxnet, against Iranian facilities. \*\*\*These cases occurred during war time.

<sup>78</sup> Data from Matthew Fuhrmann and Sarah E. Kreps, “Targeting Nuclear Programs in War and Peace: A Quantitative Empirical Analysis, 1941-2000,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54, no. 6 (December 2010): 831–59; Debs and Monteiro, *Nuclear Politics*.

be overlooked.”<sup>79</sup> Moreover, especially when it comes to nuclear proliferation, they are not expected to put an end to the program. It is understood their objective is principally to delay proliferation and increase bilateral and multilateral leverage.<sup>80</sup> As such, when evaluating the cost and benefits of preventive attacks, the cost should not be equal to the cost of an attack designed to escalate to war.

At its core, the logic of preventive wars, which encompasses the logic of preventive attacks, comes from realist and rational choice assumptions. The often-cited opening to Thucydides’ recollection of the Peloponnesian War is perhaps the clearest articulation this logic: “In my view the real reason, true but unacknowledged, which forced the war was the growth of Athenian power and Spartan fear of it.”<sup>81</sup> Due to the anarchic, self-help, nature of the system, states take shifts in the balance of power that are unfavorable to them seriously as their security and future well-being depend on it.<sup>82</sup> This is in large part due to what is known as the uncertainty of intentions. First, it is difficult to know what states’ motives are, and it is equally difficult to predict whether they will change their minds in the future; as such, uncertainty regarding others’ action and the consequences for one’s security of not acting in accordance to worse-case scenario calculations would be imprudent.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, shifts in the relative balance of capabilities increase the likelihood of preventive attacks. Following this logic, Jack Levy argues:

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<sup>79</sup> Jonathan Renshon, *Why Leaders Choose War: The Psychology of Prevention* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2006), 5.

<sup>80</sup> Renshon, 168; See also Peter S. Ford, “Israel’s Attack on Osiraq: A Model for Future Preventive Strikes?” (Master’s dissertation, Naval Postgraduate School, 2004), 3.

<sup>81</sup> Thucydides and P. J. Rhodes, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Martin Hammond, Translation edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 13.

<sup>82</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979); Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”; Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, “Security Seeking under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited,” *International Security* 25, no. 3 (January 2001): 128–61; Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

<sup>83</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 105; Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions”; Dale C. Copeland, “The Constructivist Challenge to Structural Realism: A Review Essay,” *International Security* 25, no. 2 (October 2000): 187–212; David Edelstein, “Managing Uncertainty: Beliefs about Intentions and the Rise of Great

Preventive war is a strategy designed to forestall an adverse shift in the balance of power and driven by better-now-than-later logic. Faced with a rising and potentially hostile adversary, it is better to fight now rather than risk the likely consequences of inaction—a decline in relative power, diminishing bargaining leverage, and the risk of war under less favorable circumstances later.<sup>84</sup>

This logic has for foundation the rational postulate regarding time inconsistencies and commitment problems: engagements are less credible when made over items which increase future power capabilities of one of the parties. A better negotiating position in the future may lead to an agreement now which will be revisited in the future.<sup>85</sup> The development of nuclear weapons means more options in the future. This assessment is born of the interplay between security concerns and incomplete information: state may hide some information from the other to gain leverage later.<sup>86</sup> In cases where a breach of commitment might mean costly loss or bitter defeat in the future, a preventive attack might be the solution to shortchange a detrimental power shift.<sup>87</sup> This is the foundation of the power transition and hegemonic stability theory.<sup>88</sup> Timing is also relevant in this equation, often called windows of opportunities. The likelihood of a preventive attack is exacerbated by the shortened window of opportunity in nuclear proliferation cases: once the

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Powers,” *Security Studies* 12, no. 1 (October 1, 2002): 1–40; John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: WW Norton, 2014); Evan Braden Montgomery, “Breaking Out of the Security Dilemma: Realism, Reassurance, and the Problem of Uncertainty,” *International Security* 31, no. 2 (October 2006): 151–85; Shiping Tang and Evan Braden Montgomery, “Uncertainty and Reassurance in International Politics,” *International Security* 32, no. 1 (July 2007): 193–200; Brian C. Rathbun, “Uncertain about Uncertainty: Understanding the Multiple Meanings of a Crucial Concept in International Relations Theory,” *International Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (September 2007): 533–57.

<sup>84</sup> Jack S. Levy, “Preventive War and Democratic Politics: Presidential Address to the International Studies Association March 1, 2007, Chicago,” *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (March 2008): 1

<sup>85</sup> James D Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 379–414; Robert Powell, “War as a Commitment Problem,” *International Organization* 60, no. 01 (January 2006); Sam R. Bell and Jesse C. Johnson, “Shifting Power, Commitment Problems, and Preventive War,” *International Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (March 2015): 124–32.

<sup>86</sup> Dan Reiter, “Exploring the Bargaining Model of War,” *Perspective on Politics* 1, no. 1 (March 2003): 27–43.

<sup>87</sup> Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War”; Powell, “War as a Commitment Problem.”

<sup>88</sup> A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Ronald L Tammen, *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21st Century* (New York: Chatham House Publishers, 2000); Jack S Levy, “Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War,” *World Politics* 40, no. 1 (1987): 82–107.

capability is acquired, the cost of a strike becomes exponentially prohibitive. As such, we would expect strikes early in the proliferating process as there is a dynamic of diminishing returns as time passes.<sup>89</sup> It stands to reason, therefore, that the acquisition of nuclear weapons has an important impact on the balance, and could therefore be construed as an existential threat in certain relationships.

There are, of course, many caveats offered in the literature to explain why attacks occur in certain cases and why they do not in others. From the realist camp, some have argued that what matters is the size in the shift of relative power vis-à-vis the cost of waiving preventive attacks. When the shift in the balance of power is high relative to the costs of war, then the threat is credible and preventive war is plausible and possible. When the reverse is true, preventive wars are unlikely.<sup>90</sup> Others have placed emphasis on the speed of proliferation to determine the likelihood of preventive attacks. In this case, preventive attacks are the result of large and rapid changes in the balance of power. If the change is gradual or small, the likelihood of preventive war is reduced.<sup>91</sup>

As for rationalist, the conventional wisdom is that a credible commitment to uphold the current agreement in the future will in general lead to a negotiated outcome rather than an attack

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<sup>89</sup> Arguments have also been made about the size of the shift in the balance of power. In this case, preventive attacks are the result of large and rapid changes in the balance of power. If the change is gradual or small, the likelihood of preventive war is reduced. See Christopher R. Dittmeier, "Proliferation, Preemption, and Intervention in the Nuclearization of Second-Tier States," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 25, no. 4 (2013): 492-535; See also Richard Ned Lebow, "Windows of Opportunity: Do States Jump Through Them?," *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 147-86.

<sup>90</sup> Alexandre Debs and Nuno P. Monteiro, "Known Unknowns: Power Shifts, Uncertainty, and War," *International Organization* 68, no. 01 (January 2014): 1-31.

<sup>91</sup> Christopher R. Dittmeier, "Proliferation, Preemption, and Intervention in the Nuclearization of Second-Tier States," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 25, no. 4 (2013): 492-535.

or war.<sup>92</sup> Material commitments, also known as hand tying, are generally more credible as they remove options from policy-makers. The best hand tying mechanisms are the one where reneging on an agreement would be particularly costly including treaty ratification, sunk, and audience costs.<sup>93</sup> A strong reputation in domains relevant to the negotiations may help increase the credibility of the commitment as well.<sup>94</sup> Institutional mechanisms to provide information on the desires and motives of the other may also alleviate tensions and reduce the likelihood of bargaining failure, in this case an attack.<sup>95</sup> Ultimately, the decision to commit to a preventive attack is a cost-benefit analysis in and of itself. Are the consequences of a preventive attack, chief among them potential retaliation, worth the risk?

Additional variables have been proposed to explain variation in preventive attack behavior. Regime type has been used to explain preventive war behavior. When autocrats challenge the established orders, they are more likely to be met by a balancing coalition of allied democratic states. If the challenger is a democracy, accommodation will be the preferred mode of engagement.<sup>96</sup> Relationships matter as well. States will not make the same plans for friends and

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<sup>92</sup> Jon Elster, *Ulysses Unbound: Studies in Rationality, Precommitment, and Constraints* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Robert D Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 427–60.

<sup>93</sup> Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*; Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War"; James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 03 (September 1994): 577–92; Beth A Simmons and Allison Danner, "Credible Commitments and the International Criminal Court," *International Organization* 64, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 225–56; Ian Hurd, "The Strategic Use of Liberal Internationalism: Libya and the UN Sanctions, 1992–2003," *International Organization* 59, no. 03 (July 2005): 495–526.

<sup>94</sup> Anne E. Sartori, "The Might of the Pen: A Reputational Theory of Communication in International Disputes," *International Organization* 56, no. 1 (February 1, 2002): 121–49; Anne E. Sartori, *Deterrence by Diplomacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007); Paul K. Huth, "Reputations and Deterrence: A Theoretical and Empirical Assessment," *Security Studies* 7, no. 1 (September 1, 1997): 72–99.

<sup>95</sup> Steven Rosen, "War power and the willingness to suffer," in Bruce Russett ed. *Peace, War, and Numbers* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publishing, 1972), 183.

<sup>96</sup> Randall L. Schweller, "Domestic Structure and Preventive War: Are Democracies More Pacific?" *World Politics* 44, no. 2 (1992): 238; Parts of this argument are built on tenets of the democratic peace theory. See Michael W Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *The American Political Science Review* 80, no. 4 (December 1986): 1151–69; Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton, N.J.:



foes. Differences in foreign policy goals and a history of conflict between states has also been correlated with an increase in the chances of preventive attacks: state whose foreign policy are more closely aligns are less likely to be attacked.<sup>97</sup> A corollary argument is whether states are allied or not: allies are less likely to be attacked or forced to denuclearized because they are less threatening.<sup>98</sup>

The issue with this argument is that it does not properly follow the logic proposed by realism under self-help. The realist literature is divided as to the actual effect of nuclear proliferation on the international system. On the one hand, optimists argue it will bolster deterrence system-wide and reduce the likelihood of general war, a net positive for security-seekers.<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, pessimists argue they increase, among other things, the chances of preventive wars and attack in the transition period due to the shift in the balance of power.<sup>100</sup> Logically, it becomes an empirical question whether states will also assume worse-case scenarios, as argued by Sagan and the pessimists, or whether they would positively anticipate nuclear proliferation. It is entirely possible they will be against proliferation due to the constraint on their ability to project power and protect itself in the future.<sup>101</sup> Nuclearization and the advantages it provides may lead to more

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Princeton University Press, 1994); John M. Owen, "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace," *International Security* 19, no. 2 (1994): 87–125; John R. Oneal and Dr Bruce Russett, *Triangulating Peace* (New York: W W Norton & Co Inc, 2000); Michael W. Doyle, "Three Pillars of the Liberal Peace," *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 03 (August 2005): 463–66.

<sup>97</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann and Sarah E. Kreps, "Targeting Nuclear Programs in War and Peace: A Quantitative Empirical Analysis, 1941-2000," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54, no. 6 (2010): 831-859.

<sup>98</sup> Peter D. Feaver and Emerson M. S. Niu, "Managing Nuclear Proliferation: Condemn, Strike, or Assist?," *International Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (June 1996): 209.

<sup>99</sup> Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better*; Mearsheimer, "The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent."

<sup>100</sup> Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation"; Barry R. Posen, *Inadvertent Escalation: Conventional War and Nuclear Risks* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

<sup>101</sup> Kroenig, "Nuclear Superiority and the Balance of Resolve."

predation against non-nuclear states as the balance of power favors their hegemonic preferences.<sup>102</sup> Nuclear weapons states may seek to increase their clout due to their newfound status and capabilities.<sup>103</sup> In other words, nuclear weapons can “embolden” states encouraging foreign policies of aggression, expansionism, or resoluteness for example.<sup>104</sup> As such, if we truly assume a worst-case scenario under realism and its rationalist undertone, we should expect more preventive wars.

Normative arguments have been made as well to explain the lack of preventive attacks in the past and its increased use today. On the question of the use of force the UN Charter states that: “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”<sup>105</sup> An important aspect of this literature is the argument that war, or pre-emptive attacks, are only legal and morally acceptable if they are done in self-defense, or if the UN Security Council approves the use of force.<sup>106</sup> In this context, preventive attacks against nuclear facilities would be deemed illegal. Scott Silverstone, for example, has argued that in the early 1950s the United States presidents were constrained by a norm against preventive attacks, but that this has changed over time with the development of the

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<sup>102</sup> Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*; For literature questioning crisis propensity and nuclear weapons see Bell and Miller, “Questioning the Effect of Nuclear Weapons on Conflict”; Sechser and Fuhrmann, “Crisis Bargaining and Nuclear Blackmail”; Sechser and Fuhrmann, *Nuclear Weapons and Coercive Diplomacy*.

<sup>103</sup> Erik Gartzke and Dong-Joon Jo, “Bargaining, Nuclear Proliferation, and Interstate Disputes,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 2 (2009): 209–33.

<sup>104</sup> Mark S Bell, “Beyond Emboldenment: How Acquiring Nuclear Weapons Can Change Foreign Policy,” *International Security* 40, no. 1 (2015): 92–100.

<sup>105</sup> United Nations, “Charter of the United Nations,” <http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-i/index.html>

<sup>106</sup> Christine Gray, *International Law and the Use of Force* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Richard N. Haass, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World* (Washington, D.C: Carnegie Endowment for Int’l Peace, 1999); Judith Gardam, *Necessity, Proportionality and the Use of Force by States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Joel Westra, *International Law and the Use of Armed Force: The UN Charter and the Major Powers* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

nonproliferation norm. The norm was in part the product of the American identity as averse to the “inevitability of war,” as well as being “a violation of the standards accepted within American society that define the conditions under which military force against other states is justified.”<sup>107</sup> The norm against proliferation, which took precedence over the anti-preventive attack norm, is built through the nuclear taboo. According to Nina Tannenwald, “as the taboo gained strength, nuclear weapons would become increasingly stigmatized and delegitimized,” a process that could have acted as catalyst for nonproliferation writ large as the proper course of action.<sup>108</sup>

While these arguments all have merits, they do not properly explain the empirical record. In order for quantitative studies to be credible, they need to be able to explain the exemplar cases that are relevant to their studies.<sup>109</sup> In this case, they are incapable. The United States considered attacking Chinese nuclear facilities in the late 1950s and decided against it despite recognition at the time that the shift in the balance of power with a nuclear China would be significant.<sup>110</sup> They engaged in similar behavior when the Soviet Union sought the bomb: preventive attack plans had been drafted, and the impact on the balance of power noted, they were of a different regime type than the U.S., and had opposed foreign policies, but the Soviet Union eventually became nuclear.<sup>111</sup> Despite not being strong allies of the United States, New Delhi’s nuclear program proceeded without much impairment.<sup>112</sup> By all accounts, the development by Iraq

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<sup>107</sup> Scott Silverstone, *Preventive War and American Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 18, 20.

<sup>108</sup> Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 54, chapter 9; Lyle J. Goldstein, *Preventive Attack and Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); Silverstone, *Preventive War and American Democracy*.

<sup>109</sup> Scott Sagan, “Two Renaissances in Nuclear Security Studies,” ISSF Forum, no. 2 (2014)

<sup>110</sup> T.V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 66; William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, “Whether to “Strangle the Baby in the Cradle”: The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960-64,” *International Security* 25, no. 3 (2000/01): 54-99.

<sup>111</sup> Silverstone, *Preventive War and American Democracy*.

<sup>112</sup> George Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

of its nuclear program, either real in the 1980s, or perceived in the early 2000s, would all have produced gradual changes in the balance of power. Yet, in both instances Iraq nuclear facilities were preventively attacked.<sup>113</sup>

Moreover, most of the realist and rationalist literature on bargaining and preventive attacks share a similar issue: they discard the influence, importance, and heterogeneity of preferences of the relevant policy actors.<sup>114</sup> They assume “states are unitary actors,” therefore rejecting the messiness and complexity of negotiation and bargaining, and they reject the complex, layered form bargaining may take, with agreements being made at various levels, including domestic and international, according to different preferences because “bargaining theory is now modeled in two-player games.”<sup>115</sup> This is the essence of David Lake’s critique regarding the failure of the theory to explain the 2003 Iraq War.<sup>116</sup> There are few national security issues in the United States where all policy actors agree on the desired outcome and the best policy to reach it. The decision on whether or not to build ICBMs during the Cold War, or missile defenses, or over what to do with Iran, have all been contentious among U.S. decision-makers.<sup>117</sup> There is no unitary actor with a unitary solution: the process of domestic and international negotiation is in itself a social process where actors seek to persuade others of the validity of their preferences.

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<sup>113</sup> Malfried Braut-Hegghammer, “Revisiting Osirak: Preventive Attacks and Nuclear Proliferation Risks,” *International Security* 36, no. 1 (2011): 101-132.

<sup>114</sup> Terrence L. Chapman, Patrick J. McDonald, and Scott Moser, “The Domestic Politics of Strategic Retrenchment, Power Shifts, and Preventive War,” *International Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (March 2015): 133-44.

<sup>115</sup> David A. Lake, “Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory: Assessing Rationalist Explanations of the Iraq War,” *International Security* 35, no. 3 (December 2010): 8.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> On the debates relating to the development of U.S. ICBMs see Edmond Beard, *Developing the ICBM: A Study in Bureaucratic Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); On the missile defense debate see Stephen I. Schwartz, *Atomic Audit: The Costs and Consequences of US Nuclear Weapons since 1940* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2011); On the debate surrounding the Iranian nuclear program see Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: The United States and Iran in the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2016); J. D. Hamblin, “The Nuclearization of Iran in the Seventies,” *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 5 (November 1, 2014): 1114-35.

## Capturing the Reality of Nonproliferation Policies

However, both the theoretical and empirical records are ambivalent as to whether the optimists or the pessimists are capturing the reality of non-proliferation policies. In general, proliferators have not been left to their own designs. Most attempts at nuclearization after 1945 have been publicly decried as dangerous and unacceptable and met with various means aimed at stopping or slowing nuclear ambitions.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, the United States in particular has invested heavily in non-proliferation, often times against allies, even when the cost was high in important relationships.<sup>119</sup> U.S. non-proliferation policy has evolved over time following the intensity, and type, of nuclear proliferation.<sup>120</sup>

On the other hand, however, we have seen important cases in which sensitive nuclear technology has been provided to allies and interest-aligned states.<sup>121</sup> The Soviet Union provided extensive technological help to the Chinese while they developed their nuclear program in the 1950s.<sup>122</sup> France provided help to Israel.<sup>123</sup> Israel, in turn, provided nuclear help to South Africa.<sup>124</sup> Canada provided some level of help to India in the 1950s.<sup>125</sup> The United States-based nuclear weapons in both France and the UK, as well as Canada, provided them with know-how when it

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<sup>118</sup> Solingen, *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation*.

<sup>119</sup> Gavin, "Strategies of Inhibition."

<sup>120</sup> Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*.

<sup>121</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann, "Spreading Temptation: Proliferation and Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation Agreements," *International Security* 34, no. 1 (2009): 7–41; Julian Schofield, *Strategic Nuclear Sharing* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014). Matthew Kroenig, "Importing the Bomb: Sensitive Nuclear Assistance and Nuclear Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 2 (April 2009): 161–80; Matthew Kroenig, "Exporting the Bomb: Why States Provide Sensitive Nuclear Assistance," *American Political Science Review* 103, no. 1 (2009): 113–33.

<sup>122</sup> Lewis and Xue, *China Builds the Bomb*; Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*.

<sup>123</sup> Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

<sup>124</sup> Liberman, "The Rise and Fall of the South African Bomb"; Liberman, "Israel and the South African Bomb."

<sup>125</sup> Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation*.

came time to develop their own nuclear deterrents.<sup>126</sup> China provided help to Pakistan and North Korea,<sup>127</sup> and North Korea in turn provided assistance to Syria.<sup>128</sup> While this list is not exhaustive, it represents well the case of accepted nuclear proliferation.

## 2. The Argument: Deterrence and the Reputation for Restraint

This dissertation asks: what are the determinants of U.S. nonproliferation policy choices? More specifically: why are some states targets, and subjects, of preventive attacks while they nuclearize whereas others are not? Moreover, why are preventive attacks against emerging nuclear powers so rare considering how large of a shift in the balance of power nuclearization represents? How can we be sure a nuclearizing state will use it solely for deterrence purposes and will not engage in adventurism by using the bomb to make gains, namely through compellence.<sup>129</sup>

The answer I propose has three moving parts. First, I argue that the practice of deterrence, over time, has evolved to become more than a strategy. It has become an unwritten set of rules with normative undertones. This set of unwritten rules became the building block of the security

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<sup>126</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*; Lorna Arnold, *Britain and the H-Bomb* (New York: Springer, 2001); Robert S. Norris, Andrew S. Burrows, and Richard W. Fieldhouse, *Nuclear Weapons Databook, Volume V: British, French, and Chinese Nuclear Forces* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994); Jan Melissen, “Nuclearizing NATO, 1957–1959: The ‘Anglo-Saxons’, Nuclear Sharing and the Fourth Country Problem,” *Review of International Studies* 20, no. 3 (1994): 253–75.

<sup>127</sup> Arpit Rajain, *Nuclear Deterrence in Southern Asia: China, India and Pakistan* (SAGE Publications India, 2005); Thomas Plant and Ben Rhode, “China, North Korea and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons,” *Survival* 55, no. 2 (2013): 61–80.

<sup>128</sup> Paul K. Kerr, Mary Beth D. Nikitin, and Steven A. Hildreth, *Iran-North Korea-Syria Ballistic Missile and Nuclear Cooperation*, vol. 16 (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2014).

<sup>129</sup> Matthew Kroenig, “Nuclear Superiority and the Balance of Resolve: Explaining Nuclear Crisis Outcomes,” *International Organization* 67, no. 01 (January 2013): 141–71. Sechser and Fuhrmann also propose an engaging argument as to why nuclear weapons do not perform particularly well in crises. They argue nuclear weapons cannot really control territory. As such, making foreign policy gains with the bomb is problematic. As such, it is not particularly efficient as a compellent device. See Todd S. Sechser and Matthew Fuhrmann, *Nuclear Weapons and Coercive Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War and its main stability maintaining mechanism to prevent the outbreak of war. Because of the nature of deterrence, it is possible for nuclearizing states to develop a reputation for restraint, which will reduce the likelihood of a preventive strike as they advance through the nuclear acquisition process. States can develop a reputation for restraint through exhibiting, prior and during nuclearization, behavior meant for war prevention. These include the competent use of deterrence, both general and proximate, a non-expansionist posture, and involvement in arms control, among others. These war prevention mechanisms are all meant to make deterrence stronger and are an integral part of the practice of deterrence itself. By demonstrating self-restraint in moments where they did not have to, the proliferating state “makes it possible for others to step forward and identify with us, enabling us in turn to identify with them.”<sup>130</sup> In doing so a proliferating state is signaling that it can be part of the nuclear club, as it will behave by its rules.

Second, the relationship of the proliferator with the United States has to be determined. Preventive attacks are never an option when dealing with the proliferation of an ally. While other counterproliferation means can be used if proliferation is judged undesirable, allies do not represent an existential threat. While their behavior may be more independent than the hegemon would like once they acquire the bomb, their common identity makes the fear of compellent nuclear use disappear.

Preventive attacks are reserved for adversarial states. In this case, the decision to carry out a preventive attack is rarely a given and is a source of debate within the U.S. national security apparatus between factions in favor and against this policy preference. When this is the case,

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<sup>130</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 359.

individuals against a preventive attack, known usually as doves, will highlight the reputation for restraint of the proliferating state to argue against a strike. The reputation for restraint, again, is inferred from past actions showcasing the understanding by the proliferation state that nuclear weapons should be used as deterrent, and not for offensive (compellent), purposes. Hawks who believe the proliferator will use nuclear weapons in a revisionist fashion to compel will point to the balance of power, geopolitical considerations, and other problems with nuclear proliferation to make their case in favor of an attack. What this dissertation shows is that the reputation for restraint is at the heart of counterproliferation policy debates, and if its advocates are persuasive enough and win the argument, we should not see preventive strikes. It does not mean that other counterproliferation means will not be used. What it means is that the United States can eventually live with the proliferator as a nuclear state.

Third, as deterrence evolves, so does its set of rules. In the early to mid-Cold War, nuclear weapons were an integral part of the war prevention calculus of the United States and the Soviet Union. They devised most of their national security strategies around them. As such, was easier for an adversarial proliferator to signal restraint in this period as nuclear acquisition could be more easily accommodated within the security status quo and their common identities. Alternatively, the end of the Cold War brought a significant change in the practice of nuclear deterrence: nuclear weapons became solely means to deter the use of nuclear weapons, at least publicly. As such, an adversarial proliferator seeking to signal restraint should find it significantly more difficult, and fewer advocates for past restraint will be found with the U.S. and among allies. In other words, nuclearization after the Cold War is going against the current status quo and is more at risk of being labelled a revisionist policy.



The argument proposed here is that there is no one size fits all argument for counterproliferation strategies. Geopolitics, alliance politics, relative power concerns, issues with credible commitments and incomplete information, and the actual cost of war are all part of the debate in U.S. decision-making.

### **The Role of Reputation in Determining Future Actions**

For the purpose of this dissertation, reputation is defined as “a shared perception about one state’s prior behavior that is used to predict future behavior.”<sup>131</sup> Reputation works because it is self-reinforcing: “The nature of the reputation is quite circular – it works because it works: *B* guards a reputation because it influences future trading opportunities; it has this influence because *B* guards it.”<sup>132</sup> Among others, there are three important roles that reputation plays in international relations. First, it makes it possible for states to evaluate future actions and make decisions in situations of uncertainty. It provides crucial information when assessing the intentions of the state. As Joel Sobel argues: “If an agent is uncertain about the motives of someone upon whom he must depend, either to provide information or make decisions, then the extent to which he trusts the other will be based on the partner's earlier actions. Thus, there is an incentive for an enemy to behave like a friend in order to increase his future opportunities, and for partnerships to last until someone cashes in.”<sup>133</sup> In other words, reputation is used to assess future actions, or future compliance, in the presence of incomplete information.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Gregory D Miller, *The shadow of the past: reputation and military alliances before the First World War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 37.

<sup>132</sup> David M. Kreps, “Corporate Culture and Economic Theory,” in James E. Alt and Kenneth A. Shepsle, eds., *Perspectives on Positive Political Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 107.

<sup>133</sup> Joel Sobel, “A Theory of Credibility,” *The Review of Economic Studies* 52, no. 4 (October 1985): 570.

<sup>134</sup> Michael Tomz, *Reputation and International Cooperation: Sovereign Debt across Three Centuries* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012).

Second, it makes it possible for a state to acquire desired goods, whatever they may be, at reduced cost. States that have developed a good reputation for debt repayment find it easier to access loans in the future.<sup>135</sup> Firms with a reputation for making quality products will find it easier to sell products in a new sector, be able to sell their products for more money, and keep the loyalty of their customers.<sup>136</sup> States will comply with their treaty obligations in order to be able to sign more for additional benefits later.<sup>137</sup> Studies in the field of economics have also shown how developing a reputation for aggressively undercutting newcomers in a particular market may deter others from seeking entry.<sup>138</sup> The literature on alliance formation has shown how states with a reputation for reliability are sought after as alliance partners; the reverse is true as well. Unreliable states are less likely to find willing alliance partners.<sup>139</sup> States who have developed a reputation for being honest find the diplomatic path, when they want to use it, to be more available for subsequent, but not always related, issues.<sup>140</sup> For all these reasons states treat reputation as a desirable good and will work very hard to acquire and maintain their various reputations.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid

<sup>136</sup> C. C. v Weizsäcker, *Barriers to Entry: A Theoretical Treatment* (Berlin, Heidelberg usw.: Springer, 1980), 84.

<sup>137</sup> Beth Simmons, "Treaty Compliance and Violation," *Annual Review of Political Science* 13, no. 1 (May 2010): 273–96.

<sup>138</sup> Paul Milgrom and John Roberts, "Predation, Reputation, and Entry Deterrence," *Journal of Economic Theory* 27, no. 2 (August 1982): 280–312.

<sup>139</sup> Douglas M. Gibler, "The Costs of Reneging: Reputation and Alliance Formation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52, no. 3 (June 2008): 426–54; Mark J.C. Crescenzi et al., "Reliability, Reputation, and Alliance Formation1: Reliability, Reputation, and Alliance Formation," *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (June 2012): 259–74; Miller, *The shadow of the past*.

<sup>140</sup> Sartori, "The Might of the Pen"; Sartori, *Deterrence by Diplomacy*.

<sup>141</sup> Arthur A. Stein, "The Hegemon's Dilemma: Great Britain, the United States, and the International Economic Order," *International Organization* 38, no. 02 (March 1984): 355–86; Charles Lipson, "Bankers' Dilemmas: Private Cooperation in Rescheduling Sovereign Debts," *World Politics* 38, no. 1 (October 1985): 200–225; Hugh Ward, "The Risks of a Reputation for Toughness: Strategy in Public Goods Provision Problems Modelled by Chicken Supergames," *British Journal of Political Science* 17, no. 01 (January 1987): 23–52; James E. Alt, Randall L. Calvert, and Brian D. Humes, "Reputation and Hegemonic Stability: A Game-Theoretic Analysis," *The American Political Science Review* 82, no. 2 (June 1988): 445; Joe Clare and Vesna Danilovic, "Multiple Audiences and Reputation Building in International Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54, no. 6 (December 2010): 860–82; Frank P. Harvey and John Mitton, *Fighting for Credibility: US Reputation and International Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2016); Daniel Treisman, "Rational Appeasement," *International Organization* 58, no. 2 (2004): 345–73.

Perhaps the largest body of literature on reputation has to do with the reputation for resolve. In deterrence theory, most of the causal weight behind a successful deterrent threat rests on whether it is credible. Credibility is determined by relative power, whether the threat, and the desired outcome, has been properly communicated, and whether the actor has shown sufficient resolve.<sup>142</sup> Thomas Schelling, for example, has argued that throughout the Cold War the United States sought to maintain a reputation for resolve on as many fronts as possible in order to increase the credibility of their threats, but also in order to reduce the temptations for the Soviet Union to challenge them on other issues or in other theaters.<sup>143</sup> As such, a reputation for resolve was seen as an indispensable tool which traveled across cases and was worth preserving.<sup>144</sup> Reputation can serve to bolster the credibility of an action, be it threat or otherwise, if it is used to make said commitment costly: if

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<sup>142</sup> On the rational deterrence tripod see Bruce M. Russett, "The Calculus of Deterrence," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 7, no. 2 (1963), 97-109; Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke. *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Paul K. Huth, "Extended Deterrence and the Outbreak of War," *The American Political Science Review* 82, no. 2 (June 1988), 423-443; ; Paul Huth and Bruce Russett, "Testing Deterrence Theory: Rigor Makes a Difference," *World Politics* 42, no. 4 (1990), 466-501; Paul Huth and Bruce Russett, "General Deterrence Between Enduring Rivals: Testing Three Competing Models," *The American Political Science Review* 87, no.1 (March 1993), 61-73, 68-69; Paul Huth, Christopher Gelpi, and D. Scott Bennett, "The Escalation of Great Power Militarized Disputes: Testing Rational Deterrence Theory and Structural Realism," *The American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (September 1993), 609-623; Frank P. Harvey, "Rigor Mortis or Rigor, More Tests: Necessity, Sufficiency, and deterrence logic," *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (1998), 675-707; Frank P. Harvey, "Practicing Coercion: Revisiting Success and failures Using Boolean Logic and Comparative Methods," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43, no. 6 (1999), 840-71; T.V. Paul, Patrick M. Morgan, and James J. Wirtz. *Complex Deterrence: Strategy in the Global Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), Introduction. On the importance of a reputation for resolve for the credibility of threats see Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2017); Robert Jervis, "Deterrence Theory Revisited," *World Politics* 31, no. 02 (January 1979): 289-324; Powell, *Nuclear Deterrence Theory : The Search for Credibilit*; Glenn H. Snyder. *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

<sup>143</sup> See Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 55-56.

<sup>144</sup> This claim is probably the source of most of the push back against the importance of reputation in international relations. Paul Huth for example has stated that this type of all-encompassing effect and desire for reputation is empirically difficult to sustain and to verify. John Mitton, however, appropriately argues that Schelling added scope conditions to his argument which are often dismissed or not discussed at length. For Schelling, reputation had the strongest effect in settings where the parties interacting remains the same and are engaged in iterated games. Reputation is not the be all end all of credibility, but one important component among many. On the critics of Schelling see Paul K. Huth, "Reputations and Deterrence: A Theoretical and Empirical Assessment," *Security Studies* 7, no. 1 (1997), 72-99, especially pp.83-84; For a more complex reading of Schelling on reputation see John Mitton, "Selling Schelling Short: Reputations and American Coercive Diplomacy after Syria," *Contemporary Security Policy* 36, no. 3 (2015), 408-431.

one is known to be resolved, not following through on a threat will make it more difficult to successfully do so in the future, hence increasing cost and the credibility of the action through a non-material mechanism.<sup>145</sup>

Under the literature on the reputation for resolve, it has been argued that those appearing irresolute are more at risk of seeing future conflict with the same actor escalate.<sup>146</sup> Weisiger and Yarhi-Milo found reputation to matter because they demonstrated how having a reputation for being irresolute correlates with a state facing more threats.<sup>147</sup> Similar logic applies to initiating conflict: a state that previously yielded to a threat is more likely to be targeted in the near future by an adversary.<sup>148</sup> For example, the Soviets were emboldened whenever the United States seemed to yield, backdown, or not respond to their threats: “the Soviets’ image of the United States began to change in such a way as to predispose them to further expansion.”<sup>149</sup> To be successful, a balance has to be struck with a “firm-but-flexible diplomatic strategy” ready to compromise on political issues, but to commit to threats if necessary.<sup>150</sup> Lab experiments have also demonstrated how individuals in coercive settings will seek to build positive reputations, and that this “reputation for toughness” pays.<sup>151</sup> Generally speaking, having a good reputation when it comes to some specificity of character deemed to be positive is a good thing. In the deterrence literature, where the objective is to be able to signal a credible threat, and having linked resolve to credibility,

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<sup>145</sup> Branislav L. Slantchev, *Military Threats: The Costs of Coercion and the Price of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 54–57.

<sup>146</sup> Paul Huth, D. Scott Bennett, and Christopher Gelpi, “System Uncertainty, Risk Propensity, and International Conflict among the Great Powers,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36, no. 3 (September 1992): 618.

<sup>147</sup> Alex Weisiger and Keren Yarhi-Milo, “Revisiting Reputation: How Past Actions Matter in International Politics,” *International Organization* 69, no. 02 (2015): 473–95.

<sup>148</sup> Paul Huth, D. Scott Bennett, and Christopher Gelpi, “System Uncertainty, Risk Propensity, and International Conflict among the Great Powers,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36, no. 3 (September 1992): 512.

<sup>149</sup> John D. Orme, *Deterrence, Reputation and Cold-War Cycles* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), 137.

<sup>150</sup> Paul Huth and Bruce Russett, “Deterrence Failure and Crisis Escalation,” *International Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (March 1988): 39.

<sup>151</sup> Dustin H. Tingley and Barbara F. Walter, “The Effect of Repeated Play on Reputation Building: An Experimental Approach,” *International Organization* 65, no. 02 (April 2011): 360–61.

developing a reputation for resolve is a net positive: it means threats are more likely to be effective in the future if a state is known for holding its ground and not backing off.

While reputation has so far been treated as a positive, states will seek to maintain a particular reputation because it provides easier and cheaper access to a particular commodity it desires, reputation may also have a negative connotation; states will seek to avoid particular behavior in order not to develop a negative reputation. Reputation, therefore, is strategic as it is sought, protected, and used in order to fulfill the objective of rational actors in bargaining situations.<sup>152</sup> Examples include the tradition of non-use: states are self-deterred from using nuclear weapons because of the negative reputation it would entail.<sup>153</sup> Kertzer shows how whenever the cost of backing down to one's reputation is too high, states are expected to remain more resolute.<sup>154</sup> In the civil wars literature, scholars have shown how leaders will systemically fight for land in order to "deter other groups from seeking secession in the future."<sup>155</sup> Reputational concerns have been argued to have driven Nehru's firm position when it came to territorial conflicts.<sup>156</sup> States will maintain suboptimal commitments in bargaining situations in order not to be shamed, which would increase future transaction costs.<sup>157</sup> In this case, future good behavior might not be rewarded

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<sup>152</sup> Alt, Calvert, and Humes, "Reputation and Hegemonic Stability"; Barry Nalebuff, "Rational Deterrence in an Imperfect World," *World Politics* 43, no. 3 (1991): 313–35; George J Mailath and Larry Samuelson, *Repeated Games and Reputations: Long-Run Relationships* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2006).

<sup>153</sup> T. V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, 2009); T. V. Paul, "Taboo or Tradition? The Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons in World Politics," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 04 (October 2010): 853–63; See also Press, Sagan, and Valentino, "Atomic Aversion."

<sup>154</sup> Joshua D. Kertzer, *Resolve in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

<sup>155</sup> Barbara F. Walter, *Reputation and Civil War: Why Separatist Conflicts Are So Violent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7; See also Barbara F. Walter, "Building Reputation: Why Governments Fight Some Separatists but Not Others," *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 2 (April 2006): 313–30; Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>156</sup> Mahesh Shankar, *The Reputational Imperative: Nehru's India in Territorial Conflict* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018).

<sup>157</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005), chapter 5.

if the state has a track record of bad behavior. According to Copeland: “Yet this may reflect not the desirability of their actions, but merely the fact that their past reputation for expansionist behavior has made others very reluctant to change their attitudes.”<sup>158</sup> However, Downs and Jones qualify this proposition by arguing reputational costs are only incurred when “they believe (1) are affected by the same or similar sources of fluctuating compliance costs (or benefits) and (2) are valued the same or less by the defecting state.”<sup>159</sup> In other words, reputation will not be lost if we compare apples to oranges.

In sum, actions to preserve one’s reputation may be the result of the presence of audience costs: domestic or international actors who may punish the state if it does not perform actions maintaining its reputation.<sup>160</sup> Alternatively, reputation may not be as easily lost as expected. Robert Jervis believed that reputations, once formed, may be difficult to change because “images change only slowly and are maintained in the face of discrepant information.” As such, a state seen as irresolute will find it difficult to demonstrate otherwise, but “a state with a reputation for standing firm not only will be able to win disputes by threatening to fight but has the freedom to avoid confrontations without damaging its image.”<sup>161</sup> As Jervis acknowledges, however, this remains an empirical question to be tested and not simply assumed.<sup>162</sup> It has been demonstrated, however, that states with good reputations find it easier to deviate from expectations and remain trusted. Allies

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<sup>158</sup> Dale C. Copeland, “Do Reputations Matter?,” *Security Studies* 7, no. 1 (September 1997): 56.

<sup>159</sup> George W. Downs and Michael A. Jones, “Reputation, Compliance, and International Law,” *The Journal of Legal Studies* 31, no. S1 (January 2002): 97.

<sup>160</sup> Clare and Danilovic, “Multiple Audiences and Reputation Building in International Conflicts,” 862–64; Fearon, “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes.”; Sechser, “Goliath’s Curse.”

<sup>161</sup> Robert Jervis, “Deterrence and Perception,” *International Security* 7, no. 3 (1982): 9; Jervis, “Deterrence Theory Revisited.”

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

with a reputation for being reliable may get more room to maneuver and actions seemingly counter to their reputation will count as less impactful then if done by a state with a bad reputation.<sup>163</sup>

There are, however, critics who do not believe reputation has a causal effect on behavior. Jonathan Mercer has argued that desirable outcomes are ascribed to context and not character. For example, if an actor acquiesces to a deterrent threat, they will not be seen as irresolute because the action is in line with the preference of the actor making the threat. The situation in itself dictates reputation, not how the actor has acted in the past with others.<sup>164</sup> Daryl Press in his study on credibility in conflict found that relative power and the balance of interests have more causal significance when it comes to evaluating the credibility of a threat than past actions.<sup>165</sup> Hopf on the other hand has argued that the idea of inter-dependent reputation has not panned out for American decision-makers during the Cold War. American interventions in certain theaters such as Vietnam were less effective for gaining leverage in future conflicts with the Soviet than economic means were. As such, putting emphasis on bolstering a reputation for military resolve does not have the expected outcome.<sup>166</sup> Shiping Tang, using realist assumptions, maintains reputation itself in international relations is irrelevant because it cannot accumulate in an anarchical system. Self-help creates an environment where states are always planning for worse case scenarios. As such, a state will always assume the worst of both its allies and enemies: the latter will be relentless, and the former cannot be depended upon.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Miller, *The shadow of the past*.

<sup>164</sup> Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

<sup>165</sup> Daryl G. Press. *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007)

<sup>166</sup> Ted Hopf. *Peripheral Visions: Deterrence Theory and American Foreign Policy in the Third World, 1965-1990* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994).

<sup>167</sup> Shiping Tang, "Reputation, Cult of Reputation, and International Conflict," *Security Studies* 14, no. 1 (January-March 2005), 34-62, 49-50.

The issue with most of the critiques levied against the validity of reputation as an explanatory variable is that they do not take into account how reputation acts on material variables to begin with. It informs later behavior; reputations are endogenous to interaction and are part of the make-up of the decision in itself.<sup>168</sup> We may believe, as Press argues, that as we get into a conflict situation that material factors gain primacy. However, the appropriate question to ask is whether the crisis is conditioned on a bad reputation in the past.<sup>169</sup> As Fearon argues, reputation works prior to treatment. Crisis escalation is often the point of no return. Past a certain threshold the expectations of escalation to war are high. At that point, whether one is resolute or not will no longer have a causal impact, material factors may prevail. Reputation would have conditioned whether or not this situation was reached in the first place.<sup>170</sup> Looking at a crisis in isolation and asking whether reputation works is setting up a test almost certain to return negative findings. As for Mercer's challenge, whether reputation is accumulated due to past behavior or what states want out of a particular interaction is an empirical question and needs to be validated as such. Reputation could accrue in either case.

In the argument at hand, a good reputation, similar to reliability for alliances or a strong credit rating for a firm, will fill the gap regarding future behavior when the actual information is either difficult to obtain, or non-existent. In the case of nuclear weapons, in general, it is not possible to make an apple to apple comparison before a state has access to them. Some cases come to mind where such past actions would be available such as the basing of U.S. nuclear weapons in the UK prior to the development of their own indigenous arsenal. Therefore, some proxies are needed to ascertain future behavior with nuclear weapons.

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<sup>168</sup> Sartori, "The Might of the Pen"; Weisiger and Yarhi-Milo, "Revisiting Reputation"; Copeland, "Do Reputations Matter?"

<sup>169</sup> Copeland, "Do Reputations Matter?"

<sup>170</sup> Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes.," 581.



This is not to say states will not engage in counterproliferation measures against a state that has shown significant restraint in the past, including sanctions, enforcement of the Non-Proliferation Treaty provisions, denial and more. States within the nuclear club have a significant advantage in keeping their membership to what it is right now. This is because the possession of nuclear weapons increases their own bargaining leverage in security competition while it limits the risk-taking propensities of non-nuclear states in situations involving coercive diplomacy.<sup>171</sup> As Michael Hayden, former head of the NSA and CIA under President Bush and Obama, stated with regards to the effect of a nuclear Iran:

“Oh, this isn’t about deterring them,” I objected. “This is about deterring us. Look at their behavior—with Hamas, with Hezbollah, in Iraq, in Afghanistan. Hell, we judge that it is the policy of the Iranian government—approved at the highest levels of that government—to facilitate the killing of young Americans and other allies in Iraq. And this is before they have one of these things in the garage. Imagine what they might do with this as a trump card.”<sup>172</sup>

The interaction between the United States and North Korea since it became nuclear has been an exemplar of the concern expressed by Hayden. North Korea to date has conducted five nuclear tests and many missiles launches featuring medium and long range ballistic missiles. While Washington has generally responded to Pyongyang’s belligerence, from unilateral and multilateral sanctions to force demonstrations through military exercises in the Korean Peninsula and the Sea of Japan with in collaboration with Seoul and Tokyo, they have been effectively deterred by North Korea from using more assertive military means.<sup>173</sup> There is no argument that the United States and almost all other states would have preferred if North Korea had remained a non-nuclear country.

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<sup>171</sup> Kroenig, “Nuclear Superiority and the Balance of Resolve.”

<sup>172</sup> Michael V. Hayden. *Playing to the Edge: American Intelligence in the Age of Terror* (New York: Penguin Press, 2016), 292.

<sup>173</sup> For a discussion of how North Korea has used asymmetrical deterrence to prevent the U.S. from engaging in preventive warfare see T.V. Paul and Jean-Francois Belanger, “Asymmetrical Deterrence: How the Weak Deters the Strong,” Working Paper 2018. McGill University.

The argument presented here is not inconsistent with efforts by nuclear states to restraint access to militarized nuclear technology. Most counterproliferation efforts in the end are made so they increase the general deterrent posture of the counter-proliferating state. Sanctions and the expected withdrawal thereof, mixed generally with reassurances of civil nuclear help, constitute a form of coercive diplomacy. They place constraints on the proliferating state to stop them from engaging in undesired behavior while strengthening the deterrent position of the state attacker. However, the argument being made here is that certain countries, due to their continued restraint, are essentially allowed to proliferate and welcomed within the nuclear club. France, the UK, India after 2005, Israel from the point of view of the United States, are all examples of this mechanism at work.

### **3. Plan of the Dissertation**

In Chapter 2 I elaborate my theoretical argument. The point made is that states that have developed a reputation for restraint, a reputation defined in this thesis as a heuristic which helps states discard discordant signals and accept behavior from a status quo state that they would normally not accept without the reputation, i.e. nuclear proliferation. A reputation for restraint is generally acquired through a normative acceptance of deterrence- the strategy as an important aspect of what it means to be a foreign policy decision-maker.

In chapter 3, I provide five mini-cases as a probability probe to show the entire range of outcomes on the dependent variable, as well as variation in time periods and relationships to the United States. This is done to demonstrate all possible worlds of the argument presented in this dissertation. The chapter is divided into two time periods, the Cold War and the post-Cold War

eras. In the Cold War period, I use the following three cases: The Soviet Union, the UK, and Israel. The Soviet Union case probes the onset of the nuclear age between the Soviet Union and the United States and the creation of nuclear deterrence between the two. The UK case demonstrates how the United States behaved against a close ally at the onset of the Cold War. Not only did it believe UK nuclearization to be desirable, it actively helped London develop its capability. The case of Israel demonstrates how strategic partners are not targeted by preventive attacks despite reluctance from their partner to accept their nuclearization. The second time period, the Cold War, contains two cases: Iran and Iraq. The case of Iran is indicative of a negative change in relationship. While Iran was a strategic partner during the Cold War, it became an adversary from the 1980s onwards. Moreover, despite showing mostly restrained behavior, Iran was engaged coercively by the United States, mainly due to the context of its nuclearization. Finally, Iraq is used to demonstrate U.S. policy choices when the reputation for restraint is absent.

Chapter 4 to 6 are in depth-case studies of the nuclearization process of China (Chapter 4), Pakistan (Chapter 5), and North Korea (Chapter 6). The case of China is a demonstration of adversarial proliferation during the Cold War. At the onset, it was clear that the Kennedy administration was opposed to its nuclearization and sought to stop it by any means necessary. He even discussed preventive plans with the Soviet Union. These plans would continue to be discussed even after President Kennedy was assassinated. The Johnson administration was marked by intense debates regarding the proper course of action toward China. This period demonstrates well the dynamics proposed by this dissertation. Hawks sought to convince the President that a nuclear China would be an important threat to U.S. security interests and that an attack should be strongly considered. On the other hand, doves in the administration argued in favor of past Chinese restraint to show that it would not drastically change its foreign policy in the future. However, the process

is noisy in a sense, and other considerations were discussed including technological asymmetry, the cost of war, and the actual effect of a strike. Nonetheless, the argument in favor of restraint has played an important role in the decision not to attack China.

The case of Pakistan discussed in Chapter 5 illustrates the difference in U.S. nonproliferation behavior between adversaries and strategic partners. At the onset of Pakistan's nuclear program, individuals within the Carter administration questioned whether Islamabad would be restrained in the future due to their previous offensive behavior, especially in the context of Kashmir. The administration discussed a possible attack against Pakistani installations but decided otherwise over public outcry. However, in 1979 the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, which led to rapprochement between Washington and Islamabad. From this point on, the U.S. discarded discordant signal of restraint, and the obfuscation perpetuated by the Pakistanis, in favor of containing the Soviets in Afghanistan. As such, the newfound strategic partnership between the two reduced the perceived threat of the Pakistani nuclear program. However, there is some indication that the U.S. let itself be convinced by what they saw as the new doctrine of Pakistan: one which is focused on defense and deterrence of India, rather than overt aggression. While this would rapidly change after it acquired a nuclear bomb, it still had some impact at the time, but without the shift in relationship it is difficult to imagine a similar outcome.

Chapter 7 provides some implications for the theory proposed in this dissertation. I draw out the theoretical and empirical implications of the findings, and expand on two important aspects of the argument presented, namely the future of deterrence, and the link between the reputation for restraint and the normalization process following nuclearization. The chapter also engages with the policy relevance of the argument presented here.

## Chapter 2

### Deterrence and the Reputation for Restraint in Proliferation

What explains variation in nonproliferation policy choices by the United States? Why, exactly, are some states helped in their proliferation efforts whereas others have been preventively attacked for doing so? This dissertation focuses on the latter: under which circumstances will the United States plan, and possibly execute, a preventive attack against a proliferator's nuclear facilities? Conversely, under what circumstances, will it seek other non-military approaches? While overall there has been a fair number of preventive attacks plans drafted, few have been executed. This is in itself puzzling considering how large a shift in the balance of power nuclearization represents. If decision-makers always assume worst-case scenario behavior from others, especially rivals and enemies, we would expect all cases of proliferation to be strong survival issues, with the potential for predation and compellence being high.<sup>1</sup> While the United States has generally used heavy counterproliferation measures to stop proliferation, the amount of preventive attacks remains low. What explains this state of affairs?

The argument I propose is the following. First, even in cases where proliferation is performed by an adversary, American decision-makers rarely have homogenous policy preferences as to the best possible response, which opens the door to policy struggles to capture the policy-making process. Second, preventive attacks are reserved for adversaries or rivals of the United States. U.S. do not perceive high threats from allies. It does not mean that allies will face no repercussions for their behavior, but that preventive attacks are simply not part of debated

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<sup>1</sup> Shiping Tang, "Reputation, Cult of Reputation, and International Conflict," *Security Studies* 14, no. 1 (January 2005): 34–62.

options. Third, preventive attack plans, even those against adversaries, are subject to debate. In this situation, hawks will argue in favor of preventive attacks on the basis of balance of power politics: they will put emphasis on the likelihood of a more aggressive (compellent) foreign policy with the acquisition of nuclear weapons, including revisionist policies. In order to forestall preventive attacks, doves usually emphasize the reputation for restraint of the proliferating state, a status quo inclination and the understanding of the deterrent purposes of nuclear weapons inferred from past actions, to win the debate and avoid an attack. If doves are able to convince their peers that proliferation will be restrained in the future, the possibilities of a preventive attack taking place are drastically reduced.

This type of reputation is developed as actors engage in competent use of general deterrence and other war prevention mechanisms in its justification for nuclear acquisition. Restraint post-nuclearization can be inferred by restraint pre-nuclearization. This argument rests on the following proposition: deterrence, while a strategy, has evolved over time to become a set of norm-like unwritten rules responsible powers follow. In other words, appropriate behavior under the rule of deterrence has become a marker of identity among states. It is an important way through which responsible powers come to recognize each other. By showing appropriate behavior, either while engaging in coercive diplomacy during crises or demonstrating a clear understanding of general deterrence, states can become known as restrained. In rationalist terms, the effects of a reputation for restraint are to 1) mitigate time inconsistencies linked with developing nuclear weapons, and 2) reduce regional security uncertainty throughout the nuclearization period, because 3) by showing restraint the proliferating state signals it does not wish to alter the status quo and instead seeks to protect itself. States are expected not to drastically modify their behavior in the future, which would make a deal in the present difficult to achieve.

Concretely, a good reputation makes it possible for a state to go outside accepted behavior and remain in decent standing vis-à-vis the United States and the other nuclear states in the system.<sup>2</sup> However, signaling restraint is expected to become more difficult as the practice of deterrence itself evolves. As nuclear weapon acquisition from weaker powers at the end of the Cold War become seen as going against deterrence and effective war prevention, it becomes much more difficult for a proliferator to show future restraint, and we should expect more preventive attacks when possible.

This chapter will first explain how deterrence has evolved from a strategy to an integral part of what it means to be, and be recognized, as a responsible state, how they are supposed to act, and as an indicator of recognition among nuclear states. Second, I develop a theory of reputation creation and reproduction from which an adherence to the rule-based precepts of deterrence are used as indicators by the United States to determine if the nuclearizing power will seek stability. Third, I explain the effect of the reputation for restraint in policy-making settings.

While this dissertation focuses on the United States, I make several generalizable contributions to knowledge. First, it demonstrates how heterogenous the nonproliferation policy process is. There is rarely one accepted solution. Nonproliferation policy-making is a social process where advocates and detractors engage in debates and seek to have their policy preferences succeed. Each case of proliferation features actors with different policy preferences who seek to convince each other of the appropriateness of their proposed solutions. Hawks more readily seek muscled responses, whereas doves will seek more diplomatic means. It is generally doves who highlight precedents of restraint from the proliferating party to avoid preventive strikes. Second,

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<sup>2</sup> Gregory D Miller, *The shadow of the past: reputation and military alliances before the First World War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

it adds to the growing body of evidence in the reputation literature that reputation has an impact on politics. Attention is drawn to past actions when making difficult decisions where not all information is available. Third, it shows how reputation defines and affects crisis management. Reputation is not necessarily in competition with alternative explanations such as norms or material variables: a negative or positive reputation conditions how these variables operate.<sup>3</sup> Iraq's nonproliferation signals were not accepted by the United States in part due to its negative reputation.<sup>4</sup> Normative and material concerns were assessed based on precedents.

The larger point is: whenever actors within the U.S. security apparatus are able to demonstrate the reputation for restraint of a proliferating state to its peers, we would expect a less acute crisis. Acute crises matter in our case as they are a proximate condition for a preventive attack. The remainder of the chapter will then explain the effect of the argument presented here.

## **1. Deterrence: From Strategy to Unwritten Rule**

Deterrence theory has long been a staple of American foreign policy decision-making. Aside from the brief focus on containment during the Cold War, deterrence has been the way the

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<sup>3</sup> This postulate comes from wide ranging critiques within the scholarship on reputation. A common line of argument regarding the effect of reputation rests on how difficult it is to observe the effect of reputation in times of crisis. As such, it has been argued reputation has no effect when tested alongside other variables such as the ratio of material capabilities. The argument against this line of thinking agrees with the lack of relevance of reputation in crisis situations, but puts emphasis on the misplacement of reputation at a variable at the onset of a crisis. For reputation to have an effect we need to look at events before crisis initiation. For the argument against reputation see Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); For the counter-argument that reputation has an effect before a crisis see Alex Weisiger and Keren Yarhi-Milo, "Revisiting Reputation: How Past Actions Matter in International Politics," *International Organization* 69, no. 02 (2015): 473–95; Dale C. Copeland, *Economic Interdependence and War* (Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Frank P. Harvey, *Explaining the Iraq War: Counterfactual Theory, Logic and Evidence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).



superpowers, and later the U.S. as hegemon, have been able to establish their agenda and interests.<sup>5</sup> The cost of war generally being higher than the cost of a negotiated settlement, the U.S. will look at alternative strategies which are less costly than escalation to war. As such, deterrence becomes an interesting option.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, war has become a less effective tool of foreign policy. Clausewitz's statement that "war is policy by other means," no longer holds as much weight as it once did.<sup>7</sup> Economic interdependence and the benefits of trade,<sup>8</sup> casualty aversion on the part of decision-makers,<sup>9</sup> the body of international law limiting what can and cannot be done in warfare,<sup>10</sup> the impact of growing anti-war public opinion constraining the foreign policy choices available to decision-makers,<sup>11</sup> the creation, and effect, of various international forums to discuss open for cooperation and peaceful resolution of conflicts,<sup>12</sup> as well as potential disastrous impact of a conflict between nuclear

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<sup>5</sup> X (George Kennan), "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* (July 1947); On the importance of deterrence see John J. Mearsheimer. *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); George H. Quester. *Deterrence before Hiroshima* (New York: Routledge, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> For the bargaining model of war and its cost see James D. Fearon. "Rationalist Explanation for War," *International Organization* 49 (Summer 1995), 379-414; Dan Reiter, "Exploring the Bargaining Model of War," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 1 (2003), 27-43.

<sup>7</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1976).

<sup>8</sup> Copeland, *Economic Interdependence and War*; Erik Gartzke, "The Capitalist Peace," *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 1 (2007): 166-91; Erik Gartzke and J. Joseph Hewitt, "International Crises and the Capitalist Peace," *International Interactions* 36, no. 2 (2010): 115-45.

<sup>9</sup> David A. Koplow, *Death by Moderation: The U.S. Military's Quest for Useable Weapons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

<sup>10</sup> Richard J. Regan, *Just War: Principles and Cases* (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Stuart N. Soroka, "Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy," *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 8, no. 1 (2003): 27-48; Ole R Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus," *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1992): 439-66; Ole R Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Public Opinion, Domestic Structure, and Foreign Policy in Liberal Democracies," *World Politics* 43, no. 4 (1991): 479-512.

<sup>12</sup> T.V. Paul, *Accommodating Rising Powers: Past, Present, and Future* (Cambridge University Press, 2016); Alastair Iain Johnston, "Treating International Institutions as Social Environments," *International Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (2001): 487-515; David C Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power, and Order in East Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Miles Kahler, "Rising Powers and Global Governance: Negotiating Change in a Resilient Status Quo," *International Affairs* 89, no. 3 (2013): 711-29.

powers,<sup>13</sup> coalesce to form a general delegitimization of war as a tool of foreign policy.<sup>14</sup> The arrival of nuclear weapons made stability particularly important as a potential nuclear exchange would mean catastrophic cost.

It does not mean, however, that states no longer engage in war preparation and planning. To the contrary. A common theme throughout the National Security Strategy (NSS) documents from 1988 to today is the importance of deterrence in ensuring the prevention of conflict and secure U.S. interests. The documents all discuss the importance of alliances, economic integration, and engagement to support war prevention.<sup>15</sup> The 2010 NSS perhaps summarizes this view best when it argues:

Military force, at times, may be necessary to defend our country and allies or to preserve broader peace and security, including by protecting civilians facing a grave humanitarian crisis. We will draw on diplomacy, development, and international norms and institutions to help resolve disagreements, prevent conflict, and maintain peace, mitigating where possible the need for the use of force. This means credibly underwriting U.S. defense commitments with tailored approaches to deterrence and ensuring the U.S. military continues to have the necessary capabilities across all domains—land, air, sea, space, and cyber. It also includes helping our allies and partners build capacity to fulfill their responsibilities to contribute to regional and global security.<sup>16</sup>

The late to early post-Cold War NSS generally placed emphasis on forward defense and foreign military deployment as an integral part of conflict prevention through threat of swift and costly retaliation.<sup>17</sup> NSS from the Bush era emphasized the need for alternative measures, including

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution : Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> This could be referred to as a form of self-deterrence, where states have the means to make good on a threat because of their relative superiority but refrain from engaging due to an internal, not external, decision. See TV Paul, “Self-Deterrence: Nuclear Weapons and the Enduring Credibility Challenge,” *International Journal: Canada’s Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 71, no. 1 (March 2016): 20–40.

<sup>15</sup> “National Security Strategy of the United States,” The White House, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1993, 2000, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2015, 217.

<sup>16</sup> “National Security Strategy of the United States,” The White House, May 2010, 22.

<sup>17</sup> “National Security Strategy of the United States,” The White House, January 1988; “National Security Strategy of the United States,” The White House, March 1990; “National Security Strategy of the United States,” The White House, August 1991; “National Security Strategy of the United States,” The White House, January 1993

preventive and preemptive attacks, as means to respond to the threat of the “rogue states,”<sup>18</sup> whereas the Obama era NSS focused more on cyber threats and terrorism and the need for flexible measures to handle those issues,<sup>19</sup> and the Trump NSS returns to deterrence as the rock on which war prevention is built, and the importance of regional stability through multipolarity, but with a strong emphasis on the complexity of deterrence in the current era and the need for a modernized military.<sup>20</sup> In sum, general and immediate deterrence are shown to be key among other measures to maintain international and regional stability. From the NSS we can conclude Washington believes an effective, efficient, and rapidly deployable conventional force is an important deterrent in and of itself. Moreover, while the difficulties of making deterrence work in the modern era are discussed, its relevance to conflict prevention is not in doubt. It remains the essential rule of the game.

The invention of nuclear weapons acted as the largest catalyst for the transformation of deterrence from a strategy to a normative/set of rules and expectations. The first treatise on nuclear deterrence came from Bernard Brodie who argued that nuclear weapons had completely changed how we waged war. According to Brodie, nuclear deterrence is different from conventional deterrence as it does not allow for failure. Deterrence had to be robust, “allowing for no breakdowns ever.”<sup>21</sup> As Thomas Schelling observed, the destructive potential of nuclear weapons increased significantly the lethality of an undetected preventive or pre-emptive attack. And in both cases, states see their own potential for victory and have to wonder about the strategic thinking of the other. As such, means had to be found to reduce the likelihood of a surprise attack. He proposed

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<sup>18</sup>“National Security Strategy of the United States,” The White House, September 2002, “National Security Strategy of the United States,” The White House, March 2006.

<sup>19</sup> “National Security Strategy of the United States,” 2010, “National Security Strategy of the United States,” The White House, February 2015.

<sup>20</sup> “National Security Strategy of the United States,” The White House, December 2017

<sup>21</sup> Bernard Brodie. *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 272

some cooperation on disarmament while keeping a secure force to retaliate and reduce the incentives of attack, which is called a second-strike capability. The engagement on the arms control front will create the necessary trust for mutually assured destruction to work: states agree to put their security in the hands of their adversary.<sup>22</sup> As Robert Jervis also noted, this is the novelty of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons made nuclear war impossible to win, and the “mutual vulnerability” of both sides led to a form of collaborative security.<sup>23</sup>

The elaboration of the idea of mutually assured destruction meant the necessity for conceptual distinction and sophistication. Patrick Morgan’s early work on deterrence made the distinction between crisis deterrence, the use of the threat of force in a dispute to force an opponent to relent or backdown, and general deterrence, which entails “opponents who maintain armed forces to regulate their relationship though neither is anywhere near mounting an attack.”<sup>24</sup> This posture is maintained “as insurance given the inherent uncertainties of world politics.”<sup>25</sup> This is an overall method of war prevention: weapons and capabilities are kept in order to protect the states’ territory and its interests. They are not meant for offensive purposes. While Jervis has written on the difficulties inherent to determining whether particular force systems are meant for offense or defense,<sup>26</sup> general deterrence postures are generally accompanied by confidence-building measures such as inspections and verification, or more public means of signaling such as white papers, public demonstration in the form of military exercises, or clear strategy documents

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960). Chapter 9 and 10; Also see T. C. Halperin Schelling M. H., *Strategy and Arms Control* (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1961).

<sup>23</sup> Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon*, 6-7, 23–26.

<sup>24</sup> Patrick M Morgan, *Deterrence: A Conceptual Analysis* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1977), 28.

<sup>25</sup> T.V. Paul, “Complex Deterrence: An Introduction,” in *Complex Deterrence: Strategy in the Global Age*, eds. T.V. Paul, Patrick M. Morgan, and James J. Wirtz, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 9-10.

<sup>26</sup> Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma.”

such as the recent Nuclear Posture Review released by the Trump administration.<sup>27</sup> These documents or showings are meant to show capabilities, but also reveal information about the foreign policy goals of the state and how they intent to fulfill them. As such, general deterrence is normally visible and its means clear, assuming no crisis in sight. It is subject to change in the future.

The second type of deterrence is the one used through coercive diplomacy. It is the threat of using force in order to gain concessions from an adversary.<sup>28</sup> In the case of a deterrent threat, its purpose is to stop an adversary from performing an action.<sup>29</sup> This type of deterrence is a subset of larger war prevention measures as it is designed to control possible escalation. While there are risks involved, and often times the state less averse to risk will prevail, this type of diplomacy is still used to avoid a mutually undesirable outcome: war.<sup>30</sup> As we will see below, it is possible to demonstrate restraint while using this type of deterrence.

With the addition of nuclear weapons, deterrence became a constant passive and dissuasive interaction between two states, Washington and Moscow having inspired the idea.<sup>31</sup> It became part of the entire calculus to maintain stability between the two superpowers during the Cold War. Morgan points to important debates within the U.S. decision-making apparatus as to which deterrence posture was most desirable. Morgan argues that deterrence posture is in itself a political phenomenon based on what is judged to be credible or stable at a particular time and following real life experiences. The first was minimum deterrence, which is simple in itself: a small number

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid; 2018 nuclear posture reviews.

<sup>28</sup> Schelling, *Arms and Influence*.

<sup>29</sup> Morgan, *Deterrence*; Paul, Morgan, and Wirtz, *Complex Deterrence*, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*; Schelling, *Arms and Influence*; James D Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 379–414; Dan Reiter, "Exploring the Bargaining Model of War," *Perspective on Politics* 1, no. 1 (March 2003): 27–43.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 204.

of weapons is enough to deter the use of nuclear weapons between nuclear weapons states. The second was the school of Brodie and Schelling with the idea of mutually assured destruction. If both sides could be fully destroyed in a nuclear exchange, then the use of nuclear weapons is deterred. Third was the posture of flexible response, which is a hybrid posture. Deterrence becomes only credible if you a state has the means of winning in case of deterrence failure. It meant a mixture of conventional and nuclear forces designed to prevail in any scenario.<sup>32</sup> While the way in which deterrence operates in different modes of thinking varies, it remains the backbone of any strategy to maintain systemic stability. Within policy-making circles it is barely contested and gained ought-ness qualities found in the logic of appropriateness.<sup>33</sup> Nuclear states should act in this way because of who they are as great powers and it remains overall the most effective way to limit nuclear use

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<sup>32</sup> Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 23–25. For more on the minimum deterrence argument See Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons : More May Be Better* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981); Jeffrey Lewis, “Minimum Deterrence,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 64, no. 3 (July 1, 2008): 38–41. For the debate on minimum deterrence between U.S. decision-makers see “How Much is Enough?: The U.S. Navy and “Finite Deterrence” ed. William Burr, National Security Archives Electronic Briefing Book No. 275, 1 May 2009, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb275/index.htm>; On the mutually assured destruction side see Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution : Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon.*, On flexible response and the stability-instability paradox see Colin S Gray and Keith Payne, “Victory Is Possible,” *Foreign Policy* 39 (Summer 1980): 14–27; Robert Jervis, “Why Nuclear Superiority Doesn’t Matter,” *Political Science Quarterly* 94, no. 4 (1979): 617; Francis J. Gavin, “The Myth of Flexible Response: United States Strategy in Europe during the 1960s,” *The International History Review* 23, no. 4 (December 2001): 847–75; For the impact of politics on weaker power deterrence posture see Vipin Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>33</sup> Morgan discusses thinkers who denied the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence and rejected its premise. However, he makes the point that this line of argument normally comes from actors outside of the national security apparatus of the United States, including activists from the church and outside, and non-nuclear states among others. The catholic church was perhaps the most vocal against nuclear deterrence based on moral principles and just war theory. Moreover, in recent years, anti-nuclear activists such as ICAN have shifted their strategy from directly engaging against nuclear deterrence to pointing out the humanitarian cost of nuclear failures. See Morgan, *Deterrence Now* 22–23. On the Church debate on nuclear weapons see David Hollenbach, “Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear War: The Shape of the Catholic Debate,” *Theological Studies* 43, no. 4 (December 1982): 577–605; National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1984).

This normative and law-like undertone to nuclear deterrence has been present throughout the Cold War and emphasized in what is labeled the fourth wave of deterrence theory. The fourth wave returned to the possibility of deterrence having become a norm post-1945 and how norms have an impact on the effect of deterrence.<sup>34</sup> Lawrence Freedman referred to Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) as a norm: it was the standard of behavior for nuclear armed states.<sup>35</sup> The increased acceptance of deterrence as a social practice between states, as a set of norm-like unwritten rules, led to stronger efforts at institutionalization throughout the Cold War, including arms control regimes and confidence building measures.<sup>36</sup> As Marc Trachtenberg puts it, “the primary purpose of arms control is to help prevent war.”<sup>37</sup> These institutions are an indicator of deterrence moving from a strategy to a more normative mode of behavior due to its war prevention effect.

However, this did not occur overnight. It was an evolutionary process in which crises and missteps took place. As Morgan has shown, the practice of deterrence is one informed by the political context and demands of decision-makers, as well as responses to external events.<sup>38</sup> What is considered credible or stable is learnt over time through trial, error, and better understanding of the technology itself.<sup>39</sup> At the onset of the nuclear age President Eisenhower had preferred a strategy of massive retaliation, but this would not last, the destruction of cities was not palatable

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<sup>34</sup> Amir Lupovici, “The Emerging Fourth Wave of Deterrence Theory – Toward a New Research Agenda,” *International Studies Quarterly* 54 (2010), 711; Nina Tannenwald. *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 19.

<sup>35</sup> Lawrence Freedman. *Deterrence* (New York: Polity, 2004), esp. 30-32.

<sup>36</sup> Lupovici, “The Emerging Fourth Wave of Deterrence,” 716.

<sup>37</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, “The Past and Future of Arms Control,” *Daedalus* 120, no. 1, (1991): 203-216.

<sup>38</sup> Patrick M. Morgan, “The Practice of Deterrence,” in Emanuel. Adler and Vincent Pouliot eds, *International Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 139-199; Morgan, *Deterrence*.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., “Nuclear Learning and the Evolution of U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation,” in Graham T. Allison, William L. Ury, and Bruce J. Allyn, eds., *Windows of Opportunity: From Cold War to Peaceful Competition in Us-Soviet Relations* (Cambridge, Mass: Ballinger Pub Co, 1989), 138-148.

nor strategically efficient. T.V. Paul shows how President Truman, due in large part to the destructive nature of nuclear weapons, sought alternative strategies which would not entail such destruction.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, massive retaliation was seen as problematic as it only provided general deterrence and could not be used to stop smaller engagements with the Soviet Union. As Gerard Smith stated: “a separate deterrent strategy and force, specifically designed for this purpose, is required.”<sup>41</sup> Robert McNamara illustrated this demand for more usable weapons in his elaboration of a counterforce doctrine: the use of nuclear weapons should follow the use of conventional military force: “That is to say, principal military objectives...should be the destruction of the enemy’s military forces, not of his civilian population...giving the possible opponent the strongest imaginable incentive to refrain from striking our own cities.”<sup>42</sup>

Kennedy sought more usable weapons as well since he did not want to only have the option of humiliating the Soviets in future crises, having in mind the recent nuclear crises between the two, namely the Berlin Crisis and the Cuban missile crisis.<sup>43</sup> However, the Kennedy administration maintained active nuclear war plans against the Soviet Union.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, Kennedy was not particularly prone to over accumulation for as he stated “You can’t use them as a first weapon yourself, they are only good for deterring...I don’t quite see why we’re building as many as we’re building.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> T. V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, 2009), 42–43.

<sup>41</sup> Gerard C. Smith, director, Policy Planning Staff, to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, "Review of Strategic Concept," 20 January 1959. NSA EBB 275 doc 6.

<sup>42</sup> Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, 83.

<sup>43</sup> Jervis, “Why Nuclear Superiority Doesn’t Matter.”

<sup>44</sup> Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons*, Chapter 4.

<sup>45</sup> “New Tapes: JFK Questioned Value of Nuclear Build-up,” John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston, February 6, 2002.



Gavin, however, has cast doubt as to the actual reliance of U.S. decision-makers on flexible response. On the one hand, Kennedy wanted options when it came to nuclear weapons. On the other, Robert McNamara tried to make sure the Soviets would continue to stockpile nuclear weapons. McNamara advocated publicly for a counter-force second strike doctrine because he believed the Soviet forces were too soft and he wanted to convince them to stockpile weapons. He thought Moscow might see itself at a strategic disadvantage in case of crisis with the United States and might be tempted to strike first as to not be disarmed. Therefore, the speech McNamara delivered in Athens to its NATO allies had a different audience in mind: the Soviets.<sup>46</sup>

The political context changed with the subsequent President. President Johnson, who publicly was averse to nuclear weapons, sought ways to reduce their numbers and return to a minimum deterrent posture.<sup>47</sup> However, within the SIOP-64 plans, his administration maintained “overkill” nuclear war plans against the Soviet Union and China in case of attacks from both. These were meant in case of deterrence failure. The plan meant “destroying it [the Soviet Union] as a “viable” society.”<sup>48</sup> Nixon, on his end, returned to deterrence to a risk-taking enterprise. As per declassified documents found at the national security archives: “President Richard Nixon and his national security adviser Henry Kissinger believed they could compel “the other side” to back down during crises in the Middle East and Vietnam by “push[ing] so many chips into the pot” that Nixon would seem ‘crazy’ enough to “go much further.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Gavin, “The Myth of Flexible Response,” 853-854.

<sup>47</sup> Morgan, “The Practice of Deterrence.”

<sup>48</sup> “U.S. Nuclear War Plan Option Sought Destruction of China and Soviet Union as “Viable” Societies.” National Security Archives Briefing Book #638, 15 August 2018, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault/2018-08-15/us-nuclear-war-plan-option-sought-destruction-china-soviet-union-viable-societies>

<sup>49</sup> “Nixon, Kissinger, and the Madman Strategy during Vietnam War,” *The National Security Archives*, Briefing Book #517, 29 May 2015, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb517-Nixon-Kissinger-and-the-Madman-Strategy-during-Vietnam-War/>

Perhaps the most important shift in U.S. nuclear deterrence policies came with the election of Ronald Reagan. He was opposed to the idea of mutually assured destruction and sought the creation of active defenses to reduce the vulnerability of the United States to Soviet nuclear power.<sup>50</sup> During the same period, the Able Archer 83 exercise took place and came close to precipitating nuclear war. NATO began the exercise in early November 1983 which involved practicing “nuclear release exercises.”<sup>51</sup> Moscow became worried as to the intent of NATO and “it appears that at least some Soviet forces were preparing to preempt or counterattack a NATO strike launched under the cover of Able Archer”<sup>52</sup> It this type of vulnerability Reagan sought to counter with his Strategic Defense Initiative: reduced reliance on deterrence in favor of defensive means.<sup>53</sup> A conscious effort at showing alternative modes of thinking and acting to an adversary is a strong demonstration of the importance of the strategy for Washington’s national security leadership.<sup>54</sup>

Deterrence posture and war prevention saw another change with the end of the Cold War. Deterrence between now Russia and China was fairly stable, but concerns began to emerge regarding smaller proliferators.<sup>55</sup> On the one hand, the George H.W. Bush administration

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<sup>50</sup> Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011), 13–14.

<sup>51</sup> The National Security Archive, “The 1983 War Scare Declassified and for Real,” Briefing Book no. 533, 24 October 2015, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb533-The-Able-Archer-War-Scare-Declassified-PFIAB-Report-Released/>

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Edward Reiss and Reiss Edward, *The Strategic Defense Initiative* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Stephen I. Schwartz, *Atomic Audit: The Costs and Consequences of US Nuclear Weapons since 1940* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2011).

<sup>54</sup> The reluctance of Ronald Reagan to use mutually assured destruction as the cornerstone of U.S. security policy is telling in how prevalent and accepted the strategy was. The Star Wars project can in large part be explained by the hatred of Reagan for deterrence, which he had stated publicly in his state of the union address on 22 November 1982. Carter before him and Bush after him all returned in major crises to the principle of deterrence. The 1991 Gulf War for Bush and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan for Carter.

<sup>55</sup> Frank P. Harvey, *Smoke and Mirrors: Globalized Terrorism and the Illusion of Multilateral Security* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

unilaterally enacted strong nuclear reduction measures in order to reduce tensions with Russia<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, a cursory look at the National Security Strategy and the Nuclear Posture Reviews of the United States demonstrates the increasing emphasis on nuclear proliferation as the number one threat facing the United States; proliferation coming from weaker regional states generally opposed to U.S. foreign policy objectives. The culprits usually mentioned in those documents include Libya, North Korea, Iraq, and Iran.<sup>57</sup> The term rogue states became official parlance in the Clinton administration, and was adopted by the George W. Bush administration as well.<sup>58</sup> From Clinton on, stable deterrence became a mixture of some form of strategic reductions with Russia, and the development of theatre and larger scale missile defenses to supplement deterrence against new proliferators.<sup>59</sup> George W. Bush also added a strong emphasis on preventive attacks to curb proliferation.<sup>60</sup> Preventive attack plans were drafted by the Obama and Trump administrations as well.<sup>61</sup> Once again what made deterrence stable was re-evaluated. Scholars and analysts alike argued the new proliferators were more at risk of using nuclear

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<sup>56</sup> National Security Archives, "Unilateral U.S. nuclear pullback in 1991 matched by rapid Soviet cuts," Briefing Book #561, 30 September 2016, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault-russia-programs/2016-09-30/unilateral-us-nuclear-pullback-1991-matched>

<sup>57</sup> "National Security Strategy of the United States," The White House, 2000, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2015, 217; "Nuclear Posture Review Report," *Office of the Secretary of Defense*, April 2010; "Nuclear Posture Review," *Office of the Secretary of Defense*, February 2018, Executive Summary.

<sup>58</sup> Michael O'Hanlon "Alternative Architecture and U.S. Politics" in James J. Wirtz, and Jeffrey A. Larsen, *Rockets' Red Glare: Missile Defenses and the Future of World Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 112.

<sup>59</sup> Robert Joseph "The Changing Political-Military Environment" in Wirtz, and Larsen, *Rockets Red Glare*; Erin V. Causewell, ed., *National Missile Defense: Issues and Developments* (New York: Nova Science Pub Inc, 2002); Alexander T. J. Lennon, ed., *Contemporary Nuclear Debates: Missile Defenses, Arms Control, and Arms Races in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2002); Steven A. Hildreth, *The Current Debate on Missile Defense*, UK ed. edition (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2004).

<sup>60</sup> The addition of preventive measures by the George W. Bush administration came in the Nuclear Posture Review of 2002. The document was never made available to the public, but some of its content was provided William M. Arkin of the Washington Post. See "Secret Plan Outlines the Unthinkable," *The Washington Post*, 10 March 2002, <http://articles.latimes.com/2002/mar/10/opinion/op-arkin>. Assessed 13 September 2018.

<sup>61</sup> Bob Woodward, *Fear: Trump in the White House* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), Chapter 12; Michael O'Hanlon and James Kirchick, "A 'Bloody Nose' Attack in Korea Would Have Lasting Consequences," *Brookings*, 26 February 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/02/26/a-bloody-nose-attack-in-korea-would-have-lasting-consequences/>, assessed September 16, 2018.

weapons, either due to the size of their arsenal and a “use it or lose it” situation, irrational leaders, or a history of adversarial relations with the United States.<sup>62</sup> The accrued fear was that these new proliferators could provide atomic weapons to terrorist groups.<sup>63</sup> Since the cost of directly targeting the United States with a nuclear device would be too high, providing nuclear weapons to non-state actors to carry out the deed would generate some degree of plausible deniability.<sup>64</sup> Overall, with the end of the Cold War deterrence became a more complex affair, but not one to be discarded.<sup>65</sup> As such, deterrence postures and how to most efficiently reduce dispute escalation and war are evolving principles.<sup>66</sup> However, while the norm and its practice evolved over time, it remained an important method for achieving stability and preventing war.

### **Nuclear Proliferation, Deterrence, and Collective Security**

In sum, deterrence is more than a strategy: it became the normative foundation for war prevention measures between adversaries. As Patrick Morgan eloquently puts it:

Both Washington and Moscow, however, sought to embed extended and collective deterrence in various alliances described as close associations based on common norms, principles, values, and objectives. The members were supposed to conduct relations in ways that departed markedly from standard international politics, resting on and promoting

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<sup>62</sup> David S. Yost, “Strategic Stability in the Cold War: Lessons for Continuing Challenges,” *Proliferation Papers* 36 (2011); Michael Rühle, “NATO’s Future Nuclear Doctrine: Factors Shaping a Decision,” in Mark Fitzpatrick, Alexander Nikitin, and Sergey Oznobishchev eds. *Nuclear Doctrines and Strategies* (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2008); Derek D. Smith, “Deterrence and Counterproliferation in an Age of Weapons of Mass Destruction,” *Security Studies* 12 (2003): 152-197; Keith B. Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996); Stephen J. Cimbala, *The Past and Future of Nuclear Deterrence* (Westport: Praeger, 1998); For the alternative arguments see Robert Jervis, “Deterrence, Rogue States, and the U.S. Policy,” in T.V. Paul, Patrick M. Morgan, and James J. Wirtz eds. *Complex Deterrence: Strategy in the Global Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); James A. Russell, “Strategic Stability Reconsidered: Prospects for Escalation and Nuclear War in the Middle-East,” *Proliferation Papers* (2009): 23-24; Peter Jones, “Learning to Live with a Nuclear Iran,” *The Nonproliferation Review* 19 (2012): 197-217; James J. Wirtz, “Deterring the Weak: Problems and Prospects,” *Proliferation Papers* 43 (2012): 9-11;

<sup>63</sup> Thérèse Delpech, *Nuclear Deterrence in the 21st Century: Lessons from the Cold War for a New Era of Strategic Piracy* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2012), 58.

<sup>64</sup> It is important to note that the authors here do not believe in the plausible deniability argument. They believe the U.S. is generally able to discover groups behind terrorist attacks. See Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, “Why States Won’t Give Nuclear Weapons to Terrorists,” *International Security* 38, no. 1 (July 2013): 80–104.

<sup>65</sup> T. V. Paul, Patrick M. Morgan, and James J. Wirtz, eds., *Complex Deterrence: Strategy in the Global Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

<sup>66</sup> Morgan, “The Practice of Deterrence.”

high levels of cooperation, integrated sacrifices, and shared information (like intelligence), all reflecting how the members had minimized fear among themselves. In short, in transforming the practices involved, the alliances were to transcend traditional international politics.<sup>67</sup>

Morgan recognizes that the American version of “deterrence via building pluralistic security communities of allies” had a stronger track record than Moscow, especially due to the success of NATO.<sup>68</sup> The importance of deterrence can be seen in the way the U.S. and the USSR sought to maintain it. There were efforts designed to curb anti-missile systems, codified in the ABM Treaty, enhance communication and transparency, and overall, ensure strategic stability.<sup>69</sup> Deterrence had become the thing to do for decision-makers to ensure the security of their state.

Although the United States sought to control in part what their allies did with their arsenals, during the 1950s it became more open to proliferation to bolster deterrence against the Soviet Union.<sup>70</sup> As understandings of deterrence changed, the United States nonproliferation effort became more rigorous. Whether due to issues with compellence, fear of nuclear war, or fear of horizontal proliferation, the 60s saw the beginning of a process whereas proliferation to allies was less desirable, and more so toward adversaries.<sup>71</sup> However, the U.S. desired to maintain some flexibility towards some of its allies, including Israel, South Africa, and Pakistan.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 164.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 165.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 159.

<sup>70</sup> Julian Schofield, *Strategic Nuclear Sharing* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014); Paul M. Pitman, “A General Named Eisenhower: Atlantic Crisis and the Origins of the Europeans Economic Community,” in Marc Trachtenberg ed. *Between Empire and Alliance: American and Europe during the Cold War* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003).

<sup>71</sup> Matthew Kroenig, “Force or Friendship? Explaining Great Power Nonproliferation Policy,” *Security Studies* 23, no. 1 (January 2014): 1–32; Nicholas L. Miller, *Stopping the Bomb: The Sources and Effectiveness of US Nonproliferation Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

<sup>72</sup> Glenn Chafetz, Hillel Abramson, and Suzette Grillot, “Role Theory and Foreign Policy: Belarussian and Ukrainian Compliance with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime,” *Political Psychology* 17, no. 4 (December 1996): 727; Or Rabinowitz, *Bargaining on Nuclear Tests: Washington and Its Cold War Deals* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2014).

At the same time, the development of the nonproliferation regime, and the subsequent norms, began to delegitimize nuclear acquisition.<sup>73</sup> This development is compounded by the end of the Cold War and the overall optimism that the reliance on nuclear weapons for deterrence could be reduced.<sup>74</sup> Washington became involved in many arms control initiatives aimed at reducing the overall amount of nuclear weapons possessed by the nuclear states. This was a contentious proposition within Washington, where some individuals believed strategic stability could only be maintained at high numbers of nuclear weapons, but maintaining the same number of nuclear weapon states as per the NPT remained a point of agreement between American decision-makers.<sup>75</sup>

Deterrence, and war prevention evolved over time to hold different meanings and suggest different policies. With the end of the Cold War, nuclear deterrence was mainly understood as deterring the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>76</sup> As such, contra the early to mid-Cold War period, new nuclear proliferators found it more difficult to proliferate as it is seen as going directly against the current status quo.

## **2. The Formation of a Reputation for Restraint**

As demonstrated by Patrick Morgan above, the United States and the Soviet Union, later Russia, built their security on the practice of deterrence. An important aspect of this community of deterrence was the acquisition of nuclear weapons by the rival bloc. What determined whether a proliferator would be accepted within the opposite group? Nuclearization by allies is easier to

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<sup>73</sup> Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo*; Maria Rost Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms: Why States Choose Nuclear Restraint* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009); Maria Rost Rublee and Avner Cohen, "Nuclear Norms in Global Governance: A Progressive Research Agenda," *Contemporary Security Policy* 39, no. 3 (July 3, 2018): 317–40.

<sup>74</sup> Kurt M Campbell, Robert J Einhorn, and Mitchell B Reiss, *The Nuclear Tipping Point* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

<sup>75</sup> Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*.

<sup>76</sup> Harvey, *Smoke and Mirrors: Globalized Terrorism and the Illusion of Multilateral Security*.

explain than the acceptance of rival nuclearization, even in this context. The notion of restraint is important here as it has been at the center of the optimist argument on proliferation. Kenneth Waltz, in his defense of nuclear proliferation, uses restraint as the core mechanism to explain future behavior of nuclear powers. He argued “But, with nuclear weapons, it’s been proven without exception that whoever gets nuclear weapons behaves with caution and moderation.”<sup>77</sup> If restraint is a characteristic of future behavior, it has to be observable prior to treatment, or at least during the early process of nuclearization for it to have an impact on nonproliferation choices.

As such, states will look at past actions in order to determine the future behavior of states. This is the standard definition of reputation.<sup>78</sup> It is what is called a meta-belief: it is something you assume in order to assume.<sup>79</sup> Reputation can come from past actions, but also link to current events which resonates with the belief one holds about the person or the entity.<sup>80</sup> Reputation is a measure of what is considered socially accepted behavior.<sup>81</sup> Do we know if the person will behave in a way that the group judges acceptable. In the case of nuclear weapons, restraint has long been argued in the literature to be the prime behavior as recklessness could lead to some terrible outcomes, namely nuclear wars. Therefore, an adversary developing a reputation for restraint can show that it will behave as the group expects it to behave, which reduces threat perception. In other words, it is a heuristic designed to figure out social behavior when the information necessary to objectively dispel uncertainty is not available: the future is not written yet.

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<sup>77</sup> Scott Sagan, Kenneth Waltz, and Richard K. Betts, “A Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster?” *Journal of International Affairs* 60, no. 2 (2007), 137.

<sup>78</sup> Miller, *The shadow of the past*; Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics*; Press, *Calculating Credibility*.

<sup>79</sup> Rosaria Conte and Mario Paolucci, *Reputation in Artificial Societies: Social Beliefs for Social Order* (New York: Springer, 2012).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Christopher Avery, Paul Resnick, and Richard Zeckhauser, “The Market for Evaluations,” *American Economic Review* 89, no. 3 (1999): 564–84.

I define restraint as the *voluntary apposition of limits to oneself*. I posit, therefore, the competent practice of general deterrence and proximate deterrence, as an observable instance of restraint due to their war prevention effect. Self-restraint is important in explaining adversarial proliferation because it helps develop collective identification. As Alexander Wendt argued on the benefits of self-restraint: “By holding ourselves back, in short, we make it possible for others to step forward and identify with us, enabling us in turn to identify with them.” In the case of deterrence, showing restraint signals’ one has similar goals, in this case to manage escalation and prevent war.<sup>82</sup> In the case of deterrence, showing restraint signals’ one has similar goals, in this case to manage escalation, prevent war, and maintain overall stability. It is an identity marker which signals to peers 1) what they can expect behavior wise in the future, and 2) how the proliferating actor is acting according to what is understood as an identity of a responsible actor. In other words, by showing restraint the state proliferating state decreases the threat level of its nuclearization for the United States.

For the argument to work, however, the notion of restraint has to be framed as part of the core elements of deterrence theory. The notion of restraint, although never explicitly discussed in the deterrence literature, has an integral role to play in the effectiveness of the strategy, but more so for the understanding of deterrence as a norm or an informal rule. As Therese Delpech argued: “deterrence is about behavior in daily life, not in brief crisis.” Deterrence is not only about superior fire power, but also how a state conducts itself outside of crisis.<sup>83</sup> Mutually assured destruction, the cornerstone of nuclear deterrence theory, requires restraint to work. It assumes states in a

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<sup>82</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 359, 360.

<sup>83</sup> Delpech, *Nuclear Deterrence in the 21st Century*, 88.



conflict will only use incremental and moderate escalation to keep conflicts limited due to the destructive nature of nuclear weapons.<sup>84</sup>

When deterrence is used, the potential attacker shows restraint by not pressing its military advantage beyond what is necessary to obtain its objective, and the threatened state shows restraint by not acting rashly and counter to its means. Understood in more normative terms, showing restraint in these cases is the appropriate behavior for the identity of these states. Acting in opposition, being unrestrained, shows a lack of proper behavior. In the case of nuclear proliferation, having exhibited unrestrained behavior in the past during crisis situations increases the chances of preventive attacks on the proliferating state as they are not seen as a potential responsible nuclear power. Saddam Hussein, for example, had demonstrated multiple times in previous crises that he was not restrained. He used chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq war, did not comply once threatened by the U.S. in 1991, a conflict he was not likely to win, and refused to cooperate in 1998 when Washington suspected him of developing weapons of mass destruction, leading to a preventive strike from Washington and some allies.<sup>85</sup> All these instances culminated to the 2003 invasion of Iraq over the potential development of WMD by Hussein.<sup>86</sup>

### *The Formation of a Reputation for Restraint: Core Mechanisms*

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<sup>84</sup> The idea of small, incremental responses in case of conflict is central to Thomas Schelling's idea of deterrence. For him, this ability for restraint is the stone on which rests the whole mechanism of mutually assured destruction. See *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); Victor Asal and Kyle Beardsley, "Proliferation and International Crisis Behavior," *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 2 (March 2007): 139–55; Todd S. Sechser and Matthew Fuhrmann, *Nuclear Weapons and Coercive Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)..

<sup>85</sup> Williamson Murray and Kevin M. Woods, *The Iran-Iraq War: A Military and Strategic History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, trans. Nicholas Elliott, Translation edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London, England: Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, 2015); Richard Lowry, *The Gulf War Chronicles: A Military History of the First War with Iraq* (New York: iUniverse, 2008).

<sup>86</sup> Hans Blix, *Disarming Iraq* (New York: Pantheon, 2004); Harvey, *Explaining the Iraq War*.

States can develop a reputation for restraint through exhibiting, prior and during nuclearization, behavior meant for war prevention. These war prevention mechanisms are all meant to make deterrence stronger and are an integral part of the practice of deterrence itself. Using the mechanism of competence borrowed from practice theory, this section will untangle the relationship between the rules of deterrence and identity formation. An important aspect of the rule-like application of deterrence is how it helps develop the identity of responsible states. The fourth wave of deterrence theory has hinted at the creation of identity through the use of deterrence but has not offered a clear, in depth analysis of the linkage between the two and the mechanisms at play.<sup>87</sup> The identity of interest here is that of responsible state. See figure 1 for a visualization of the argument made in this section

The link between the formation of an identity as a restrained, therefore responsible, state is through recognized competent use of deterrence or military force. As noted by Lupovici, the deterrence theory literature has never truly engaged with the issue of competency in coercive diplomacy.<sup>88</sup> Deterrence successes or failures are ascribed to misperceptions, miscommunication of the threat or of the interest of the threatening state,<sup>89</sup> due to different types of military strategies,<sup>90</sup> unclear commitment by allies,<sup>91</sup> or an inappropriate ratio of material power.<sup>92</sup> In all

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<sup>87</sup> Amir Lupovici, "The Emerging Fourth Wave of Deterrence Theory—Toward a New Research Agenda," *International Studies Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (2010): 712; See also Bradley S. Klein, *Strategic Studies and World Order: The Global Politics of Deterrence*, vol. 34 (Cambridge University Press, 1994); Hugh Gusterson, *People of the Bomb: Portraits of America's Nuclear Complex* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Latha Varadarajan, "Constructivism, Identity and Neoliberal (in) Security," *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 3 (2004): 319–41.

<sup>88</sup> Lupovici, "The Emerging Fourth Wave of Deterrence,"

<sup>89</sup> Frank P. Harvey, "Rigor Mortis or Rigor, More Tests: Necessity, Sufficiency, and Deterrence Logic," *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (1998): 675–707.

<sup>90</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

<sup>91</sup> James D. Morrow, "Arms Versus Allies: Trade-Offs in the Search for Security," *International Organization* 47, no. 2 (1993): 207–33.

<sup>92</sup> Paul Huth and Bruce Russett, "Testing Deterrence Theory: Rigor Makes a Difference," *World Politics* 42, no. 04 (July 1990): 466–501.

cases, either the material variables were not enough for deterrence to hold, or there was incomplete information. While miscommunication could be understood as being implicitly incompetent, it does not necessarily mean this is the case.

States acquire a reputation for restraint by their peers through the recognized competent practice of deterrence. According to Emmanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot,

practice is more or less competent in a socially meaningful and recognizable way. The structured dimension of practice stems not only from repetition but also, and in fact primarily, from the fact that groups of individuals tend to interpret its performance along similar standards. Social recognition is thus a fundamental aspect of practice: its (in)competence is never inherent but attributed in and through social relations.<sup>93</sup>

As such, states engaged in general deterrence or coercive diplomacy do not do so in a vacuum. As shown above, according to Morgan deterrence became the cornerstone of community building during the Cold War.<sup>94</sup> As such, occurrences of deterrence are observed and evaluated by their peers, mainly the United States and the Soviet Union. Therefore, a reputation is not only built through one-on-one interaction, but also through an interested audience. Time is also a factor. One occurrence of competency does not create a strong reputation. It is multiple instances, over time, which can demonstrate responsibility.

The standards of competency rest within the audience. Moreover, those standards are often determined by the dominant states who are also bearers of the sought-after reputation. While less powerful states may have an impact on whether a state acquires a certain reputation, it is the dominant state who makes or breaks it.<sup>95</sup> In nuclear matters, one such player is the United States.

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<sup>93</sup> Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, "International practices: introduction and framework," in *International Practice*, eds. Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 7.

<sup>94</sup> Morgan, "The Practice of Deterrence," 164-165.

<sup>95</sup> This argument is similar to the argument made by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink on norm cascades. While norms entrepreneurs and smaller states may be in favor of the proposed norms, the adoption of a new standard of behavior requires the endorsement of at least one of the most important state in the system. See Martha

They have been recognized as being restrained through their creation and acceptance of the post-war constitutional liberal order.<sup>96</sup> As a superpower, and as the hegemon after the Cold War, the United States' role in maintaining international stability helped dictate nuclear principles to satellite states.<sup>97</sup> In essence, reputation has a loose hierarchy. There is a "pecking order" of reputation where states, through competent practice of deterrence in this case, may come to be known as restrained as they have conformed to community standards multiple times.<sup>98</sup> As such, states outside the United States may seek to persuade it that they have shown restraint shown in the past. For example, the Soviet Union vouched for the restraint of China in the 1960s. South Korea had similar language when discussing future behavior of North Korea in the 1990s.

As such, some states are seen as more restrained than others. States that have been engaged in nuclear crises, extensive use of general deterrence, and have an overall good track record when it comes to war prevention are regarded as standards. In general, states that have ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty are viewed as such due to their denuclearization commitment per Article VI. The treaty, overall, has defined what it means to be a nuclear state, and how one should act. They are the exemplar to be followed.<sup>99</sup> The non-signatories are a mixed bag. India and Israel, although

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Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norms Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (Autumn 1998), 887-917

<sup>96</sup> See G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001). For alternative arguments as to how restrained the U.S. has been as the hegemon see T.V. Paul, *Restraining Great Powers: Soft Balancing from Empires to the Global Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Robert Denemark, Hasan Yonten, Jean-Francois Belanger, and Matthew Hoffmann, "Diplomacy and Controversies in Global Security Studies: The Sea Power Anomaly and Soft Balancing," *Journal of Global Security Studies* (Forthcoming); Robert A. Pape, "Soft Balancing against the United States," *International Security* 30, no. 1 (July 2005): 7-45; T.V. Paul, "Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy," *International Security* 30, no. 1 (July 2005): 46-71; Kai He and Huiyun Feng, "If Not Soft Balancing, Then What? Reconsidering Soft Balancing and U.S. Policy Toward China," *Security Studies* 17, no. 2 (May 22, 2008): 363-95.

<sup>97</sup> Tannenwald, *Nuclear Taboo*, Paul, *Tradition of Non-Use*; Schofield, *Strategic Nuclear Sharing*.

<sup>98</sup> On hierarchies as pecking orders and for politics as the struggle for competency see Vincent Pouliot, *International Pecking Orders* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>99</sup> Although Washington under the George W. Bush administration were no longer recognized as such by many states in the system due to their unilateral policies on regime change and security, namely in Iraq, and the soft balancing that followed, on average it has been the most dominant state when it comes to non-proliferation, its

not signatories to the treaty, have been tacitly, and recently explicitly in the case of India, accepted as nuclear states. Pakistan has followed a different trajectory. While the United States was not completely averse to a nuclear Pakistan as they proliferated, their future behavior, including their compellent use of nuclear weapons in the Kargil War, their export of nuclear technology, and their sponsorship of terrorist groups, has shifted the U.S. perception from one of uneasy restraint to clearly unrestrained. Reputations are not set in stone: while they help anticipating future behavior, they do not guarantee future good behavior. On the other hand, the designation by President Bush of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as being part of the “axis of evil,” states ready to embolden terrorist groups and work actively against international stability made these three countries *de facto* undesirables as nuclear states. An important implication of this is that reputation can be shared. If the United States for example makes a public claim that another power is restrained, it is much more likely to be believed than if a state that has a low supply of it.

The standard in this case is whether the state engaging in general deterrence is actually increasing overall stability through war prevention. Nuclear weapons could either bring instability or help maintain the balance in an unequal system.<sup>100</sup> Since we assume here that decision-makers seek stability, those who use nuclear weapons to ensure their safety are rewarded, whereas those who are more aggressive and upsetting to the status quo will be punished. During crisis deterrence, therefore, competent behavior is understood as a proportionate response. An attacker shows restraint by not pressing its military advantage beyond what is necessary to obtain its objective, and the threatened state shows restraint by not acting rashly and counter to its means. A state making a deterrent threat will not engage in predatory behavior if it successfully coerces its

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definition, and its applications. See Francis J. Gavin, “Strategies of Inhibition: U.S. Grand Strategy, the Nuclear Revolution, and Nonproliferation,” *International Security* 40, no. 1 (July 2015): 9–46.

<sup>100</sup> T.V. Paul, “Great Equalizers.”

adversary. Conversely, the state on the receiving end of the deterrent threat will be judged competent if it recognizes the situation for what it is and seeks a negotiated settlement.

Rationality in this case becomes an important aspect of developing a reputation for restraint. For the previous mechanism to work, decision-makers need to be believed to be rational. Rationality, understood as the ability to evaluate cost, benefits, and consequences properly, is at the heart of deterrence theory.<sup>101</sup> I am agnostic as to whether it is an objective state of the human mind, or a socially created object. What matters is how decision-makers value rationality, which they do in the case of deterrence.<sup>102</sup> Whether they are perceived as rational is whether they understand deterrence, which makes restraint possible. If a state is not perceived to be rational, it will have difficulty accumulating, and signaling, its reputation.

Moreover, two additional mechanisms are signs of competency. The first one is non-expansionist force posture. This encapsulates a reduced use of force for offensive means, and no to limited threats on the territorial integrity of others. Threats to territorial integrity have historically been described as the number one case of war alongside offensive-like force postures.<sup>103</sup> As such, a decline of such a practice is a competent way to reduce the overall risk of

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<sup>101</sup> Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Robert Powell, *Nuclear Deterrence Theory: The Search for Credibility* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Frank P. Harvey, "Rigor Mortis or Rigor, More Tests: Necessity, Sufficiency, and Deterrence Logic"; Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Frank C. Zagare, "Reconciling Rationality with Deterrence: A Re-Examination of the Logical Foundations of Deterrence Theory," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 16, no. 2 (April 2004): 107–41; Frank C. Zagare, "Rationality and Deterrence," *World Politics* 42, no. 4 (January 1990): 238–60.

<sup>102</sup> Amir Lupovici, "The Emerging Fourth Wave of Deterrence Theory—Toward a New Research Agenda," 715–16; Timothy W. Luke, "What's Wrong With Deterrence? A Semiotic Interpretation of National Security Policies," in *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, eds. James Der Durian and Michael J. Shapiro (Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1998).

<sup>103</sup> Harvey Starr, "Territory, Proximity, and Spatiality: The Geography of International Conflict," *International Studies Review* 7, no. 3 (2005): 387–406; Karen A. Rasler and William R. Thompson, "Contested Territory, Strategic Rivalries, and Conflict Escalation," *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (2006): 145–67; Monica Duffy Toft, "Territory and War," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 2, (2014); Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Jack Snyder, "Civil-Military

deterrence failure. The second is the involvement in arms control and disarmament measures. Arms control have long been recognized as important war prevention tools. They are part of confidence-building measures between adversaries because of the verification and transparency measures attached to them.<sup>104</sup> The confidence-building measures coupled with the verification and information sharing mechanism reduces the likelihood of misperceptions and the potential of escalation to war,<sup>105</sup> hence acting as war preventing mechanisms and overall strengthening deterrence.<sup>106</sup>

The formation of a reputation for restraint is in itself interactive. The United States in general favors stability and seek to minimize risks to its security and interests. The issue with adversarial nuclearization is that the nascent nuclear power will use it to threaten the security of the United States. As such, the U.S. will seek to determine whether the nuclearizing state will be

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Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984,” *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 108; Stephen Van Evera, “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War,” *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 58.

<sup>104</sup> Schelling, *Strategy and Arms Control*; Marc Trachtenberg, “The Past and Future of Arms Control”; Bernd W. Kubbig and Sven-Eric Fikenscher, eds., *Arms Control and Missile Proliferation in the Middle East* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2011); Michael A. Levi, *Future Of Arms Control* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2004); Emanuel Adler, “The Emergence of Cooperation: National Epistemic Communities and the International Evolution of the Idea of Nuclear Arms Control,” *International Organization* 46, no. 1, (Winter 1992): 101-145; Emanuel Adler, “Arms Control, Disarmament, and National Security: A Thirty Year Retrospective and a New Set of Anticipations,” *Daedalus* 120, no. 1, (1991): 1–20.

<sup>105</sup> Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma”; Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>106</sup> It is important to note that I hold force posture as constant here. In the deterrence literature, the development of a second-strike capability is an important aspect of a deterrent posture. The survivability of a state’s nuclear arsenal is the primary mechanism behind strategic stability and the use of nuclear weapons as deterrent. By having the means to survive a first strike and launch a response, a nuclear state in essence has a more credible deterrent, which reduce incentives to use nuclear weapons. In reality, however, no nuclear states has developed a second strike capability immediately. China, for example, took about two decades before they had a robust second-strike capability. As such, I assume the United States is cognizant of this and will not infer a compellent nuclear posture due to a lack of credible second-strike capability towards the end of the nuclearization process. On second strike capability see Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution : Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); On the difficulties associated with the development of a second-strike capability see Scott D. Sagan, “The Perils of Proliferation: Organization Theory, Deterrence Theory, and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons,” *International Security* 18, no. 4 (1994): 90; Austin Long and Brendan Rittenhouse Green, “Stalking the Secure Second Strike: Intelligence, Counterforce, and Nuclear Strategy,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 1–2 (January 2, 2015): 38–73.

a threat to its security in the future, or if it can be managed. It means that they will favor the status quo and reject revisionism. The status quo here is understood as favoring a deterrent posture, whereas revisionism is seen as adopting a compellent posture. Therefore, to be seen as an abiding member of the system, states need to be recognized as acting as status quo powers. Nuclear proliferation is generally seen as a revisionist action, but I argue that this is seen on a spectrum. It is possible to want nuclear weapons either for protection or greater autonomy, but a desire for autonomy does not automatically correlate with revisionism. The two are not mutually exclusive. We can have a proliferating state who wants to be seen as a status quo state as well.

What I mean by the interactive effect and formation of a reputation for restraint is this: no states after the United States, the UK, and the Soviet Union have been allowed to proliferate unimpaired. Sanctions, diplomatic maneuvers, institutional means such as the NPT or the Limited Test Ban Treaty, positive inducements, and public condemnations have been used as counterproliferation means. These measures are meant to increase the effectiveness of deterrence as proliferating states are met with severe warnings about the continued development of their nuclear programs. However, the ways in which the proliferating state handles these counterproliferation means may help improve its reputation. If deterrence is the appropriate way for decision-makers to act, states have to care not only about whether they make credible threats, but how they react to credible threats made against them. For example, when Washington successfully achieved the passage of resolution 1440 in 2002 at the United Nations, the US signaled to Saddam Hussein the costs of not abiding by its demands. Hussein, for a variety of reasons including not wanting to appear weak in front of its regional adversary Iran, discarded the threat and did not comply fully with the request made by the U.S. and the international community.



Washington invaded in March 2003.<sup>107</sup> Hussein was already seen as an irrational and brash leader, which was further evidenced by his refusal to cooperate despite the consequences. If he had acquiesced to the demands of the international community and presented the evidence he was required to, the result would have been a net positive for his reputation. By showing restraint and accepting to be deterred, he would have shown he understood the rules of the game, the rules of great power politics.

*On History, Time, and the Development of a Reputation for Restraint*

An obvious critique to the argument made here is how nuclear proliferation is inherently a revisionist policy. Revisionism here is defined here as behavior by states aimed at “improv[ing] their position in the system.”<sup>108</sup> This revision of position is generally done by force.<sup>109</sup> As such, a state seeking nuclear weapons could be labelled as revisionist because its new capability could help it compel the United States. Such compellence would be detrimental to U.S. security, and the security of its allies. However, the concepts of status quo and revisionist states need not be absolute. It can accommodate some deviation. During the early to mid-Cold War, the acquisition of nuclear weapons was not de facto seen as an effort to change the status quo by the United States. This period was marked by the importance of nuclear deterrence to ensure collective security. As such, China, a state seen as restrained because they sought nuclear weapons for deterrence purposes, was not attacked. They were reconciled within the status quo. On the other hand, with the end of the Cold War and the changes in norm of deterrence, now strictly meant to deter the use of nuclear weapons, new nuclear states were seen more rapidly as revisionist. Signaling restraint

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<sup>107</sup> For a thorough analysis of why deterrence failed against Hussein see Frank P. Harvey. *Explaining the Iraq War: Counterfactual Theory, Logic and Evidence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>108</sup> Randall L. Schweller, “Bandwagoning for Profit,” *International Security* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994): 87.

<sup>109</sup> Organski and Kugler, *The War Ledger*; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

became more difficult. This explains why proliferators, after the Cold War, received the moniker of rogue state who sought to upend the current international order, as was the case with Iraq, Syria, Iran, and North Korea.<sup>110</sup>

As such, the issue of time is important. As such, the factors supporting proliferation may change or become more important. For example, the exchange of sensitive nuclear technology was not perceived the same way during the Cold War and the post-Cold War period.<sup>111</sup> There was more leeway in the former than in the latter. Allied proliferation was not seen as a particular problem at the onset of the Cold War, but it changed over time.<sup>112</sup> The accent on the norm of nonproliferation, and the threat of terrorism, has made proliferation in the post-Cold War an important issue which made it particularly difficult to signal restraint for nuclearizing states. As the practice of deterrence evolved, so did the nonproliferation choices and behavior. The next section engages with this question directly.

### **3. Explaining Nonproliferation Choices**

There are two important steps in determining U.S. nonproliferation choice. First, we need to determine the relationship between the proliferator and the United States. The closer the proliferating state is in term of identity, the less likely it is that a preventive attack plan will even be considered. The threat perception coming from a proliferating friendly state will be less acute

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<sup>110</sup> Patrick M. Cronin and Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Challenging Deterrence: Strategic Stability in the 21st Century," International Institute for Strategic Studies (2007); Therese Delpech, "Chapter One: Nuclear Weapons—Less Central, More Dangerous?" in Therese Delpech et al. eds. *Nuclear Weapons: A New Great Debate* (Paris: Institute for Security Studies Western European Union, 2011); Dennis M. Gormley, "Missile Contagion," *Survival* 50 (2008): 137-154; James M. Lindsay and Michael E. O'Hanlon. *Defending America: The Case for Limited National Missile Defense* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001).

<sup>111</sup> Schofield, *Strategic Nuclear Sharing*.

<sup>112</sup> Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*; Gavin, "Strategies of Inhibition."

than proliferation from a neutral or rival state. This does not mean an ally will not be the target of counterproliferation efforts by the United States. However, preventive attacks are generally ruled out of the nonproliferation equation. In short, if push comes to shove, the United States will assume restraint and deterrence, rather than revisionism, as the primary motives for proliferation because allies are perceived as less threatening.<sup>113</sup> Washington will accommodate discordant signals: an allied state lying regarding its proliferation or acting more recklessly will be allowed some leeway whereas a neutral state or a rival will not because the U.S. does not expect the proliferator to be a threat to its security in the future.

This argument is built on the constructivist literature on alliances and common identity. In the realist literature, alliances are formed and at times maintained to balance against revisionist states seeking to modify the distribution of relative power in the system,<sup>114</sup> and/or safeguard against threats.<sup>115</sup> These alliances may be formal or informal,<sup>116</sup> and are not expected to last long term.<sup>117</sup> On the other hand, liberal scholars have argued that alliances and the institutions built around them, are primarily designed to deal with collective action problems by providing the information about

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<sup>113</sup> For a demonstration of different level of threat perception and nuclear proliferation see Paul, *Power Versus Prudence*.

<sup>114</sup> Edward Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power: A Case History of the Theory and Practice of One of the Great Concepts of European Statecraft* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1967); Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

<sup>115</sup> Stephen M Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

<sup>116</sup> Charles Lipson, "Why Are Some International Agreements Informal?," *International Organization* 45, no. 4 (Autumn 1991): 495–538; James D. Morrow, "Alliances: Why Write Them Down?," *Annual Review of Political Science* 3, no. 1 (June 2000): 63–83; Paul, "Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy"; T. V. Paul, *Restraining Great Powers: Soft Balancing from Empires to the Global Era* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).

<sup>117</sup> Mearsheimer, for example, did not expect to see NATO survive the end of the Cold War as its utility had dissipated. See John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 1 (1990): 5.

others necessary to foster cooperation.<sup>118</sup> But alliances, through the common identity they develop, may do more.

For our purpose identity is used in “telling you who you are, identities strongly imply a particular set of interests or preferences with respect to choices of action in particular domains, and with respect to particular actors... The identity of a state implies its preferences and consequent actions. A state understands others according to the identity it attributes to them, while simultaneously reproducing its own identity through daily social practice.”<sup>119</sup> As such, states with similar identities may be able to reject material and security concerns in their relationship.<sup>120</sup> As Alexander Wendt famously wrote: “anarchy is what states make of it;” states, socialized in different ways may come to be able to discard the security dilemma and form larger and stronger communities.<sup>121</sup> NATO was able to endure because its members shared a similar identity, in this case as liberal democracies, and were able to define threats as being external to the relationship.<sup>122</sup> This became a broader security alliance where members expected peaceful interaction with each other and where war between members became unthinkable.<sup>123</sup> Patrick Morgan has argued that deterrence was the baseline, the focal point, of communal arrangements such as NATO:

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<sup>118</sup> Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005); Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser, “An Economic Theory of Alliances,” *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 48, no. 3 (August 1966): 266; Wallace J. Thies, “Alliances and Collective Goods: A Reappraisal,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 31, no. 2 (June 1987): 298–332.

<sup>119</sup> Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” *International Security* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1998): 175.

<sup>120</sup> Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security,” in Peter Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996), 33–75..

<sup>121</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 391–425.

<sup>122</sup> Thomas Risse-Kappen, “Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: the Case of NATO,” in Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*, ebook.

<sup>123</sup> Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 16–17; Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, eds., *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Both Washington and Moscow, however, sought to embed extended and collective deterrence in various alliances described as close associations based on common norms, principles, values, and objectives. The members were supposed to conduct relations in ways that departed markedly from standard international politics, resting on and promoting high levels of cooperation, integrated sacrifices, and shared information (like intelligence), all reflecting how the members had minimized fear among themselves... The goal, in deterrence, was a coherent, politically uniform bloc constituting larger total forces and displaying greater solidarity.<sup>124</sup>

One result of this arrangement was nuclear sharing between allies.<sup>125</sup> The goal was to increase the deterrent value of the alliance against the Soviet Bloc.<sup>126</sup>

In sum, threat perceptions change depending on the culture of anarchy found between states. According to Alexander Wendt, states with similar identities and similar interests will not act against each other in the same ways as states with rival identities. Actions deemed dangerous in one relationship would not necessarily be perceived as such in a different relationship. For example, friends will not automatically fall within the trap of the security dilemma when one individual gets offensive weapons.<sup>127</sup> As such, states that have a close identity will not be targeted by preventive attacks. Their proliferation could also be encouraged and helped. This type of relationship is not the focus of this dissertation but will be examined in chapter 3.

Alliances are not uniform and can vary in breadth and depth. The U.S. involvement with Israel, South Africa, and Pakistan, for example in the 1960s and 1970s, could not possibly be considered as integrated as the alliance with the UK and Canada. However, the benefits received by each members of the relationship lessen the effects of anarchy and the security dilemma. This type of alliance is what is known as a strategic partnership and is the closest to the realist definition of alliances. They are generally bounded in time, and the common identity is built on a common

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<sup>124</sup> Morgan, "The Practice of Deterrence," 164-165.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 165.

<sup>126</sup> Schofield, *Strategic Nuclear Sharing*.

<sup>127</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Chapter 6.

enemy or a common objective.<sup>128</sup> Once the objective or threat is gone, the partnership can dissolve. It is also possible for this type of alliance to become something else, like NATO for example, which at the onset was designed so the U.S. could reduce its presence in Europe. During the period of time where a state is a strategic partner, it is less likely to be targeted by a preventive strike. Proliferation by allies of this type is not necessarily going to be regarded as dangerous automatically, and plans for preventive attacks should be non-existent, or if elaborated, generally discarded rapidly as restraint is more persuasively argued and demonstrated.

In the two types of relationships above, nonproliferation is not homogeneous either. Decision-makers will have different opinions and debate the best course of actions. As such, nonproliferation measures can be applied on the proliferating ally. However, in close relationships preventive attacks are never discussed, and in strategic partnerships plans may be discussed, but are expected to be rejected.

If the state is an adversary, then preventive strikes can be contemplated and executed. From the culture of anarchy of Alexander Wendt, states in this category are in the Hobbesian culture: an acute security dilemma with worse-case decision-making.<sup>129</sup> As such, shifts in the balance of power are likely to be taken seriously. Nuclearization is seen as dangerous, and preventive attack plans can be drafted, and executed.

The decision to carry out a preventive attack is rarely a given and is a source of debate within the U.S. national security apparatus with factions in favor or against this particular policy preference. When this is the case, individuals against a preventive attack, known usually as doves,

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<sup>128</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*; Charles G. Cogan, *Forced to Choose: France, the Atlantic Alliance, and NATO -- Then and Now* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1997); Emerson M. S. Niu and Peter C. Ordeshook, "Alliances in Anarchic International Systems," *International Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (June 1994): 167.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

will highlight the reputation for restraint of the proliferating state to argue against a strike. The reputation for restraint, again, is inferred from past actions showcasing the understanding by the proliferation state that nuclear weapons should be used for deterrent, and not offensive (compellent), purposes. Hawks who believe the proliferator will use nuclear weapons in a revisionist fashion to compel will point to the balance of power, geopolitical considerations, and other problems with nuclear proliferation to make their case in favor of an attack. What this dissertation shows is that the reputation for restraint is at the heart of counterproliferation policy debates, and if its advocates are persuasive enough and win the argument, we should not see preventive strikes. It does not mean that other counterproliferation means are not going to be used. What it means is that the United States can eventually live with the proliferator as a nuclear state. The proliferating state will also work hard in order to signal their future restraint in order to avoid an attack.

The effect of the reputation for restraint in this case is, in a sense, to move the proliferating state from the Hobbesian to the Lockean culture of anarchy. In other words, demonstrating restraint leads to positive collective identification. As Alexander Wendt argued on the benefits of self-restraint: “By holding ourselves back, in short, we make it possible for others to step forward and identify with us, enabling us in turn to identify with them.” In the case of deterrence, showing restraint signals one has similar goals, in this case to manage escalation and prevent war.<sup>130</sup> In the case of deterrence, showing restraint signals one has similar goals, in this case to manage escalation, prevent war, and maintain overall stability. In other words, the proliferator is expected to abide by deterrence in the future. It is an identity marker which signals to peers 1) what they

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 359, 360.

can expect behavior wise in the future, and 2) how the proliferating actor's behavior aligns with what is understood as an identity as a responsible actor.

The flip side, therefore, is that not practicing deterrence, or being perceived as if you would not, places you in isolation of the group. States in this category then become, by definition, revisionist. If they are then labelled this way, their likelihood of being attacked preventively if they choose to nuclearize is therefore increased. In sum, the status quo versus revisionist debates do not revolve on whether or not a state nuclearizes. Instead, the nuclearization will be either perceived as status quo or revisionist depending on how the state is perceived in the system by its peers—whether they are granted this status quo status.<sup>131</sup> This can only be acquired then through continued interrelationship with other states, but also through the practice of deterrence. While shifts in power differentials matter, we should not see preventive attacks in situations where the proliferating state has been recognized by its peers, and great powers, as being restrained. This argument, in sum, substantiates the optimists by specifying the process through which deterrence affects nuclear nonproliferation choices.

This does not mean, however, that the United States will not try to stop proliferation by other means. This dissertation expects the United States to deploy a wide range of measures to curb proliferation. Alternatively, the U.S. can threaten abandonment if allies are reliant on them already for security, as the U.S. did to stop West German proliferation.<sup>132</sup> From the 1970s onward, the United States added sanctions as part of its counterproliferation arsenals through amendments to

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<sup>131</sup> For the importance of status in international relations see T.V. Paul, Deborah Larson, and William Wohlforth. *Status in International Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, "Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to U.S. Primacy," *International Security* 34, no. 4 (Spring 2010), 63-95.

<sup>132</sup> Gene Gerzhoy, "Alliance Coercion and Nuclear Restraint: How the United States Thwarted West Germany's Nuclear Ambitions," *International Security* 39, no. 4 (April 2015): 91-129.



the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Most notable are the Symington Amendment, which prohibits providing military and economic assistance to a country either seeking or exporting reprocessing or enrichment technology outside of the IAEA framework, and the Glenn Amendment, extending the Symington Amendment provisions to states sharing nuclear technology or proceeding to a nuclear test. Both are now part of a larger U.S. nonproliferation framework known as the Arms Export Control Act (AECA).<sup>133</sup>

Second, the timing of proliferation matters. As I have shown earlier, the norms, and rules, of the practice of deterrence have evolved during the Cold War. In the early Cold War, nuclear deterrence was seen as an integral part of the overall deterrent relationship of the United States with the Soviet Bloc. This understanding of deterrence made it easier for rival proliferators, including the Soviet Union and China, to signal restraint as they proliferated. Their acquisition of nuclear weapons, in a sense, was part of the larger status quo in the relationship between the two blocs.

As we moved to the mid-Cold War period, the United States become less tolerant toward proliferation, and more aggressive in its nonproliferation efforts. As such, a rival seeking to signal restraint should have a difficult time doing so, but not impossible. Moreover, allies should be able to acquire nuclear weapons, but not without cost. As proliferation was deemed problematic, from the 1970s onward nuclear proliferation became counter to U.S. preferences.<sup>134</sup> Proliferation is now judged as unfavorable along the lines proposed in the introduction, because of its effects on regional and international stability, the possibility of nuclear conflict, the compellent and

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<sup>133</sup> For more on the development of the U.S. sanction framework see Nicholas L. Miller, “The Secret Success of Nonproliferation Sanctions,” *International Organization* 68, no. 04 (2014): 913–44; Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*.

<sup>134</sup> Gavin, “Strategies of Inhibition.”

expansionist use of nuclear weapons, and a reduced ability to project force on the proliferating state, among others. Table 2.2 recaps the argument:

**Table 2.1: The Reputation for Restraint and Preventive Attacks**

|                     | <b>COLD WAR</b>   | <b>POST-COLD WAR</b>  |
|---------------------|---|---|
| <b>REPUTATION +</b> | Reduce threat level +<br>Expect Future Deterrence<br>=<br>Reduce likelihood of<br>Preventive Attack | Harder to Signal<br>Positive Collective<br>identification<br>=<br>Strong nonproliferation<br>pressure |
| <b>REPUTATION -</b> | Increase Threat Level<br>=<br>Increased likelihood of attack  | Hardest to Signal<br>=<br>Strong Likelihood of Attack   |

The end of the Cold War was an important shift of paradigm when it came to war and nuclear weapons.<sup>135</sup> With the end of the Cold War, nuclear deterrence became understood as a way to deter the use of nuclear weapons, and nuclear weapons only. They became the backbone of general deterrence. As this shift began to operate the United States became more willing to reduce its arsenal. As such, it is now difficult for proliferators to signal restraint as their nuclear ambitions become public. Since nuclear weapons now only serve to deter nuclear weapons, proliferation becomes strictly revisionist in nature. They are meant to change the status quo. The United States is expected to assume that new nuclear states will seek to compel it to adjust its foreign policies, and that they will directly threaten its security interests.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Morgan, “The Practice of Deterrence.”; Michel Fortmann and David G. Haglund, “of Ghosts and Other Spectres: The Cold War’s Ending and the Question of the next ‘Hegemonic Conflict,’” *Cold War History* 14, no. 4 (2014): 515-532.

<sup>136</sup> In this dissertation I remained agnostic about the reasons leading to this qualitative change in the practice of deterrence. However, we could talk of two competing explanations to account for this shift. The first is a normative

## **The Issue of Time**

The importance of time in the development of U.S. counterproliferation measures has to be noted. Cases of proliferation do not occur in isolation of each other. The U.S. experience with the Soviet Union influenced its response to China, which influenced its response to Israel, India and Pakistan, which in turn informed its later strategy against Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. The development of the sanction infrastructure is perhaps the best example. As such, while the United States has many counterproliferation tools at its disposition, it may not use all of them in every case. The effectiveness and choice of instrument has become dependent on the circumstances. Positive inducement was favored in the Pakistani case. Providing the same arms transfer to China simply would not make sense. I expect to see means which have been deemed efficient to be used in later cases and means deemed less efficient to be discarded.

## **The Issue of Timing**

There are four broad phases of nuclear proliferation. The first is the initial phase, where a state seeking nuclear weapons will either develop or seek the appropriate technology to enrich or

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effect. The NPT, the nuclear taboo, and the tradition of non-use of nuclear weapons all worked together to delegitimize the acquisition of nuclear weapons, which had an impact on how the U.S. viewed nuclear deterrence and the diffusion of nuclear weapons. The more delegitimized nuclear weapons became, the more rigorous the nonproliferation policies used by the United States at the end of the Cold War. The second is a shift in material capabilities by the United States. The end of the Cold War marked the conventional superiority of the United States. No other states could realistically compete with the U.S. on a conventional scale. As such, the equalizing qualities of nuclear weapons became more salient. As such, Washington became more assertive with its nonproliferation policies as a way to maintain its conventional superiority, and as a way to decrease the coercive power of adversarial states. On nuclear norms see Maria Rost Rublee and Avner Cohen, "Nuclear Norms in Global Governance: A Progressive Research Agenda," *Contemporary Security Policy* 39, no. 3 (July 3, 2018): 317–40; Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); T. V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); On the conventional military balance and the superiority of the United States see G. John Ikenberry, Michael Mastanduno, and William C. Wohlforth, "Unipolarity, State Behavior, and Systemic Consequences," *World Politics* 61, no. 01 (January 2009): 1–27; Paul "Great Equalizers."

reprocess uranium or plutonium. Delivery programs, including ballistic missile programs, generally co-exist at this stage. The second phase is what I call the partial phase where a state breaks the 20% ceiling on enriching uranium and is closing in on assembling a fully functional design. The third phase is commonly referred to as the breakout phase, where a state has all the required material to build a nuclear device in a short time span. These nuclear latent states may or may not decide to assemble a bomb.<sup>137</sup> The fourth stage is the nuclear test stage where a state detonates its device and signals to the international community that it is now a nuclear power.

From the argument presented above, we can derive the following observable propositions for the case studies:

1. Proliferating states who are close to the United States will not be targets of preventive attacks as they nuclearize. In certain circumstances their proliferation could also be deemed favorable and helped. Discordant signals when it comes to the reputation for restraint will generally be discarded.
2. States in a strategic partnership with the United States shall not be the target of a preventive strike. Plans might be elaborated but discarded because they go counter to other objectives. Discordant signals of restraint may be ignored due to other objectives. This does not mean, however, that the proliferating state will not be the target of counterproliferation including sanctions, threat of abandonment, or positive inducement such as arms transfers.
3. Adversarial states are more likely to be the target of preventive plans. Decisions to attack, however, are not expected to be homogeneous. If advocates of means other than a preventive strike persuasively argue that the proliferating state has been restrained in the past, a preventive attack should not occur.
4. Preventive strikes against a proliferating state should be carried out before a nuclear device is assembled. In the period prior to latency we would expect to see significant nonproliferation efforts deployed by the United States.
5. Signaling, and advocating for, the reputation for restraint should be easier during the Cold War and in the post-Cold War period. As nuclear deterrence becomes, in the post-Cold War, strictly meant to deter nuclear weapons, proliferation becomes increasingly seen as revisionist *a priori*. As such, signaling restraint should be harder.

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<sup>137</sup> Matthew Fuhrmann and Benjamin Tkach, "Almost Nuclear: Introducing the Nuclear Latency Dataset," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 32, no. 4 (September 2015): 443–61.

## 4. Research Design

### *Scope Conditions and clarification*

It is important to note what this dissertation does and does not do. First, this is not a theory-testing type of work. I'm not arguing against alternative explanations to demonstrate my causal mechanisms are more accurate than others. Counterproliferation debates are messy and there is rarely only one explanation or argument which carries the day. Shifts in the balance of power and their meaning for geopolitics, whether the proliferator is an ally or a rival, the actual cost of war versus the benefits of performing a preventive attack are all, at one time or another during a counterproliferation crisis, are all relevant in determining nonproliferation strategies and policies. However, I do argue that the reputation for restraint is an important component of the decision by the United States to use the diplomatic processes for counterproliferation instead of force. It is a variable that has been ignored in the nonproliferation literature. If policy-makers averse to the use of force successfully argue that restraint has previously been shown, and that the proliferator has status quo inclinations, plans for preventive attacks are generally shelved. In sum, this dissertation aims to bring to the fore the presence, importance, and effect of the reputation for restraint.

Second, the argument proposed in this dissertation has feasibility as its scope condition, where scope means "a claim about causal homogeneity—i.e., about the domain in which causal effects can be expected to be stable."<sup>138</sup> While preventive attacks are not like preventive wars—we are speaking of hours for an attack and not days, months, or years—in order for the argument presented above to work it needs first to be demonstrated that the state had the means to attack.

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<sup>138</sup> Gary Goertz and James Mahoney. *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 206

The feasibility will be measured as whether decision-makers in charge of planning the attack perceive that they have the means to do so, whether it is objectively accurate or not. Only cases where feasibility is established are part of the sample of this study.

Third, this study is limited to cases where the potential attacker was already a nuclear power. This scope is selected due to the primary effect posited in the theory: expectation of future deterrence to hold. In cases where the attacker is not a nuclear power, it can more easily be argued that strikes are the result of a shift in the balance of power, especially between states involved in a rivalry.

Finally, this dissertation will be limited to the non-proliferation efforts of the United States, and by definition, of its acceptance or not of the new nuclear power. This is mostly due to the available data for the case studies. The data used for this study are archival in nature, i.e. declassified documents detailing foreign policy choices, debates, and discussions. I use those documents because it provides the most accurate assessments of the nuclearization of another state. While some documents have been redacted, it remains the most accurate source of evidence when it comes to perceptions and assessment of the past actions of another. Unfortunately, no other country makes available as much material as the United States. As such, the focus of the dissertation will be from the perspective of the United States. Moreover, as they are, and were, the hegemon throughout the case studies, they had the means to engage in preventive attacks, and have undoubtedly been the most active state when it comes to non-proliferation during the Cold War,<sup>139</sup> hence the focus is justified.

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<sup>139</sup> Gavin, "Strategies of Inhibition."

We can still, however, generalize from the case of the United States. First, we can expect great powers who are democracies to have similar debates when it comes to national security decisions due to their administrative structures. Moreover, we can expect other great powers who can project power to be careful as to whom they allow within the deterrence community.<sup>140</sup> The Soviet Union engaged in strong nonproliferation efforts against states in its sphere of influence.<sup>141</sup> Moreover, there is indication the 1967 War was part of a strategy by Moscow to preventively attack Israeli nuclear facilities. Moreover, the Politburo was known to be in disagreement over foreign policy choices.<sup>142</sup> As such, the nonproliferation choices of the U.S. could be generalized to other great powers due to their position in the system, and their threat perception. There are some particularities to the U.S. case, however. As the hegemon, it is less constrained in its foreign policy choices than smaller powers.<sup>143</sup> Moreover, it can count on an array of allies to help. As such, I do not expect smaller states to behave in a similar fashion: defer to deterrence when in doubt. Israel is a good example here. It has attacked most of the proliferator in its region because it feared for its security and would not take any chances.

### **Case Selection**

The object of study for this dissertation is the deliberative process within the United States when it comes time to develop nonproliferation strategies. Specifically, I focus on the debates and struggles surrounding the decision to draft preventive attack plans as part of the U.S. counterproliferation strategy, and the decision to launch them. In other words, I focus on the

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<sup>140</sup> Kroenig, "Force or Friendship?"

<sup>141</sup> William C. Potter, "The Soviet Union and Nuclear Proliferation," *Slavic Review* 44, no. 03 (1985): 468–885.

<sup>142</sup> Matthew Evangelista, *Innovation and the Arms Race: How the United States and the Soviet Union Develop New Military Technologies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

<sup>143</sup> For a dissenting view on the possibility of global hegemony see John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014).

deliberation of U.S. decision-makers and the evidence and arguments they use to justify their preferred policy outcomes.

According to the theoretical framework presented here, I propose several mechanisms which explain U.S. nonproliferation choices, all of which are open to deliberation internally. As such, I approach all three long case studies of this dissertation through process tracing to ascertain whether the reputation for restraint I propose here is used by decision-makers in the proposed way. I use process tracing to be able to demonstrate the particularities of each case, and the ways in which opponents of preventive attacks have used it. The goal is to provide an in-depth analysis of the case at hand, while being able to generalize from the findings.<sup>144</sup> As such, I use process tracing to demonstrate the process used by American decision-makers while deciding whether or not to preventively attack a proliferating state. This is for the purpose of showing whether the mechanism I propose, the debate between hawks and doves over the proliferators past history of revisionism and restraint, occurs in the cases.<sup>145</sup>

The case studies are to be used in specific, but not mutually exclusive, fashions. First, I proceed through within-case analysis to assess the use and effect of the reputation for restraint in different cases and in different time periods. This method helps show context and effects within cases and allow them to stand on their own.<sup>146</sup> In order to determine some generalizable content across cases, I have added more than one case to the dissertation in what is called a structured and focused comparison. The method of structured comparison makes it possible to make “systematic

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<sup>144</sup> Vincent Pouliot, “Practice Tracing,” in Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, eds., *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 237.

<sup>145</sup> Jeffrey T. Checkel, “Mechanisms, Process, and the Study of International Institutions,” in Bennet and Checkel, *Process Tracing*, 77.

<sup>146</sup> Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2005).



comparison and cumulation of the findings of the cases” due to the same questions being asked of all cases.<sup>147</sup> This way it is possible to determine which factors are strictly related to one case, and which one can travel to others.

In other to demonstrate most of the observable implications of this study, I have included a plausibility probe of the various time periods in which proliferation took place, as well as the relationship with the United States. The plausibility probe shows variance on all aspects of the theory presented here. On the relationship scale, there are cases of closeness to the U.S (U.K), strategic partnerships (Israel), as well as adversarial relationships (Soviet Union, Iran, Iraq). Iran is of particular interest as it varies in types of relationship over time, from strategic partner to adversary. Second, the cases also vary in time period. The UK, France, Israel, the Soviet Union, and Iran all proliferated during the Cold War. While Iraq did proliferate during the Cold War, its program was attacked by Israel and restarted with the end of the Cold War. It is also during this period that the United States sought preventive action against it. Iran provides an interesting case as it continued proliferation in two different time periods, which makes it possible to demonstrate the importance of time and history. Finally, I did not add cases of proliferation by friends who did not come close to becoming nuclear. There has been strong scholarship in recent years dedicated to this subject and they all support the assertion made here: despite strong counterproliferation efforts, preventive attacks were not considered because of their relationship to the U.S.<sup>148</sup> This plausibility probe provides enough variation in outcome, context, and use of the reputation for restraint to demonstrate at least the generalizable observations of this study.

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid; Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, “Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices,” *Process Tracing*, 13-14.

<sup>148</sup> Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*; Gavin, “Strategies of Inhibition”; Gerzhoy, “Alliance Coercion and Nuclear Restraint.”

**Table 2.2: Case Selection**

| <b>Power Differential</b> | <b>Allies</b> | <b>Strategic Partners</b> | <b>Adversaries</b>                     |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|--|
| Power Parity              |               |                           | Soviet Union                           |
| Asymmetry                 | UK            | Israel<br>Pakistan*       | China*<br>Iraq<br>Iran<br>North Korea* |

Note: \*In-depth case study

Table 2.3 contains all the cases assessed in this dissertation. The cases I have chosen for the in-depth analysis are: the Chinese development of nuclear weapons from the end of the Sino-Soviet entente in 1959 until the detonation of their first device in 1964. The second case is the nuclearization of Pakistan from 1976 until the acquisition of a nuclear device in 1985. The third case is the nuclearization of North Korea from 1982 to the detonation of its first device in 2006. Of note, I have chosen not to include the 2003 invasion of Iraq and Iran as long form cases. They are important cases, but there is little archival material available at the moment for the time period in which preventive attacks were debated, and in the case of Iraq, executed. As I discuss below, archival material is a corpus of private discussions between U.S. decision-makers. While it is dedicated to an audience: the administration under which it is produced, it is not designed for public consumption. The issue with public material is that the audience changes, and as such it is difficult to determine what the statement is actually designed to do.

The in-depth case studies have been chosen to provide the hardest possible test of the theory. First, with some caveats, democracies do not wage war against each other.<sup>149</sup> As such, the

<sup>149</sup> On the democratic peace thesis see Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace*; Oneal and Russett, *Triangulating Peace*. For the counter-argument to the infallibility of the thesis, see Christopher Layne, "Kant or Cant: The Myth

nuclear ascendancy of France and the UK would have constituted an easy test: the United States had no plans of attacks. For this dissertation, I have chosen cases where 1) the proliferator was not a democracy, or was not a democracy for an important portion of their nuclearization period, 2) cases where Washington was, at the onset, strongly opposed to the nuclearization, 3) cases where the Americans had a superior power ratio to the proliferator, meaning they would have the means to perform the attack. While the power ratios between China, Pakistan, and North Korea are drastically different, their power ratio with the United States remain large. This is also why the Soviet Union is not part of the long-form analysis. And 4) the cases of preventive attack planning in peacetime. The latter is done in order to remove the possibility of an attack of opportunity.<sup>150</sup> Despite signs of restraint from the proliferator, if both states are engaged in warfare it is entirely possible they would seize on the opportunity to reduce the capabilities of their adversary at a lower cost. Moreover, in all three cases, I gathered evidence from the moment the United States had clear indications that a nuclear weapon was in development and testing became a possibility. The empirical gathering was stopped either at the detonation of the device or when Washington was certain the state had a workable nuclear device. This is because I assume at this point the cost of a preventive attack would be too high to be believable.

### *Data Collection*

For the most part, this dissertation will use declassified archival material. The use of these primary sources provides perhaps the best insights into the discussions surrounding the events under study here. While interviews would be useful, they would certainly contain some form of bias, the least being the bias of the individuals having taken part in the event. While archival

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of the Democratic Peace,” *International Security* 19, no. 2 (1994): 5–49; Sebastian Rosato, “The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory,” *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 04 (November 2003): 585–602.

<sup>150</sup> For examples of preventive attack on nuclear program during conflict see Fuhrmann and Kreps, “Targeting Nuclear Programs in War and Peace.”

documents introduce bias of their own, the discussions are after all taking place between senior officials in various American administrations and can be reported in ways reflecting well at the time on the administration, it is nonetheless the most unaltered type of document available. It is, I believe, acceptable in this context where what is of interest is the decision-making process of individuals in Washington. Secondary sources are used sparingly and avoided if possible, the main problem with them being the introduction of an interpretative bias from the researchers having analyzed them.<sup>151</sup> The archival data used here comes principally from the Office of the Presidential Historian, or FRUS, the National Security Archives, the State Department, as well as the Central Intelligence Agency.

### **Data Analysis and Operationalization**

The main variable in the creation of a reputation for restraint is the competent use of deterrence. As mentioned earlier, there are two types of interest here: crisis deterrence and general deterrence. The crisis deterrence category measures how restrained the would-be proliferator is in conflict, and by proxy how it can be expected to behave once it possesses nuclear weapons. Part of the operationalization process for this study is whether the proliferator has signaled restraint and whether these signals were observed by the United States. Restraint in this case can come in various forms. It can be the recognition by the state receiving the deterrent threat that punishment would be too great, which leads to the decision to back down. This was the case, for example, in the Taiwan Straits crisis for the Chinese. In sum, it is the admission of defeat. Another would be how forceful the state making the threat is. If the threat was to back down from an objective, and the recipient of the threat did as asked, it would be counted as an instance of restraint if the state

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<sup>151</sup> Ian S. Lustick, "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias," *American Political Science Review* 90, 3 (1996): 605-618.

making the threat does not take predatory measures to make additional gains. Additionally, actions which could lead to a crisis but were not performed, will serve as indicators of restraint as well. For example, the state of Israel never formally tested its nuclear weapons, knowing that doing so would have led to a crisis with its neighbors which could have escalated. By doing this, they showed restraint. Of note: the perception of the United States in this case is more important than the actual occurrence. If the U.S. perceived restraint through crisis bargaining, despite some uncertainty, it will still be regarded as an instance of restraint.

The competent use of general deterrence can be divided into three variables: non-aggressive or expansionist postures, adherence to arms control and disarmament measures, and an understanding of deterrence. This category measures, mostly as a proxy, the adherence to war prevention mechanisms from the would-be nuclear power. For non-aggressive or expansionist postures, there exist a variety of indicators. First, this can be shown through a reduction in the amount of the threat of the use of force, or the actual the use of force, that a state has engaged in. Second, the development of weapon systems that are defensive in nature, as well as a military posture that is recognized as defensive, demonstrate restraint. The differentiation between offensive and defensive capabilities, as well as their inferred military posture, has been argued by Robert Jervis as difficult to signal, but also as the best way to reduce the security dilemma if properly done.<sup>152</sup>

The second category, adherence to arms control and disarmament mechanisms, are all instances either where 1) the proliferating state has proposed disarmament measures to reduce the instability of the nuclearization process, either in its proximate region,<sup>153</sup> or in the larger

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<sup>152</sup> Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma."

<sup>153</sup> For the importance of regionality in security studies see. T.V. Paul. *International Relations Theory and Regional Transformations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

international context. This, again, measures the acceptance of war prevention as an important aspect of international life from the would-be nuclear power, as arms control measures are known to be an important aspect of it.<sup>154</sup> Of note: I do not count denuclearization proposals as part of this variable. State like China and North Korea, for example, who had expressed a clear desire for nuclear deterrence but would not willingly bind themselves in which a way. However, there is a problem once a state agrees to some form of arms control and disarmament measures, and then systematically goes against its commitment. This, in turn, goes counter to a restraint signal and can be perceived as a sign of future recklessness.

Finally, the proliferator's understanding of the concept of deterrence is more difficult to operationalize. The closest way is to look for instances where the mechanisms of deterrence are referenced, such as rationality, power ratios, and communication. As such, instances where the U.S. would reference that the proliferator's understanding of the power asymmetry between the two to justify future deterrence success would count as an observation. They may or may not reference past actions in making this assessment as it is often judged as self-evident.

For the outcome of preventive attack plans and their execution to be explained, the operationalization is simple. Plans are deemed to have been taken seriously if 1) discussions are found arguing that it is feasible, and 2) possible means of engagement are discussed. The actual act of preventive attack is operationalized as a small-scale military strike, usually through air capabilities, against nuclear facilities.

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<sup>154</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, "The Past and Future of Arms Control."

## **Chapter 3**

### **From the Cold War to the Post-Cold War Period -- Evaluating U.S. Nonproliferation Choices**

This chapter is designed as a probability probe of the argument proposed by this dissertation. Chapter 4, 5, and 6 will provide in depth case studies, but casting a wider net will help demonstrate the mechanisms of the theory. This chapter is divided in two parts. The first will look at nuclear proliferation during the Cold War by rivals and allies alike to show the difference in U.S. policy choices between the two. In this section, I discuss the cases of the Soviet Union, the UK, France, and Israel. I will show how the U.S. did not treat adversaries and friends alike during the Cold War. The Soviet Union case is important as it showcases the development of nuclear deterrence between the two. While restraint had little to do with the decision not to attack, the U.S. simply did not know Russia was on the brink of becoming nuclear, it did play a part in the aftermath and the decision not to attack Moscow in the early 1950s. The second section will engage with two cases of proliferation in the post-Cold War: Iran and Iraq. In fact, Iran is selected because it shows the variation in behavior by the United States as Tehran moved from being a strategic ally to an adversary. The case of Iraq is used to show U.S. behavior when a state develops a negative reputation, a reputation for recklessness. In sum, I seek to show as much of the empirical observations of my argument as possible.

#### **1. The Cold War**

##### **Adversarial Proliferation – The Soviet Union and the Onset of Nuclear Deterrence**

Following the end of WWII, the Soviet Union emerged as the principal rival to the United States. As Major Gian P. Gentile argued, American decision-makers thought future wars would necessarily include the use of nuclear weapons. As such, plans had to be made to minimize damage

against the United States and increase the odds of victory. To that end, the United States devised three war plans during the 1940s, codenamed respectively Princer, Broiler, and Crankshaft.<sup>1</sup> According to Gentile: “the key concept in war plans and studies at this time was a quick, devastating strategic air attack, relying heavily on atomic bombs, to destroy industrial infrastructure.”<sup>2</sup> In sum, while the United States made plans for preventive war against the Soviet Union, it did not directly plan a preventive strike against its nascent nuclear facilities and installations.

This can in part be explained by the inaccurate intelligence the U.S. had on a future Soviet test. By the late 1940s Washington was cognizant of Moscow’s nuclear program, but they had estimated the “most probable date...to be mid-1953.” They also estimated the size of the Soviets arsenal by the mid-1950s to be between 20 and 50 bombs.<sup>3</sup> This assessment would be revised in the summer of 1949, with a mid-1951 assessment if the Soviets decided to streamline the process and “[attempted] an atomic bomb by one method only (method not indicated).”<sup>4</sup> Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, director of the CIA, had stated to President Truman: “it continues to be impossible to determine the exact status of or to determine the date scheduled by the Soviets for the completion of their first atomic bomb.”<sup>5</sup> The Soviet Union would go on and perform a nuclear test at the end of August 1949, taking the United States by surprise. President Truman would formally announce the detonation on September 23, 1949, assorted of a message to develop, “truly effective

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<sup>1</sup> Gian P. Gentile, “Planning for Preventive War, 1945–1950,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 24 (Spring 2000): 68-70; T. V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, 2009), 41.

<sup>2</sup> Gentile, “Planning for Preventive War,” 70.

<sup>3</sup> Director of Central Intelligence R.H. Hillenkoetter, memorandum to the President, “Estimate of the Status of the Russian Atomic Energy Project,” 6 July 1948 in “U.S. Intelligence and the Detection of the First Soviet Nuclear Test, September 1949,” NSA EBB 286, doc 3.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Air Force, Executive Directorate of Intelligence, “Estimate of Soviet Capabilities in the Field of Atomic Energy,” 13 July 1949, NSA EBB 286, doc 4.

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Jeffrey Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb: American Nuclear Intelligence from Nazi Germany to Iran and North Korea*, Reprint edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), ebook.



enforceable international control of atomic energy.”<sup>6</sup> Secretary of State Dean Acheson would qualify the statement and argue that the control of nuclear energy was part of the broader American foreign policy to ensure the “preservation of peace.”<sup>7</sup>

In their initial assessment of Soviet behavior with the bomb, the U.S. Air Force Director of Intelligence General S.E. Anderson highlights the ways in which Moscow could use its newfound nuclear capability in conflict. First, the report states that the Soviets could “bomb any target in the United States and Canada” as well as “deliver the atomic bombs to any base area employed by the allies in their war efforts.”<sup>8</sup> Second, it discusses how Moscow could use nuclear weapons to force London out of the Korean War and “expend the bulk of their capabilities in one-way attack against Urban, industrial, and governmental centers in the United States.”<sup>9</sup> Importantly, the report features a proto-discussion of nuclear restraint. Anderson states that, at least as long as Washington maintains nuclear superiority, “the prime objective of the Soviets probably will be to prevent the delivery of the U.S. atomic offensive.”<sup>10</sup> While the document remains focused on what Moscow could do during the Korean war with more weapons, namely being able to target more U.S. sites and remove the UK from the war calculations, it does offer some stipulation that the Soviet Union does understand deterrence, and will use its capability to deter the use of nuclear weapons against itself.

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<sup>6</sup> Statement by President Truman in Response to First Soviet Nuclear Test,” September 23, 1949, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Department of State Bulletin, Vol. XXI, No. 533, October 3, 1949. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134436>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> General S. E. Anderson, Director, Plans and Operations, memo to Director of Intelligence, "Implications of Soviet Atomic Explosion," 5 October 1949, attached to memorandum from General C. P. Cabell, U.S. Air Force Director of Intelligence to Director Plans and Operations, "Implication of Soviet Atomic Explosion," 6 October 1949. NSA EBB 286, doc 10.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

A later CIA report delivered in June 1950 delves in more details on the potential intentions of the Soviet Union now that they had developed a nuclear capability. It is important to note that the report is very clear as to the uncertainty of the situation and how difficult it was to assert Soviets intentions. However, throughout the report it is stated that the Soviet Union had been mostly restrained in the past when it came to military conquest and expansion, but that they had also been opportunistic as well. As such, if given the chance, the memo does not rule out Soviet aggression, but does not take it as a given either. However, the memo does emphasize Washington's dearth of information when it comes to Soviets motivations. As such, the use of military force should not be automatically believed to be in favor of Soviets interests. Of note is several mentions of the importance, for the Soviets leadership, of a proper balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union "and the security of the USSR therein." While the report believes the overarching objective of Moscow is communist world domination, "there would appear to be no firm basis for an assumption that the USSR presently intends deliberately to use military force" in pursuing this objective. Even if it did gain superiority, the report argues the Soviets would not resort to war to obtain their objective. They may, however, use lower intensity conflict.<sup>11</sup>

Directly on the subject of nuclear weapons, the same CIA report states "it is not yet possible to estimate with any precision the effects of the Soviets possession of the atomic bomb upon the probability of war." However, the report mentions they had not noticed any doctrinal changes from Moscow. At this point they are left assuming "in this way it may [the Soviet Union] hope to create sufficient public pressure on the West to neutralize the US bomb" and "create conditions which might [unreadable] to the ability of the United States to wage offensive war."<sup>12</sup> As such, while the

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<sup>11</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Estimate of the Effects of The Soviet Possession of the Atomic Bomb upon the SE," June 4, 1950. <http://www.fqs.org/cia/docs/129/0000258849/ESTIMATE-OF-THE-EFFECTS-OF-THE-SOVIET-POSSESSION-OF-THE-ATOMIC-BOMB-UPON-THE-SE.html> (assessed September 28, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

U.S. did not fully reject possible aggressive and revisionist tendencies, there are some indications, among other things, that the United States expected Moscow to be restrained and to abide by deterrence principles moving forward as long as the opportunity to make significant gains did not arise.

By 1951, however, the decision to use deterrence as the primary way to maintain the security of the Soviet Union and the United States has mostly been agreed upon, as both sides believed they could not win a war with the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>13</sup> According to David Holloway: “The great success of Stalin’s military policy was that it helped persuade the United States that the atomic air offensive would not be decisive, and that war with the Soviet Union would be prolonged and difficult.” As Holloway argues, Stalin wanted to be able to use the threat of a nuclear attack against the United States, same as the U.S. had over Moscow.<sup>14</sup> Previous military accomplishments by Stalin had led both the U.S. and the Soviet Union to consider alternative means of defense: deterrence.

Additionally, there is indication the focus on deterrence to ensure the security of both the United States and the Soviet Union was in part due to the aversion to preventive war of the Truman administration. T.V. Paul and Scott Silverstone have also demonstrated the importance of normative constraints on President Truman leading him to reject preventive war as a strategy against the Soviet Union. In the National Security Council report 68, the writers stipulate “[A] surprise attack upon the Soviet Union, despite the provocations of recent Soviet behavior, would be *repugnant* to many Americans...Many would doubt that it was a “just war” and that all

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<sup>13</sup> David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 240.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 251.

reasonable possibilities for a peaceful settlement had been explored in good faith.” As such, the United States had “*no choice* but to...attempt to change the world situation by means short of war.”<sup>15</sup> While future restraint had an important role to be, it interacted with normative constraints the U.S. leadership had imposed on itself, thus leading to the practice of deterrence we witnessed during the Cold War.

### **Allied Proliferation – The United Kingdom and U.S. Nonproliferation**

Sharing was at first prohibited under the McMahon act between 1946 and 1957.<sup>16</sup> The goal was “to maintain and improve the US atomic monopoly, and after 1949 the alleged US nuclear superiority,” a policy contested by the military as it reduced the flexibility of U.S. nuclear strategy.<sup>17</sup> Laws were made less stringent over time, but the overt sharing of technical data remained unauthorized.<sup>18</sup> The objective, at the onset, was to maintain U.S. superiority.<sup>19</sup> However, President Eisenhower sought to reduce the U.S. defensive presence in Europe while maintaining a strong deterrent against Moscow. To do this, he began a strategy of stationing large numbers of tactical weapons in Europe with shared control with NATO members.<sup>20</sup> These weapons were

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<sup>15</sup> T.V. Paul and Scott Silverstone have also demonstrated the importance of normative constraints on President Truman leading him to reject preventive war has a strategy against the Soviet Union. In the National Security Council report 68, the writers stipulate “[A] surprise attack upon the Soviet Union, despite the provocations of recent Soviet behavior, would be *repugnant* to many Americans...Many would doubt that it was a “just war” and that all reasonable possibilities for a peaceful settlement had been explored in good faith.” As such, the United States had “*no choice* but to...attempt to change the world situation by means short of war.” “A Report to the National Security Council – NSC 68,” April 12, 1950. President’s Secretary’s File, Truman Papers. Cited in Scott Silverstone, *Preventive War and American Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 70; See also Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons*, 44.

<sup>16</sup> Wayne Reynolds “Rethinking the Joint Project: Australia’s Bid for Nuclear Weapons, 1945-1960” *The Historical Journal* 41 (1998): 860.

<sup>17</sup> H. L. Nieburg, “The Eisenhower AEC and Congress: A Study in Executive-Legislative Relations” *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 6 (1962): 116, 125.

<sup>18</sup> Larry M. Loeb “Jupiter Missiles in Europe: A Measure of Presidential Power” *World Affairs* 139 (1976): 30.

<sup>19</sup> Nieburg, “The Eisenhower AEC,” 131

<sup>20</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1991), 186; Paul M. Pitman, “A General Named Eisenhower: Atlantic Crisis and the Origins of the Europeans Economic Community,” in Marc Trachtenberg ed. *Between Empire and Alliance: American and Europe during the Cold War* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003) 43.

provided under a dual-key system where they could only be launched when U.S. officers were present.<sup>21</sup> While Eisenhower and Secretary of Defense Dulles had been in favor of more liberal sharing, Congress wanted the weapons to remain in U.S. hands.<sup>22</sup> In theory, nuclear sharing of the sort was meant to reduce incentives for independent programs.<sup>23</sup> The overall goal, however, was strengthening deterrence against the Soviet Union.<sup>24</sup> Reality on the ground, however, was different.

The launch of Sputnik in 1957 changed the game. The U.S. became much more open to help allies directly and allow for independent nuclear capabilities.<sup>25</sup> Reynolds stated, “Britain’s success in developing deterrent weapons in 1956 and 1957, along with the dramatic successes of the Soviet Union in rocketry and thermonuclear weapons, paved the way for a renewal of Anglo-American atomic relations.”<sup>26</sup> In 1954 the U.S. began performing joint nuclear tests with Britain.<sup>27</sup> In 1958 the U.S. transferred Thor missiles to the UK to be under dual-key control. In 1960, the U.S. provided Britain with nuclear warheads parts and the U.S. enriched uranium was exchanged for British plutonium.<sup>28</sup> While some of these measures were done under dual key, in 1960 the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (JCAE) found that the arrangement was a “travesty” of the idea of American custody, and even found multiple instances where British officers had possession of

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<sup>21</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace. The Making of the European Settlement 1945-1963*, (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1999), 193-195.

<sup>22</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace* 196-197.

<sup>23</sup> Schofield, *Strategic Nuclear Sharing*.

<sup>24</sup> Mark Berhow *US Strategic and Defensive Missile Systems 1950-2004* (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2005) 12; Martin A. Smith, “British Nuclear Weapons and NATO in the Cold War and Beyond,” *International Affairs* 87 (2011): 1388.

<sup>25</sup> Lorna Arnold, *Britain and the H-Bomb*, (New York, Springer 2001), 7, 38.

<sup>26</sup> Wayne M. Reynolds, “Whatever Happened to the Fourth British Empire? The Cold War, Empire Defence and the USA, 1943-1957,” in M. Hopkins, M. Kandiah, and G. Staerck, eds., *Cold War Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 138.

<sup>27</sup> Arnold, *Britain and the H-Bomb* 195-196

<sup>28</sup> Robert S. Norris, Andrew S. Burrows, Richard W. Fieldhouse. *Nuclear Weapons Databook volume V, British, French, and Chinese Nuclear Weapons* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994) 50

both keys that permitted the launch of the weapons.<sup>29</sup> This was all part of the special relationship, the Anglo-American” axis that saw the UK receives more nuclear technology than any other ally.<sup>30</sup> Many have argued within the American administration at the time that the sharing of nuclear technology with Britain was one more way to reassert to the British that they had a special relationship.<sup>31</sup> In fact, Eisenhower trusted the British to such an extent that he was dismayed by the fact that the U.S. had not provided nuclear weapons to the UK sooner.<sup>32</sup> Despite the Cuban Missile Crisis and the desire by the Kennedy administration to reduce proliferation, Washington continued to provide sensitive material to London, with a total of 400 warheads.<sup>33</sup> During this period, despite some earlier concern contained in the Baruch plans as to allied proliferation, the United States welcomed the UK within its deterrent community.

### **Strategic Partner – Israel and the Nixon-Meir Compromise**

#### *Kennedy and the Israeli Nuclear Program*

The decision by Israel to acquire a nuclear weapon was not well received initially in Washington. Israel initially used the know-how it received from the Atoms for Peace program to develop better technology; technology which could be used for nuclear weapons.<sup>34</sup> The U.S. would discover the existence of the Dimona reactor in 1960.<sup>35</sup> President Kennedy, who assumed the presidency in 1961, immediately saw issues with the implications of a nuclear Israel and sought to

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<sup>29</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace* 193-195.

<sup>30</sup> Pierre Chao and Robin Niblett, “Trusted Partners: Sharing Technology Within the U.S.-UK Security Relationship,” *CSIS* (2006): 9-10.

<sup>31</sup> Schofield, *Strategic Nuclear Sharing*.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph Cirincione, *Deadly Arsenals*, (Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), 173

<sup>34</sup> Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*, 45-47.

<sup>35</sup> The National Security Archives, “The U.S. Discovery of Israel’s Secret Nuclear Project,” briefing Book #510, 15 April 2015, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb510/>

have it inspected to make sure it was not designed for a nuclear weapons program.<sup>36</sup> Avraham Harman, who was the Israeli ambassador to the U.S. at the time, had made it clear to McGeorge Bundy, who was President Kennedy's National Security Advisor, that the recent development in the Middle East was worrying to Israel: "there are important elements for anxiety in the Middle East, in general, and specifically for Israel." Specifically, Harman pointed to the rearmament of Egypt, supported by the Soviet Union, which had picked up pace in 1955, and that it feared conflict with Egypt and its allies in the near future.<sup>37</sup> Although not stated directly, this was in part the justification for the Israel program.

Prime Minister Ben-Gurion was not enthused with the prospect of a U.S. inspection and sought to avoid it, delaying the Americans as much as possible.<sup>38</sup> Israel would finally accept but sought to keep the nuclear installations, and the visit from the Americans, a secret.<sup>39</sup> The visit to the Dimona reactor would take place in mid-May 1961. The scientists who visited the reactor, U.M. Staeber and J.W. Croach Jr. would report that the reactor seemed to be purposed for civilian use only.<sup>40</sup>

President Kennedy would later meet with Prime Minister Ben-Gurion on May 30, 1961, in Vienna. In a memorandum of the conversation, Kennedy states that Israel is an important partner of the U.S.: "We are much involved with you in the Middle East" and that "we are close friends."

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<sup>36</sup> Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs to Secretary of State, "President's Suggestion re Israeli Reactor, 2 February 1961, Secret. NSA EBB 547, doc 2A"; Memorandum of Conversation, "Inspection of Israel's New Atomic Reactor," 13 February 1961, Secret. NSA EBB 547 doc 2D.

<sup>37</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, "Israel's Security and Other Problems," 16 February 1961. NSA EBB 547 doc 2E.

<sup>38</sup> Memorandum from Secretary Rusk to President Kennedy, "Dimona Reactor in Israel," 30 March 1961, with "History of United States Interest in Israel's Atomic Energy Activities," attached. NSA EBB 547 doc 3F, 3A-E.

<sup>39</sup> "U.S. Visit to Dimona Reactor Site," 10 April 1961. NSA EBB 547 doc 4A; Memorandum by Assistant Secretary Jones to Secretary of State Rusk, "Your Appointment with Israeli Ambassador Harman," 11 April 1961. NSA EBB 547 doc 4B.

<sup>40</sup> Atomic Energy Commission AEC 928/1, "Visit to Israel by U.M. Staebler and J.W. Croach, Jr.," 7 June 1961. NSA EBB 547 doc 8B, also 8A.

However, the President did not want to give any indications to Egypt and others that the U.S. was part of proliferation efforts in the region.<sup>41</sup> In turn, Ben-Gurion highlighted the security concerns of Israel in the region, especially with Egyptian President Nasser “declared aim...to destroy Israel.”<sup>42</sup> At this juncture the Israeli prime minister asked for military aid, which Kennedy was inclined to provide.<sup>43</sup> The interaction seems very similar to positive inducements provided to Pakistan against the Soviet Union in a bit to stall proliferation. Of interest, the national security archives report that an early version of this memorandum had an acknowledgement of the nuclear ambitions of Israel. PM Ben-Gurion reportedly told President Kennedy that “for the time being, the only purposes of [the Dimona reactor] are for peace...[but] we will see what happens in the Middle East.”<sup>44</sup>

The continued suspicion of a potential nuclear program at Dimona persisted. In a 1961 National Intelligence Estimate, the report states that “Israel may have decided to undertake a nuclear weapons program. At a minimum, we believe it decided to develop its nuclear facilities in such a way as to put it into a position to develop nuclear weapons promptly should it decide to do so.” If Israel chose to go that route, they could become a nuclear weapons state by 1966.<sup>45</sup> A second

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<sup>41</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “President Kennedy, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, Ambassador Avraham Harman of Israel, Myer Feldman of the White House Staff, and Philips Talbot, Assistant Secretary, Near East and South Asian Affairs, at the Waldorf Astoria, New York, 4:45 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.,” 30 May 1961. NSA EBB 547 doc 9B. Also see doc 9A, C, D.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> The National Security Archives. Notes to Documents 9A-D: Kennedy’s Meeting with Ben—Gurion. Available at: <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault/2016-04-21/concerned-about-nuclear-weapons-potential-john-f-kennedy>

<sup>45</sup> National Intelligence Estimate No. 35-61, “The Outlook for Israel,” 5 October 1961. NSA EBB 547 doc 11A, see also 11B.



visit to the Dimona reactor would take place in 1962, and left the American scientist thinking, “whether in fact the reactor might give Israel a nuclear weapons capability.”<sup>46</sup>

*Johnson, Nixon, and the Israeli Bomb*

The Israeli situation, and U.S. apprehensions, would accelerate. In 1967 the U.S. Near East Bureau still believed that Israel had not decided to weaponize its nuclear energy program.<sup>47</sup> They would revise this assessment in 1968 and from the gathered evidence suggested Israel was close to nuclear latency.<sup>48</sup> By the end of 1968 and early 1969, the Israeli nuclear program was dividing the Nixon administration. On the one hand, the State Department saw as problematic the nuclearization of Israel, as it believed it would make countries less likely to consider ratifying the NPT. Moreover, a nuclear Israel “would enlarge the chances of war between Israel and the Arab states and of nuclear confrontation involving the U.S. and USSR.”<sup>49</sup> This assessment was supported by Melvin Laird, the Secretary of Defense, in a memorandum to Henry Kissinger, the Secretary of State for President Nixon. Laird argued that the prospect of a nuclear Israel was highly problematic, that it was “not in the United States’ interests and should, if at all possible, be stopped.”<sup>50</sup> Joseph J. Sisco, the Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East and South Asia, sustained all of the apprehension of Secretary of Defense Laird, and added that a nuclear deterrent

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<sup>46</sup> State Department telegram 451 to U.S. Embassy Egypt, 22 October 1962, Secret; Memorandum of Conversation, “Second U.S. Visit to Dimona Reactor,” 23 October 1962. NSA EBB 547 doc 16B, see also 16A; Rodger P. Davies to Phillips Talbot, “Second Inspection of Israel’s Dimona Reactor,” 27 December 1962. NSA EBB 547 doc 16B.

<sup>47</sup> State Department Briefing Paper for Eshkol-Johnson talks, “Israel: The Nuclear Issue and Sophisticated Weapons,” December 31, 1967. NSA EBB 189 doc 1.

<sup>48</sup> Parker T. Hart to Secretary Dean Rusk, “Issues to be Considered in Connection With Negotiations With Israel for F-4 Phantom Aircraft,” October 15, 1968. NSA EBB 189 doc 2.

<sup>49</sup> Henry Owen to the Secretary, “Impact on U.S. Policies of an Israeli Nuclear Weapons Capability,” February 7, 1969. NSA EBB 189 doc 5.

<sup>50</sup> Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird to Secretary of State et al., “Stopping the Introduction of Nuclear Weapons into the Middle East,” March 17, 1969. NSA EBB 189 doc 6.

would “do nothing to deter Arab guerrilla warfare,” and would instead increase the risk that Arab state proliferate themselves.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, President Nixon did not want to close any of its options in the Middle East. In the first place, he had ratified the NPT but had instructed his administration not to force the ratification of any recalcitrant state.<sup>52</sup> As such, he had demanded a review of the Israeli nuclear program, and the options at his disposal. The report was designed to figure Israel’s intentions with the bomb, and the counterproliferation means available to Washington. Of interest, the report memorandum, known as NSSM 40, plans to assess two scenarios: one in which a nuclear Israel is a secret, and one in which the nuclearization of Israel is known by its Arab neighbors, which would prompt it to deploy its arsenal.<sup>53</sup> The introduction of these two scenarios provide some evidence that the United States potential willingness to live with an undeclared nuclear Israel.

The actual text of the NSSM 40 is not declassified, but we have access to memos engaging with the review process, and this evidence sheds some light on the internal discussions, which were the theater of strong disagreement between the State Department and the Department of Defense. On the one hand, The Undersecretary of Defense David Packard, in a subsequent memo, had mentioned that Washington was OK with a secret program “if Israel signs the NPT and gives appropriate assurances on not deploying nuclear weapons.”<sup>54</sup> Sisco of the NEA, however, wanted

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<sup>51</sup> Joseph J. Sisco to the Secretary, "Israel's Nuclear Policy and Implications for the United States," April 3, 1969. NSA EBB 189 doc 7.

<sup>52</sup> National Security Decision Memorandum 6, "Presidential Decision to Ratify Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty," February 5, 1969. NSA EBB 189 doc 4.

<sup>53</sup> “National Security Study Memorandum [NSSM] No. 40, Memorandum from Henry Kissinger to Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Director of Central Intelligence, 'Israeli Nuclear Weapons Program',” April 11, 1969, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Mandatory declassification review request. Obtained and contributed to NPIHP by William Burr and Avner Cohen. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121095>

<sup>54</sup> Roger Davies to Mr. Austin et al., "Review Group Consideration of Response to NSSM-40 June 26, 1969," June 30, 1969. NSA EBB 189 doc 9.

to pressure the Israeli into signing the NPT and would not be the first to have nuclear weapons in the Middle East. They would also agree not to deploy missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. Those were to be talking points delivered to the Israeli ambassador Yitzhak Rabin by Undersecretary of State Richelson.<sup>55</sup> The memo, however, is clear that there is not much the U.S. can do to get Israel to change their mind.<sup>56</sup>

In the end, President Nixon would meet with Prime Minister Meir in late 1969 and they would come to an “understanding.” In a memo sent to Henry Kissinger by Rabin in February 1970, the Israeli diplomat mentions that “in light of the conversation between the President and Golda Meir that Israel had no intentions to sign the NPT.”<sup>57</sup> The deal between the President and Pm Golda Meir would mean that the U.S. would not engage in any counterproliferation measures against Israel as long as its program remained covert.<sup>58</sup>

### *Some Conclusions*

This case is indicative of the difference in nonproliferation behavior during the Cold War of the United States when facing adversaries and allies. In the case of Israel, the United States never considered an attack against its nuclear facilities. At no point in time did it believe that the proliferation of Israel would be aimed at the United States in the future. It's not even that deterrence would hold in the future, but that deterrence would not be needed between the two. Moreover, the case shows that the U.S. believed tacitly that Israel would be restrained with its use of the bomb. It had accepted the postulate that its ally wanted the bomb for deterrence purposes, and did not

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<sup>55</sup> Joseph J. Sisco to the Acting Secretary, "Talking Points for Initial Meeting with Israelis on Nuclear and SSM Issue July 29," July 28, 1969. NSA EBB 189 doc 13.

<sup>56</sup> Richardson to President, "Israel's Nuclear Program," with memorandum of conversation attached, August 1, 1969. NSA EBB 189 doc 15.

<sup>57</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Kissinger and Rabin, February 23, 1970. NSA EBB 189 doc 28.

<sup>58</sup> The National Security Archives. Note to document 28. Available at <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB189/index.htm> (assessed October 14, 2018).

believe it would be adventurous due to the ways in which it had behaved in the past. More importantly, the negative externalities of an Israeli bomb all came from its adversaries, and not Israel itself.

## **2. Proliferation in the Post-Cold War Era**

### **From Strategic Partner to Rival – Iran’s Nuclear Efforts 1972-2015**

#### *Iran and Nuclear Proliferation: The Cold War Period*

##### Iran, Ford, and Carter: Strategic Partnership

Iran’s civilian nuclear program was built principally through the help of the United States. Iran had been part of the atoms for peace initiative from the onset, and had received technology from the U.S. By the 1970s it began to entertain the idea of a nuclear program, with the Shah declaring in an interview that Iran might soon be a nuclear weapons state.<sup>59</sup> Iran sought to reassure its ally soon after that it had no such intentions. Gholam Reza Kianpoor, an Iranian politician, told Washington that the Shah “actually said Iran is not thinking of building atomic weapons but my revise its policy in this regard if other non-nuclear nations do.”<sup>60</sup> The U.S. became concerned about the nuclear ambitions of its ally in the late 1970s and sought to prevent Tehran from reprocessing uranium by itself.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Alexandre Debs and Nuno P. Monteiro, *Nuclear Politics*, vol. 142 (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 157.

<sup>60</sup> U.S. Embassy Tehran cable 5192 to Department of State, "Shah's Alleged Statement on Nuclear Weapons," 25 June 1974. NSA EBB 521 doc 2.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 158

They were also worried of what a nuclear Iran would mean. While the United States gave some indications it believed the Shah's words when it came to nuclear weapons, but were skeptical of the caveat provided. The U.S. was aware the Shah was interested in nuclear energy "to prepare the country for the time when its oil reserves begin to run out."<sup>62</sup> While Washington did not see that Shah as bent on regional revisionism, it did question Tehran's strong interest in nuclear energy. A cable sent from the U.S. embassy in Tehran highlights this ambiguity stating, "the components of the GOI's motivation to acquire this complex and expensive technology are not entirely clear." Moreover, Washington was worried that if another state decided to develop nuclear weapons in the region, Tehran might follow suit: "Iran's interest in acquiring nuclear knowhow and plutonium is, in part, motivated by the desire to preserve the option of developing nuclear weapons should the region's power balance shift toward the nuclear."<sup>63</sup> This assessment was, in part, due to the considerable number of nuclear weapons which could be built with the technology and fuel requested by the Shah.<sup>64</sup>

Moreover, while Washington was confident in the status quo inclination of the Shah at this point in time, the same could not be said regarding future rulers. In a memo to the Secretary of Defense, the issue is discussed as: "An aggressive successor to the Shah might consider nuclear weapons the final item needed to establish Iran's complete military dominance on the region."<sup>65</sup> The same memo includes a decision from A. S. Friedman of the Atomic Commission to authorize

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<sup>62</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXVII Iran/Iraq, 1973-1976, ed. Monica L. Belmonte (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2012), document 59.

<sup>63</sup> "The Shah's Motives Are 'Not Entirely Clear'" Tehran Embassy cable 5939 to State Department, "Multinational Nuclear Centers: Assessment of Iranian Attitudes toward Plutonium Reprocessing," 17 July 1975. NSA EBB 268 doc 7.

<sup>64</sup> Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs to Secretary of Defense, "Nuclear Energy Cooperation with Iran (U) – Action Memorandum," n.d. [Late June 1974], enclosing Atomic Energy Commission and Department of State memoranda, Confidential, with handwritten note attached. NSA EBB 268 doc 2.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

sales of uranium to Iran, despite some reservations, notwithstanding Iran's NPT commitment.<sup>66</sup> Following the Indian test of a nuclear device in 1974, the Ford administration decided to review its uranium sale to Tehran and decided to suspend it for the time being due to renewed interest in nonproliferation.<sup>67</sup>

By 1975, however, Washington had agreed to provide fuel for Iranian reactors, but that Tehran would "require U.S. approval for reprocessing of U.S. supplied fuel."<sup>68</sup> While Washington recognized Iran was an ally, it was afraid of proliferation in the Middle East. In other words, the U.S. knew the level of cooperation it was ready to provide Tehran could put it in a good position to develop nuclear weapons, which ran counter to U.S. interests at the time.<sup>69</sup> The Shah reacted adversely to the news arguing: "you are asking us for safeguards that are incompatible with our sovereignty, things that the French or German would never dream of doing."<sup>70</sup> Yet, Washington continued to seek restraint from Iran on reprocessing rights, in part in a bid to build momentum for this type of nonproliferation measures aimed at U.S. allies seeking nuclear weapons.<sup>71</sup> The U.S. did put a lot on emphasis on getting Iran to agree to multinational reprocessing, a process through which countries including France and Germany would reprocess uranium for Iran, in a bid to

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> NSC Under Secretaries Committee to Deputy Secretary of Defense et al, "US Nuclear Non-Proliferation Policy," 4 December 1974, enclosing Memorandum for the President from Robert S. Ingersoll, Chairman, 4 December 1974, and NSSM 202 Study, "Executive Summary." NSA EBB 268 doc 3.

<sup>68</sup> National Security Decision Memorandum 292, "U.S.-Iran Nuclear Cooperation," 22 April 1975, signed by Henry Kissinger. NSA EBB 268 doc 5d. See also 5a-c.

<sup>69</sup> Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger to Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, "Nuclear Cooperation Agreement with Iran: NSSM 219," 25 April 1975. NSA EBB 268 doc 5e.

<sup>70</sup> Tehran Embassy cable 11539 to State Department, "US/Iran Nuclear Agreement," 26 November 1975. NSA EBB 268 doc 9c. See also 9a-b.

<sup>71</sup> "To Set a World Example" National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft to President Ford, "Letter to the Shah," n.d. [Circa 19 February 1976]. NSA EBB 268 doc 11.

ensure reprocessing levels not designed to sustain nuclear weapons.<sup>72</sup> Washington was, however, open to agree to let Iran reprocess uranium if it agreed to additional safeguards.<sup>73</sup> The Shah was not enthusiastic to the idea and as Brent Scowcroft stated in a letter to the President, the Shah had no interest in “a joint [reprocessing] venture as the *sine qua non* for our approval of the reprocessing of U.S.-supplied fuel in Iran” which was, in the end, “a serious irritant in our relations with Iran.”<sup>74</sup>

As the negotiations on a nuclear cooperation agreement with the U.S. took place, Iran continued to seek to reassure Washington regarding its nuclear ambitions. Atomic energy chief Akbar Etemad, in a meeting with the ambassador to Iran Richard Helms, stated that nuclear acquisition was not in the interest of Iran; nonproliferation was due to its geopolitical situation. Etemad stated: “Proliferation can only weaken Iran’s position vis-à-vis its neighbors, and therefore proliferation is anathema to Iran.”<sup>75</sup> Iran would reject the U.S. demand for a veto on its uranium management.<sup>76</sup>

With the arrival of President Carter into office, Washington put a moratorium on all of its commercial export of nuclear fuel while the administration updated its nonproliferation policy.<sup>77</sup> Washington and Tehran eventually reached an agreement on nuclear cooperation, one in which

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<sup>72</sup> U.S. Embassy Tehran Airgram A-76 to State Department, “The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran,” 15 April 1976. NSA EBB 268 doc 14a ; U.S. Embassy Tehran Airgram A-69 to State Department, “The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran,” 11 May 1977. NSA EBB 268 doc 14b.

<sup>73</sup> David Elliott, Robert Oakley, National Security Council Staff, to Brent Scowcroft, “Nuclear Negotiations with Iran,” 16 April 1976. NSA EBB 268 doc 15.

<sup>74</sup> The National Security Archives. Brent Scowcroft to the President, “Negotiation of a Nuclear Agreement with Iran,” 19 April 1976. NSA EBB 268 doc 16.

<sup>75</sup> U.S. Embassy Tehran cable 5765 to State Department, “Iranian Views on Non-Proliferation and US/Iran Nuclear Cooperation,” 7 June 1976, Secret. NSA EBB 268 doc 19b, see also 19a.

<sup>76</sup> “Iran Shall Have Full Right to Decide” U.S. Embassy Tehran cable 7485 to State Department, “Iranian Counterproposals for Atomic Energy Agreement,” 23 July 1976. NSA EBB 268 doc 21.

<sup>77</sup> U.S. Policy Review State Department cable 42988 to Embassy Tehran, “U.S.-Iran Bilateral Agreement for Nuclear Cooperation,” 25 February 1977. NSA EBB 268 doc 26.

the U.S. reserved the right to refuse the reprocessing of uranium.<sup>78</sup> The deal never took effect, however. Domestic turmoil marked the end of the Shah's regime and as William Burr explains: "When the Shah's regime collapsed in 1979, so did the nuclear power program."<sup>79</sup>

While the program was not particularly advanced by that point, the United States did have some serious reservations regarding the intentions of the Shah. However, the evidence suggests Washington believed Iran would develop the bomb to protect itself, and not as an expansionist measure. Moreover, at no point in time was the use of force ever discussed. This is in part due to how early in the process we were, but also by the fact the Iran was an important strategic partner for the United States.

#### *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: The Post-Cold War Period*

Iran's nuclear program was stopped with the departure of the Shah and the Iranian revolution. The program would only be restarted in 1984.<sup>80</sup> From the end of the 1980s to the early 2000s, Iran received significant external help in getting its nuclear program off the ground. First, it bought material, as well as plans and blueprints for nuclear weapons, from the A.Q. Khan network in the late 1980s.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, from the mid-1990s to the 2010, Tehran was able to count on the support of Moscow and Beijing in securing exports of nuclear facilities and fuel. Both Russia and China bypassed the IAEA for most of these transactions. Iran received help from

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<sup>78</sup> State Department cable 125971 to Embassy Tehran, "U.S.-Iran Nuclear Cooperation Agreement," 17 May 1978. NSA EBB 268 doc 31a. See also 31b.

<sup>79</sup> William Burr, "A Brief History of the U.S.-Iranian Nuclear Negotiations," *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* (January/February 2009): 32.

<sup>80</sup> Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*.

<sup>81</sup> Mark Fitzpatrick, "Lessons Learned From Iran's Pursuit Of Nuclear Weapons," *The Nonproliferation Review* 13, no. 3 (November 2006): 529, 533.



Pakistan as well during this period.<sup>82</sup> The Clinton administration did try to put pressure on all three states to stop exports of sensitive technology to Iran to various degrees of success. While Washington was able to persuade Beijing to desist, Russia continued to supply nuclear technology to Tehran.<sup>83</sup>

### Threat Assessment and Preventive Attack

Early estimate of the Iranian nuclear threat from the United States believed in a relatively long window until Tehran could become a nuclear weapons state. In 1991 the National Intelligence Estimate speculated Iran was “10 years or more away from actually producing nuclear weapons.” The report also highlights the potential construction of “a secret facility that may be used for nuclear...near Qazvin.”<sup>84</sup> This estimate would be revised four years later with a reduced timeline. The 1995 estimate put Tehran 5 years out of a nuclear capability if they received the appropriate external assistance.<sup>85</sup> This explains in part why the Clinton administration worked hard in cutting nuclear exports to Tehran: the success of the Iranian program was directly linked to outside assistance. By 2003 Iran had not yet reached the point where it had enough material to assemble a nuclear weapon, but the United States still believed it was the objective of their nuclear program. A public report published by the CIA in 2003 reads: “Despite Iran’s status in the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the United States remains convinced Tehran is pursuing a nuclear weapons program...We suspect that Tehran is interested in acquiring foreign

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<sup>82</sup> Wyn Q. Bowen and Joanna Kidd, “The Iranian Nuclear Challenge,” *International Affairs* 80, no. 2 (March 2004): 261-262.

<sup>83</sup> Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb*. Chapter 14, ebook.

<sup>84</sup> “National Intelligence Estimate, NIE 5-91C, ‘Prospects for Special Weapons Proliferation and Control,’” July, 1991, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Obtained and contributed by William Burr and included in NPIHP Research Update #11. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116907>

<sup>85</sup> Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*, 230.

fissile material and technology for weapons development.”<sup>86</sup> A subsequent report published in 2006 reaffirms similar conclusions.<sup>87</sup>

This assessment was partially supported by IAEA findings. IAEA inspectors would get access to Iranian facilities by 2004. The agency complained that Iran was using similar obfuscation mechanisms as used by Iraq while trying to mislead inspectors. They also found that the Iranian military had built centrifuges.<sup>88</sup> This report would be mitigated in part by a subsequent NIE published in 2007. The 2007 NIE stipulates that “We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program; we also assess with moderate-to-high confidence that Tehran at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons.” However, it cannot with certainty say whether Iran has completely given up its nuclear ambitions. Moreover, “if Iran wants to have nuclear weapons it would need to produce sufficient amounts of fissile material indigenously—which we judge with high confidence it has not yet done. The report could not with high certainty say whether the Iranian regime had acquired a nuclear weapon at that point in time.”<sup>89</sup> Moreover, the CIA judged that acquiring the required material from external sources for a nuclear weapon would be difficult and would not be enough to develop a weaponized program.<sup>90</sup>

By 2012, however, there were debates within Washington as to how latent the Iranian weapons program was. James Clapper, who was CIA director, argued Iran was a few years out of

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<sup>86</sup> “Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions, 1 January Through 30 June 2002.” *Central Intelligence Agency* [https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/archived-reports-1/721report\\_jan-june2002.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/archived-reports-1/721report_jan-june2002.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> “Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions, 1 January-31 December 2004,” [https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/report/2006/wmd-acq\\_cia\\_2004.pdf](https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/report/2006/wmd-acq_cia_2004.pdf)

<sup>88</sup> Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb*, chapter 14, ebook.

<sup>89</sup> “Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities,” *National Intelligence Estimate*, November 2007, 6.

<sup>90</sup> “Unclassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate: Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities,” Background Briefing with Senior Intelligence Officials, December 3, 2007.

being able to weaponize its nuclear infrastructure. Leon Panetta, on the other hand, argued this scenario was possible within 12 months of a decision to become nuclear from Iran.<sup>91</sup> This debate is similar to the one the Obama administration will have with its ally Israel around 2012 in determining whether the regime's nuclear facilities should be attacked preventively.

Iran, in the post-Cold War period, has been unable to signal restraint to the United States, despite its status as an NPT signatory and indications by the CIA that from 2003 until at least 2012 it was no longer seeking to develop nuclear weapons. First, Iran had been placed on the U.S. list of state sponsoring terrorism in 1984. In particular, it was accused of providing assistance to Hezbollah and the various terrorist groups operating in Palestine. The link between Iran and terrorist groups, as well as its nuclear ambitions, was used in 1995 as a pretext to impose trade sanctions against Tehran. Warren Christopher, who was the Secretary of State at the time, called Iran an "outlaw state" over its nuclearization and link to terrorist groups.<sup>92</sup> Iran was portrayed by the Clinton administration as an "enemy of peace" who could severely threaten the security of the U.S. and of its allies in the Middle East.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, as Richelson points out, Iran maintained an ambiguous narrative to justify its nuclear program. On the one hand, it had declared in 1991 that "Iran should collaborate with other Islamic states to produce an Islamic bomb." On the other hand, it maintained its nuclear facilities were strictly for civilian use. Washington never fully trusted the intentions of Tehran.<sup>94</sup> The Clinton administration imposed heavy sanctions on Iran, including trade bans and oil embargos, as well as sanctions on foreign entities with oil-related businesses.

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<sup>91</sup> Paul K. Kerr, "Iran's Nuclear Program: Status," *Congressional Research Service*, 17 October 2012, 2.

<sup>92</sup> Elaine Sciolino, "Calling Iran 'Outlaw State,' Christopher Defends U.S. Trade Ban," *The New York Times*, 2 May 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/05/02/world/calling-iran-outlaw-state-christopher-defends-us-trade-ban.html> (assessed September 30, 2018).

<sup>93</sup> Warren Christopher, "America's Leadership, America's Opportunity," *Foreign Policy*, no. 98 (1995): 21.

<sup>94</sup> Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb*, chapter 14, ebook.

However, in part due to the relatively long-time horizon of an Iranian bomb, the United States did not draft preventive attack plans at this time.

The inability of Iran to signal restraint to the United States continued throughout George W. Bush's two terms as president. In fact, the Bush administration was aggressive in its qualification of Iran, as well as its nonproliferation measures. During his 2002 State of the Union Address, the President referred to Iran as being part of the "axis of evil" a group of states, including Iraq and Libya, who were perceived by the U.S. to seek regional revisionism through the use of terrorism and nuclear proliferation. Specifically, President Bush stated: "Our second goal is to prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction. [...] Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom."<sup>95</sup> Moreover, Tehran was, in all likelihood, the next target in the counterproliferation effort of the Bush administration. As such, it sought rapprochement with Washington, willing to allow rigid inspections and additional safeguards for its nuclear facilities. The U.S. rejected the proposition, with some members of the administration reportedly arguing: "[w]e don't speak to evil." Tehran would turn to Europe and sign a deal similar to what it had proposed to the United States.<sup>96</sup> Iran would go on to violate the deal it made with Germany, France, and the UK in 2004. Tehran would resume its enrichment and reprocessing efforts in 2005 while continuing to misreport its activities to the IAEA.<sup>97</sup> This resumes well how hawklike the administration was in its counterproliferation efforts.

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<sup>95</sup> "President Delivers State of the Union Address," *The White House*, 29 January 2002, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html> (assessed September 30, 2018).

<sup>96</sup> Debs and Monteiro, *Nuclear Politics*, 167.

<sup>97</sup> Tom Sauer, "Coercive Diplomacy by the EU: The Iranian Nuclear Weapons Crisis," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (April 2007): 618, 620.

The Bush administration would impose severe sanction on Iran, as well as garner international support to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions. In 2005 President Bush would sign an executive order designed to "[block] property of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferators and their Supporters." In essence, the executive order stated individuals and corporations doing business with states seeking nuclear weapons would see its assets frozen and transactions blocked if the transaction was performed in the United States.<sup>98</sup> Additionally, following issues with the inspections, the IAEA sent the case to the United Nations Security Council, which Washington would support. In 2006 the UNSC would deliver resolution 1737 which demanded Iran stops its reprocessing and enriching efforts and provide better access to the IAEA to its facilities. The resolution also prohibits the export of sensitive nuclear material to Tehran. Finally, the resolution calls on all member states to freeze the assets of any countries who assisted "Iran's proliferation sensitive nuclear activities or the development of nuclear weapon delivery systems."<sup>99</sup> Subsequent resolutions would prohibit Tehran from selling weapons to third parties, suggests monitoring individuals who were affiliated with the Iranian nuclear programs, and demanded it ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and stop its ballistic missile program for the time being.<sup>100</sup> In addition, the United States would block the funds of the Iranian Central Bank, as well as impose an oil embargo. The EU followed through with additional financial sanctions as well.<sup>101</sup>

In the end, the Bush administration would never launch a preventive strike against Iran. It was reported in 2009 that the Bush administration had refused to support an Israeli attack on

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<sup>98</sup> Presidential Documents, "Executive Order 13382: Blocking Property of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferators and their Supporters." *Federal Register* 70, no. 126 (2005).

<sup>99</sup> "Resolution 1737 (2006)," *United Nations Security Council*, 27 December 2006, 2-4.

<sup>100</sup> "Resolution 1747 (2007)," *United Nations Security Council*, 24 March 2007, 2-3; "Resolution 1803 (2008)," *United Nations Security Council*, 3 March 2008, 3; "Resolution 1929 (2010)," *United Nations Security Council*, 9 June 2010, 3

<sup>101</sup> Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*, 236-237

Iranian underground facilities. The U.S. forced its ally to back down because it was in the process of developing a covert program designed to hurt the Iranian nuclear program.<sup>102</sup> The project would eventually be known as Stuxnet and unleashed on Iran, and inadvertently on the rest of the world, in 2011.<sup>103</sup> The possibility of designing a cyberattack can credibly explain the lack of preventive strikes from Washington despite its stance that Iran would not be restrained with nuclear weapons. The attack would come at a lower cost, reduced risk of escalation, and would have similar effect than an attack would have: it could delay the program and bring Iran to the negotiating table.

### The Obama Administration, Iran, and Plans of Preventive Strike

Discussions of the use of force to stop the proliferation of Iran were most present during the Obama administration. Preventive plans were in large part a bilateral affair with the inclusion of Israel. In fact, depending on how cyber warfare is interpreted, it's possible to argue that the United States did attack Iran preventively, delaying their program, and forcing them to accept a deal in 2015. All in all, the Obama administration used a two-pronged approach of diplomacy and coercion. On the one hand, it sought to further talks with Iran on the question of denuclearization, while applying, with multilateral support, crippling sanctions on the regime. Through executive order Obama made possible the freezing of assets and the application of sanctions on any foreign

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<sup>102</sup> David E. Sanger, "U.S. Rejected Aid for Israeli Raid on Iranian Nuclear Site," *The New York Times*, 10 January 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/11/washington/11iran.html?scp=1&sq=january%202009%20sanger%20bus%20natanz&st=cse> (assessed September 30, 2018).

<sup>103</sup> Kim Zetter, "An Unprecedented Look at Stuxnet, The World's First Digital Weapon," *Wired*, 11 March 2014, <https://www.wired.com/2014/11/countdown-to-zero-day-stuxnet/> (assessed September 30, 2018).

actors who sought to buy oil from Iran.<sup>104</sup> The President, however, did not rule out the use of force to disarm Iran if need be.<sup>105</sup>

Preventive strikes are rarely designed to fully stop proliferating efforts. They are meant to delay the program as much as possible in order to force a negotiated settlement. As such, an argument can be made that the United States did preventively attack Iran in 2010 through other means. William Broad and David Sanger of the New York Times were the first to report that the Obama administration, in concert with Israel, had been able to introduce a computer virus into the work stations of the Natanz underground facilities.<sup>106</sup> The malware introduced to the Natanz computer network by an Iranian scientist as the facility was offline, was designed to increase the speed of the centrifuges in order to break them.<sup>107</sup> Stuxnet was the achievement of a program authorized by the Bush administration in 2009.<sup>108</sup>

In 2011 the IAEA released a report on the state of Iran's nuclear program which stated that "Iran has carried out...activities that are relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device" which included enriching and reprocessing activities in hidden complexes, import of sensitive material from external sources, as well as "Work on the development of an indigenous design of a

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<sup>104</sup> "Fact Sheet: Sanctions Related to Iran," *The White House*, 31 July 2012, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/07/31/fact-sheet-sanctions-related-iran> (assessed September 30, 2018).

<sup>105</sup> "Interview with Barack Obama," *The New York Times*, 1 November 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/01/us/politics/02obama-transcript.html> (assessed September 30, 2018)>

<sup>106</sup> William J Broad and David E. Sanger, "Worm Was Perfect for Sabotaging Centrifuge," *The New York Times*, 18 November 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/19/world/middleeast/19stuxnet.html> (assessed September 30, 2018).

<sup>107</sup> William J. Broad, John Markoff, and David E. Sanger, "Israeli Test on Worm Called Crucial in Iran Nuclear Delay," *The New York Times*, 15 January 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/16/world/middleeast/16stuxnet.html> (assessed September 30, 2018).

<sup>108</sup> David E. Sanger, "U.S. Rejected Aid for Israeli Raid on Iranian Nuclear Site," *The New York Times*, 10 January 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/11/washington/11iran.html?scp=1&sq=j%20january%202009%20sanger%20bus%20natanz&st=cse> (assessed September 30, 2018).

nuclear weapon including the testing of components.”<sup>109</sup> A few months later the New York Times learned that Israel had plans to attack Iran preventively, but that the subject was polarizing within the Israeli government. According to the NYT “Mr. Netanyahu was intent on launching such an attack, and had to be restrained by opposition from top intelligence and military officials, almost all of whom have since left office.” The same article reports that Washington was against the attack and argued that “the combination of economic sanctions and covert sabotage of the Iranian effort has been more effective than an attack could be, without the risk of provoking counterattacks or a war.”<sup>110</sup>

During the period between 2012 and 2015, several reports were made on the possibility of a preventive strike from Washington, Israel, or both. In May of 2012 the ambassador to Israel, Daniel Shapiro, strongly suggested Washington’s patience was getting thin and that it was now considering all available options. Shapiro stated: “It would be preferable to resolve this diplomatically and through the use of pressure than the use of military force. But that doesn't mean that option is not fully available – not just available, but it's ready. The necessary planning has been done to ensure that it's ready.”<sup>111</sup> Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel, concurred and argued at the United Nations that the time to strike Iran was near as they were close to being able to assemble a nuclear weapon.<sup>112</sup> Obama rejected the argument made by Netanyahu

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<sup>109</sup> Board of Governors, “Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” IAEA, 8 November 2011, <https://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/2011/IAEA-Nov-2011-Report-Iran.pdf?action=click&contentCollection=World&module=RelatedCoverage&region=Marginalia&pgtype=article> (assessed September 30, 2018).

<sup>110</sup> Isabel Kershner and David E. Sanger, “Israel Faces Questions about News Reports of Eyeing Iran Strike.”

<sup>111</sup> Adrian Bloomfield, “US admits it has military plan to attack Iran,” *The Telegraph* 17 May 2012,

<sup>112</sup> Rick Gladstone and David E. Sanger, “Nod to Obama by Netanyahu in Warning to Iran on Bomb,” *The New York Times*, 27 September 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/28/world/middleeast/netanyahu-warns-that-iran-bombmaking-ability-is-nearer.html> (assessed September 30, 2018).



because he believed the Iranian situation could still be settled diplomatically.<sup>113</sup> As such, during this period the Obama administration worked hard into restrain Israel, arguing that an attack at this junction would have little effect, and might instead lead to a protracted conflict.<sup>114</sup>

Obama was not ready to launch preventive attack on Iran and stops Netanyahu. This situation provides some evidence, which should not be overstated, on the relationship between doves and restraint. While Israel really wanted to strike, Obama argued in public he is not convinced that Iran is actually seeking a bomb. Because of this, he is reluctant to agree to a preventive strike. We're not privy to the internal discussion, and whether restraint had a role to play in Obama's decision. It does lend some credence, however, to the argument that dove in general will be averse to preventive attacks. There were, however, other considerations including the real possibility of war in the Middle East if an attack was carried out against Tehran.

In the end, the Obama administration, through strong multilateral sanctions and alternative coercive means were able to force Iran back to the negotiating table. The result was the ratification of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action signed and ratified in 2015 by the United States, Iran, China, Russia, the European Union, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. The Plan, also known as the Iran nuclear deal, imposed perhaps the strictest safeguards and verification mechanisms imposed on a state. Iran agreed to have cameras installed in its nuclear facilities. Moreover, Tehran agreed to rid itself of a significant portion of its centrifuge, as well as 98 percent

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<sup>113</sup> Mark Lander and Helene Cooper, "Obama Rebuffs Netanyahu on Setting Limits on Iran's Nuclear Program," *The New York Times*, 13 September 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/14/world/middleeast/obama-rebuffs-netanyahu-on-nuclear-red-line-for-iran.html> (assessed September 30, 2018).

<sup>114</sup> Daniel Sobelman, "Restraining an Ally: Israel, the United States, and Iran's Nuclear Program, 2011-2012," *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 4 (August 2018): <https://tnsr.org/2018/08/restraining-an-ally-israel-the-united-states-and-irans-nuclear-program-2011-2012/> (assessed September 30, 2018).

of its enriched uranium. It would also be limited in the type of nuclear technology it could use for energy purposes.<sup>115</sup>

### *Conclusions*

The case of Iran highlights three empirical observations of this dissertation. First, it demonstrates how strategic partners' actions are not perceived in the same way as adversaries as they nuclearized. While officials in the Ford and Carter administrations were suspicious of the Shah, they were willing to cooperate on nuclear issues. Second, it shows how, due to the context of the post-Cold War, Iran had a much harder time to signal restraint to the United States, who saw its nuclearization as a threat to its security and regional order. Although we need to take these conclusions with a grain of salt as we do not have access to private documents, only public statements. Third, Iran did engage in obfuscation as it nuclearized, but its motives have historically been to acquire nuclear weapons for deterrence. However, its sponsorship of terrorist groups was perceived as recklessness and as such labeled its program as revisionist. The interplay between the context and the actions of Iran tell the tale.

A fourth implication would be regarding how hawks will generally default back to balance of power arguments in order to suggest preventive strikes. With the election of Donald Trump, who was critical of the deal, the United States removed themselves from the Iran deal citing Iran's continuation of its ballistic missile program and of its continued support for terrorist groups.<sup>116</sup> President Trump, like most critics of the deal, disagrees with the sunset closes found within the Action Plan. Specifically, by 2030 Iran will be able to acquire better centrifuges, and its limit of

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<sup>115</sup> The National Security Archives. White House, "Statement by the President on Iran," July 14, 2015, Unclassified Source: White House; "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action" *U.S. Department of State*, 14 July 2015, <https://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/iran/jcpoa/> (assessed September 30, 2018).

<sup>116</sup> Mark Landler, "Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned," *The New York Times*, 8 May 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear-deal.html> (assessed October 4, 2018).

3.67% enriched uranium would be lifted, essentially placing them in a good position to acquire a nuclear weapon if needed.<sup>117</sup> The Trump administration has hope of bringing Tehran back to the negotiating table for what it believes would be a better deal, but there has also been indications that it would not hesitate to use force to strike at facilities if it believed Iran was proliferating again.<sup>118</sup>

### **Adversarial Proliferation – The 2003 Invasion of Iraq**

The willingness of Saddam Hussein to develop nuclear weapons, and U.S. counterproliferation efforts to stop it, has a long history. Iraq had begun its nuclear program in the early 1960s, evidence Iraq was developing a nuclear weapons' program emerged in the 1970s.<sup>119</sup> At the onset, and throughout the 1970s, Baghdad's program was provided support by the Soviet Union, but also by a variety of Western allies, including France and Germany.<sup>120</sup> However, during and after the Iran-Iraq war, support for Iraq within the United States would dissipate and the current adversarial relationship would evolve. In August 1990, Saddam Hussein would invade Kuwait, despite the deterrent threat of the United States not to proceed. Washington would win the war in seven months.

Following's Iraq's defeat as part of the 1991 Gulf War, the United Nations Security Council voted resolution 687. The resolution meant to end the hostility and pose conditions on Hussein's future behavior, stated that due to prior use of chemical weapons from the regime,

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<sup>117</sup> "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action." *The Department of State*, 14 July 2015, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/245317.pdf> (assessed October 14, 2018).

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Khidhir Hamza, "Inside Saddam's Secret Nuclear Program," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (September/October 1998): 26-33.

<sup>120</sup> Namira Negm, *Transfer of Nuclear Technology under International Law* (Leiden ; Boston: BRILL, 2009) Chapter 3-4.

“grave consequences would follow any further use by Iraq of such weapons.” Moreover, as part of the resolution Iraq was to destroy its entire WMD complex, as well as its ballistic missile program, and that Iraq would agree “not to use, develop, construct or acquire” a nuclear and chemical weapons capability. Safeguards and verification were included.<sup>121</sup> Saddam Hussein initially agreed to comply with the resolution.

Iraq was found in non-compliance of its resolution 687 commitment almost immediately. In August 1991 the security council issued resolution 707 condemning Iraq’s efforts to shirk its commitment to resolution 687 by providing incomplete information regarding its nuclear and chemical weapons program, as well as not conforming to its NPT commitment.<sup>122</sup> Hussein would eventually allow the IAEA inspectors in. In a statement recapping its work in Iraq the IAEA stipulates:

In September 1991, the IAEA seized documents in Iraq that demonstrated the extent of its nuclear weapons program. By the end of 1992, we had largely destroyed, removed or rendered harmless all Iraqi facilities and equipment relevant to nuclear weapons production. We confiscated Iraq's nuclear-weapons-usable material - high enriched uranium and plutonium - and by early 1994 we had removed it from the country. By December 1998 - when the inspections were brought to a halt with a military strike imminent - we were confident that we had not missed any significant component of Iraq's nuclear program.<sup>123</sup>

This period, 1991 to 1998, would be marked with multiple instances in which Iraq sought to deny, or did deny, access to United Nations inspectors, each instance contested by the United States with

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<sup>121</sup> United Nations Security Council, “Resolution 687: Iraq-Kuwait,” 3 April 1991. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/596/23/IMG/NR059623.pdf?OpenElement> (assessed September 28, 2018).

<sup>122</sup> United Nations Security Council, “Resolution 707: Iraq-Kuwait,” 15 August 1991. <http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/documents/707.pdf> (assessed September 28, 2018).

<sup>123</sup> IAEA Director General Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, “The Status of Nuclear Inspections in Iraq,” *International Atomic Agency*, 27 January 2003, <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/statements/status-nuclear-inspections-iraq> (assessed September 28, 2018).

signals to comply with its international obligations.<sup>124</sup> In 1998, Saddam Hussein stated he would no longer comply with UN inspectors.<sup>125</sup> Fearing Hussein's regime could develop a nuclear device in a short amount of time and threaten the security of U.S. allies in the region, in December 1998 the Clinton administration decided to use air strikes against Hussein's rumored nuclear facilities.<sup>126</sup>

The event of September 11, 2001 took the full attention of the U.S. foreign policy apparatus for the time being, but it would not be long until Washington returned its focus on Iraq. As Condoleezza Rice states in her memoir: "Now, in the spring of 2002, examining the WMD threat and its nexus with terrorism, the question of what to do about Saddam—who had a record of using chemical weapons against Iranian targets and ethnic minorities within his own population—was on the table again."<sup>127</sup> In his State of the Union Address of January 23, 2002, President George W. Bush made it clear the uncertainty surrounding Iraq's chemical and nuclear programs would be at the heart of U.S. foreign policy under his administration. He stated:

Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens — leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections — then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world. States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> "Saddam Hussein's Defiance of United Nations Resolutions," *The White House*, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/iraq/decade/sect2.html> (assessed September 28, 2018).

<sup>125</sup> "World: Middle East Iraq under spotlight at Security Council," *BBC*, 31 October 1998, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/205160.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/205160.stm) (assessed September 28, 2018).

<sup>126</sup> "Iraq could rearm 'in months,'" *BBC*, 13 November 1998, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/211925.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/211925.stm) (assessed September 28, 2018); Eugene Robinson, "U.S. Halts Attacks on Iraq After Four Days," *The Washington Post*, 20 December 1998, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/iraq/stories/end122098.htm> (assessed September 28, 2018).

<sup>127</sup> Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown, 2011), Chapter 12, ebook.

<sup>128</sup> "Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush 2001-2008," *The White House*, 106.

He concluded this portion of the speech by reaffirming his commitment to U.S. security, but also to all means available to his administration to handle what he saw as the Iraqi threat. Plainly: “The United States of America will not permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons.”<sup>129</sup> President Bush doubled down on the accusations against the Iraqi regime a month later during a speech he delivered in Cleveland. Emphasizing what the U.S. saw as a breach of UN resolution by Hussein, President Bush argued: “It possesses and produces chemical and biological weapons. It is seeking nuclear weapons. It has given shelter and support to terrorism and practices terror against its own people. [...] We agree that the Iraqi dictator must not be permitted to threaten America and the world with horrible poisons and diseases and gases and atomic weapons.”<sup>130</sup>

The arguments developed by the Bush administration as to the continued pursuit of nuclear and chemical weapons by Iraq are in large part based on the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) of October 2002. The report, titled “Iraq’s Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction,” makes the case Hussein continued its development of nuclear and chemical capabilities. The relevant parts of the report on the subject reads: “

We judge that Iraq had continued its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs in defiance of UN resolutions and restrictions. Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons as well as missiles with ranges in excess of UN restrictions; if left unchecked, it probably will have a nuclear weapon during this decade [...] We judge that we are seeing only a portion of Iraq’s WMD efforts, owing to Baghdad’s vigorous denial and deception efforts. Revelations after the Gulf war starkly demonstrate the extensive efforts undertaken by Iraq to deny information. [...] Since inspections ended in 1998, Iraq has maintained its chemical weapons effort, energized its missile program, and invested more heavily in biological

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> “Transcript: George Bush’s Speech on Iraq,” *The Guardian*, 7 October 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/oct/07/usa.iraq> (assessed September 29, 2018).

weapons; in the view of most agencies, Baghdad is reconstituting its nuclear weapons program.<sup>131</sup>

As such, based on this evidence, the United States went to the United Nations in a bid to get support for the disarmament of Iraq.<sup>132</sup> The result of this effort was UNSC resolution 1441, which re-emphasized Iraq's failure to uphold its disarmament commitments, and asked of the regime "a currently accurate, full, and complete declaration of all aspects of its programmes to develop chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, and other delivery systems" to be delivered to the relevant agencies within 30 days, as well as provide access to all of its facilities deemed relevant by the IAEA and the UNMOVIC. The document closes on a reminder of previous threats made against Iraq that non-compliance would lead to "serious consequences."<sup>133</sup> The resolution passed unanimously within the Security Council.

On November 13, 2002, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq sent a letter to the UNSC in which he denounced U.S. accusations, but in which Iraq nonetheless agreed to let inspectors back in and provide the required documents, which Iraq would do.<sup>134</sup> In January 2003, Hans Blix, who was in charge of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, provided his report to the Security Council. In the report, Blix notes issues regarding chemical weapons development and Iraq's ballistic missile program. Recalling resolution 687 he stated that "Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance - not even today - of the disarmament,

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<sup>131</sup> National Intelligence Estimate - White House declassification release *Iraq's Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction* October 2002, Top Secret (Extract) Source: White House, July 2003. Available at: <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB129/> (assessed October 14, 2018).

<sup>132</sup> Frank P. Harvey, *Explaining the Iraq War: Counterfactual Theory, Logic and Evidence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>133</sup> UNSC, "Resolution 1441 (2002)," *United Nations*, 8 November 2002, <https://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/documents/1441.pdf> (assessed September 29, 2018).

<sup>134</sup> "Letter dated 13 November 2002 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council," *United Nations Security Council*, 13 November 2002, [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2002/1242](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2002/1242) (assessed September 29, 2018).

which was demanded of it and which it needs to carry out to win the confidence of the world.”<sup>135</sup> Mohamed Elbaradei, who was director of the IAEA at the time, supported Blix’s assessment and argued, in a statement to the UNSC “The Iraqi declaration was consistent with our existing understanding of Iraq’s pre-1991 nuclear programme; however, it did not provide any new information relevant to certain questions that have been outstanding since 1998 — in particular regarding Iraq’s progress prior to 1991 related to weapons design and centrifuge development.”<sup>136</sup>

Following these updates, in February 2003 President Bush reaffirmed the meaning of the Iraqi threat for the security of the Middle East and the United States stating “The danger posed by Saddam Hussein and his weapons cannot be ignored or wished away. The danger must be confronted.” On the means to achieve this objective, the President declared Washington was “prepared to disarm Iraq by force” if necessary.”<sup>137</sup> The final justification for the invasion would be delivered by Colin Powell in front of the United Nations in February 2003. In his speech, Powell emphasized the U.S. believed Saddam Hussein to be in breach of UNSC resolution 1441, as well as several others. The essence of Powell’s speeches was that Hussein could not be trusted. He had a pattern of being historically aggressive, dealing with terrorists, and having an aggressive and expansionist foreign policy against his neighbors, and U.S. allies. Moreover, any attempt to get Iraq to relinquish its chemical or nuclear facilities were met with resistance and obfuscation. In particular: “The facts on Iraq’s behavior - Iraq’s behavior demonstrate that Saddam Hussein and his regime have made no effort - no effort - to disarm as required by the international community. Indeed, the facts and Iraq’s behavior show that Saddam Hussein and his regime are concealing their efforts to produce more

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<sup>135</sup> Hans Blix, “An Update on Inspection,” *The Security Council*, 27 January 2003, <https://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/Bx27.htm> (assessed September 29, 2018).

<sup>136</sup> Mohamed Elbaradei, “The Status of Nuclear Inspections in Iraq,” *United Nations Security Council*, 27 January 2003, <http://www.un.org/News/dh/iraq/elbaradei27jan03.htm> (assessed September 29, 2018).

<sup>137</sup> “Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush 2001-2008,” *The White House*, 168.



weapons of mass destruction.”<sup>138</sup> While some U.S. allies at the security council strongly opposed the invasion, including France and Germany,<sup>139</sup> the United States would move to attack Iraq on March 20, 2003. The conflict would last until May 2003.

From the 1990s to the 2003, Saddam Hussein had been unable to signal restraint to the United States, who saw the potential nuclearization of Iraq as an important revisionist move that would put in jeopardy its security, as well as the security of its allies in the region. Moreover, the belief within the Bush administration in Saddam Hussein’s recklessness made the uncertainty surrounding Iraq’s capabilities acute. Condoleezza Rice, who was National Security Advisor at the time, wrote in her memoir that:

Saddam might aid a terrorist in an attack on the United States did not seem far-fetched. Some observers said that Saddam would never transfer WMD to terrorists out of fear of retaliation should the weapons be traced back to their source. He had, however, established a pattern of recklessness, particularly in failing to anticipate the international community’s strong response to his 1990 invasion of Kuwait and his 1993 attempt to assassinate former President George H. W. Bush. When coupling his proclivity toward miscalculation with his past support for terrorist activity, it was not unreasonable to suspect that he might supply extremists with a weapon that could be detonated in an American city. And in any case, it was a chance we were not willing to take.<sup>140</sup>

Hussein did train, during the 1991 Gulf War, terrorist groups as proxy.<sup>141</sup> While the link between Saddam Hussein and terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda was tedious at best, it remained, at the time, an important argument from the Bush administration to support their drive to disarm the regime.<sup>142</sup> Moreover, Rice was not the only high-profile Republican highlighting Saddam’s aggressive and expansionist behavior. Brent Scowcroft, who had been national security advisor under George H.

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<sup>138</sup> Colin L. Powell, “Remarks to the United Nations Security Council,” *U.S. Department of State*, 5 February 2003, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2003/17300.htm> (assessed September 29, 2018).

<sup>139</sup> T.V. Paul, “Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy,” *International Security* 30, no. 1 (July 2005): 46–71.

<sup>140</sup> Rice, *No Higher Honor*, Chapter 12, ebook.

<sup>141</sup> “IRAQ: Iraqi Ties to Terrorism,” *The Council on Foreign Relations*, 3 February 2005, <https://www.cfr.org/background/iraq-iraqi-ties-terrorism> (assessed September 29, 2018).

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

W. Bush wrote: “It is beyond dispute that Saddam Hussein is a menace, He terrorizes and brutalizes his own people. He has launched war on two of his neighbors. He devotes enormous effort to rebuilding his military forces and equipping them with weapons of mass destruction. We will all be better off when he is gone.” While Scowcroft did not support invasion a priori, he strongly supported the assessment of Hussein as a reckless and dangerous leader.<sup>143</sup>

Part of the inability of Saddam Hussein to signal restraint comes from the 1980s. First, Iraq has been placed on the State Sponsor of Terrorist list in 1979. Its inscription would be rescinded in 1982 in order to be able to provide aid to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. Tehran had been able to turn the tide against Iraq, and Washington feared it could succeed in toppling Hussein.<sup>144</sup> It would later be added again in 1990. Second, the behavior of the Iraqi regime during the Iran-Iraq war has shown recklessness. During and after the war it was reported that the Hussein regime had used chemical weapons, including mustard gas and tabun during the conflict.<sup>145</sup> Moreover, the Federation of American scientists reported that the use of tabun by Iraq was “the first ever use of a nerve agent in war.”<sup>146</sup> Thus, breaking its international law commitment under the various status on chemical weapons Iraq has previously signed. Negative references to chemical weapons use by Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war, but also against his own population, would be made a multiple juncture in the period leading to the 2003 invasion of Iraq as previously seen. It was also the basis for imposing nonproliferation measures on Hussein through UNSC resolution 687.

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<sup>143</sup> Cited in Harvey, *Explaining the Iraq War*, 134.

<sup>144</sup> Efraim Karsh, *The Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988* (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 42-45.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 37-47.

<sup>146</sup> “Chemical Weapons Programs: History,” *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/iraq/cw/program.htm> (assessed September 29, 2018).

The case of Iraq demonstrates how the lack of a reputation of restraint was particularly damaging for Saddam Hussein. There is evidence the perceived recklessness from Hussein made a preventive strike possible. The cost of not striking against the regime was perceived as higher than inaction in this case.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, this case demonstrates as well the nonproliferation preferences of the United States following the end of the Cold War, but also after the event of 9/11. The uncertainty surrounding Iraq's nuclear program, coupled with his negative reputation and the time period, made the regime's actions directly revisionist. Despite much of his assurances and cooperation, Hussein was never able to signal otherwise, and Iraq was eventually be attacked. There are some caveats to the argument, however. The 2003 invasion of Iraq, and its WMD motives, has been highly debated. On the one hand, it has been argued that the United States sought a pretext to finally carry out regime change in Iraq, and that the focus on WMD was either a lie, or misguided.<sup>148</sup> On the other hand, there is significant literature on the uncertainty of the threat, and the difficulty to get proper intelligence on the regime, but also the strategic ambiguity tactics used by Hussein in order to deter aggression from Iran.<sup>149</sup> The U.S. Senate, in July 2004, would release a report highlighting the various issues with the intelligence used to justify the invasion of Iraq. Quote: "[T]oday we know these assessments were wrong. And, as our inquiry will show, they were also unreasonable and largely unsupported by the available evidence."<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Debs and Monteiro, "Known Unknowns."

<sup>148</sup> Jeffrey Record, *Wanting War: Why the Bush Administration Invaded Iraq* (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2010); James Fallows, *Blind Into Baghdad: America's War in Iraq* (New York: Vintage, 2006); John Chapman, "The Real Reason Bush Went to War," *The Guardian*, 28 July 2004, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/jul/28/iraq.usa> (assessed September 29, 2018).

<sup>149</sup> Harvey, *Explaining the Iraq War*; Robert Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails: Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 134–36; See also George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA*, Larger Print edition (New York: HarperLuxe, 2007); Richard K. Betts, "Two Faces of Intelligence Failure: September 11 and Iraq's Missing WMD," *Political Science Quarterly* 122, no. 4 (December 2007): 585–606.

<sup>150</sup> Cited from The National Security Archives, "CIA Whites Out Controversial Estimate on Iraq Weapons," 9 July 2004, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB129/> (assessed September 29, 2018).

Moreover, the documents available to the public are mainly speeches from important cabinet members and United Nations officials, and selected declassified documents such as the 2002 NIE. Since they are public, they were written or released with an audience in mind. They are not, like the three in-depth case studies found in the remainder of this dissertation, private discussions between the relevant U.S. agencies. As such, they are meant, in part, to convince an audience of a particular course of action desired by the United States. While the evidence presented here supports the argument that the negative reputation of Saddam Hussein played a role in the invasion of Iraq in 2003, we cannot ascertain fully its validity.

## Chapter 4

### Adversarial Proliferation During the Cold War -- The Case of China

“The important thing is not what the French or Chinese say but what they do.”  
-Secretary of State Dean Rusk,

U.S. President John F. Kennedy was originally against China getting the bomb. There were options to use coercive force in order to stop the Chinese from obtaining nuclear weapons. The threat of a nuclear China was real to the U.S., so much so they considered a joint venture with the Soviets to attack Beijing’s nuclear facilities, either separately or together. Moreover, once the Soviets refused the offer, the U.S. continued to entertain the possibility of a preventive strike on its own under President Johnson’s administration. Of note was Washington’s fear that a nuclear China would be able to contest its presence in East Asia while forcing the U.S. into providing more concessions on its security goals.<sup>1</sup> These talks gained traction during the Johnson period. Commissioned studies at the time had recommended preventive strikes against the Chinese to stop them from acquiring the bomb. It was argued that the threat was not only to the United States but to its allies abroad as well. But the Kennedy administration, as well as the Johnson administration, declined to launch preventive attacks. In the case of the Johnson administration, they decided to go ahead with an institutional response by pushing for the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).<sup>2</sup>

Importantly, preventive strikes were not launched against the Chinese because policy-makers within the Kennedy and Johnson administration were able to argue it possessed a

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<sup>1</sup> William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, “Whether to ‘Strangle the Baby in the Cradle’: the United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960-64,” *International Security* 25, no. 3 (2000/01): 54-55, 77

<sup>2</sup> T.V. Paul. *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2009) 66; National Security Archives, electronic briefing book 1: “The United States, China, and the Bomb,” Washington D.C.: The George Washington University. Available at: <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB1/> (assessed October 14, 2018).

reputation for restraint. On the one hand, advocates of preventive attacks would point to the potential revisionism of China, and how they could be particularly aggressive towards U.S. allies, including Taiwan, once they acquired a bomb. On the other hand, decision-makers averse to a preventive strike placed emphasis on the past behavior of general and immediate deterrence of China, as well as its historically non-expansionist foreign policy, therefore showcasing its restraint. Moreover, the Chinese leadership proposed arms control and disarmament initiatives for all throughout the nuclearization period. While other variables were in consideration, restraint played a role in avoiding an attack. The Chinese, although not willing to curtail their own nuclear ambitions, were recognized by the U.S. as understanding the deterrent, instead of compellent, nature of nuclear weapons.

The context of nuclearization is also relevant to the case. China sought a nuclear weapon in the early Cold War, where the United States and the Soviet Union had begun to use nuclear deterrence as part of a larger practice of deterrence to maintain stability and security between the two blocks. The Soviet Union, in fact, advocated strongly in favor of China and against a strike, arguing with the United States that China would not be adventuristic in the future. As the case will demonstrate, the question of whether deterrence would hold is at the heart of a lot of the discussions surrounding a nuclear China. In this context, China, the Soviet Union, and U.S. decision-makers were credible and persuasive in their advocacy.

The chapter focuses on the internal debates and struggles within the U.S. administration when determining the proper course of action against the nascent Chinese nuclear program. The decision not to preventively strike China was not an easy one, nor was it a uniform policy preference. In fact, what to do was debated almost to the last minute. That said, this chapter is organized as follows. First, I discuss the motivations behind the Chinese bomb, as well as the onset

of its program and the help it received from the Soviet Union. Second, I provide an in-depth look at the nonproliferation stance and counterproliferation policies of the Kennedy administration as the Chinese program gained momentum. Third, I engage in a similar analysis of the Johnson's administration response as the Chinese reached nuclear latency and were getting close to acquire a nuclear capability. I conclude with some thoughts on the direct aftermath of the October 1964 detonation and review the findings of the case.

## **1. Background on the Chinese Nuclear Program – The Sino-Soviet Connection**

### *Sino-Soviet Nuclear Relationship: 1949 to 1958*

While it is entirely possible the Chinese would have been able to achieve nuclear status without the help of the Soviet Union, it is undeniable the help provided by Moscow led Beijing to accelerate the process. While the relationship would eventually sour, and Khrushchev would eventually come to desire a non-nuclear China, the 1950s were marked by a desire by the Soviet Union leadership to add a Chinese deterrent to its rank against the West.

While the Soviet Union under Stalin had shown a desire to help China in most aspects of its economy to bolster socialism, it had no intentions of providing Beijing with nuclear technology.<sup>3</sup> The extension of its nuclear umbrella to China was deemed enough.<sup>4</sup> After Stalin's death, China made similar overture about nuclear weapons technology to Khrushchev who agreed

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<sup>3</sup> Shenfa Zhang 'The Main Causes for the Return of the Changchun Railway to China' in Thomas P. Bernstein and Hua-Yu Li *China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1949-Present* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010) 61-78, 63; Ellis Joffe "The Conflict between Old and New in the Chinese Army" *The China Quarterly* 18 (1964), 118-140, 119-120; Viktor M. Gobarev, "Soviet Policy Towards China: Developing Nuclear Weapons 1949-1969," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4 (December 1999), 16.

<sup>4</sup> Gobarev, "Soviet Policy Towards China," 16.

to provide civilian technology.<sup>5</sup> Following President Eisenhower's launch of the Atoms for Peace program, the USSR increased its nuclear technological assistance to China.<sup>6</sup>

The first Taiwan Strait Crisis (1954-1955) crystallized the need for nuclear weapons in the minds of the Chinese leadership. During the crisis, Secretary Dulles had threatened the use of tactical nuclear weapons against China in the "event of open armed aggression" to protect the exiled Republic of China in Taiwan.<sup>7</sup> Khrushchev at first refused to extend the nuclear umbrella to China during the crisis until the Chinese publicly announced they were open to negotiate.<sup>8</sup> As a result of the Taiwan Strait Crisis, the Chinese realized that the Soviet nuclear umbrella was not reliable. To mitigate this, Beijing, in a 1955 meeting, elaborated its first nuclear weapons plan, Project 02.<sup>9</sup> In October 1957 Moscow agreed to provide Beijing with a nuclear weapon prototype and uranium hexafluoride for enrichment purposes.<sup>10</sup> Following these negotiations, in January 1958, Moscow provided two R-2 missiles (U.S. code name SS-2) to China, as well as blueprints to produce R-2 rockets.<sup>11</sup> Although the technology given to China was outdated by Soviet standards, it was still an important policy reversal by Moscow. It also provided China with the know-how, material, and experts to narrow the gap between Chinese weapons technology and that

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<sup>5</sup> Yue Ren "National Image-Conflicts and the Pursuit of Nuclear Independence: Nuclear Policies of China under Mao Zedong and France under Charles De Gaulle". PhD. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1994, 165.

<sup>6</sup> Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 165-166; Walter C. Clemens *The Arms Race and Sino-Soviet Relations* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Publications, 1972), 15; Xie Guang, *China Today: Defence Science and Technology volume 1* (Beijing, China: National Defence Industry Press, 1993), 28

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Huck *The Security of China: Chinese approaches to Problems of War and Strategy* (London: Windus for the Institute for Strategic Studies, 1970) 64

<sup>8</sup> Lorenz M. Luthi 'Sino-Soviet Relations during the Mao years, 1949-1969' in Thomas P. Bernstein and Hua-Yu Li *China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1949-Present* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010) 27-60, 29

<sup>9</sup> Élisabeth Fouquiere-Brillet *La Chine et le Nucléaire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999) 12

<sup>10</sup> John Wilson Lewis and Xue Litai "Strategic Weapons and Chinese Power: The Formative Years" *The China Quarterly* 112 (1987), 542

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 549.



of more advanced countries.<sup>12</sup> In his memoir, Khrushchev remembered this period as the time when the Soviets did not know how to say ‘no’ to the Chinese. He stated, “When China asked us for an atomic bomb, we ordered our scientists to receive Chinese representatives and to teach them how to produce one. We provided nuclear know-how for free,” and “we gave everything to China. We kept no secrets from the Chinese.”<sup>13</sup>

### *Ending Nuclear Assistance – 1959 Onwards*

On June 20, 1959, the Soviet Union informed China that it was reconsidering its plans to help them develop nuclear weapons. The reason presented to the Chinese was that the Soviet Union had launched discussions with Western countries about limiting nuclear testing, and stated that whether China received the technology would depend on the international situation.<sup>14</sup> The question of détente with the United States was also widely accepted as the main reason why the Soviet Union reneged on their earlier commitment.<sup>15</sup> It was in June the same year that the Soviets abrogated the deal sending nuclear weapons to the Chinese.<sup>16</sup> In the end, the Soviet Union provided sufficient technology from 1957 to 1959 to ensure China would be able to build nuclear weapons.<sup>17</sup> The help provided by the Soviet Union made it possible for China to “leapfrog”— i.e. skip intermediate steps in technological advancement rather than following the linear progression of everyone else.<sup>18</sup> China would go on to detonate its first bomb on October 16, 1964.

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<sup>12</sup> Bruce D. Larkin *Nuclear Designs: Great Britain, France & China in the Global Governance of Nuclear Arms* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996) 44-45n75

<sup>13</sup> Zubok and Pleshakov *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, 216-217.

<sup>14</sup> Baichun Zhang, Jiuchun Zhang, and Fang Yao “Technology Transfer from The Soviet Union to the People’s Republic of China.” *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society* 4, no. 2 (August 2006): 145; Andrei Gromyko *Memories*, Translated by Harold Shukman (London: Hutchinson Press, 1989) 251

<sup>15</sup> Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali. *Khrushchev's Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 328

<sup>16</sup> William E. Griffith *The Sino-Soviet Rift* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1964), 18.

<sup>17</sup> Viktor M. Gobarev, “Soviet Policy Towards China: Developing Nuclear Weapons 1949-1969,” 48.

<sup>18</sup> Chong-Pin Lin *China's Nuclear Weapons Strategy: Tradition Within Evolution* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988) 45-46

## **2. Gaining Momentum: U.S. Non-Proliferation and China – The Kennedy Years**

The Kennedy years are marked by two very different visions of what the nuclearization of China would mean for the United States and South Asia. Most within the U.S. Establishment agreed China sought great power status and potential hegemony. However, two camps developed as to how China might behave. On the one hand, hawks feared a nuclear China would be more adventurous and use their newfound nuclear capacity to achieve its communist aims in Asia. Some also expected China to use its nuclear capability to support insurgency. President Kennedy was part of this faction.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, doves did not dismiss the fact China would use its nuclear capability to its advantage. However, they argued they would use it primarily for deterrent purposes and would not be much more aggressive in the future. A nuclear China would be restrained. Individuals with Asia portfolios were mostly espousing this view as will be demonstrated through the case.

However, both factions agreed a non-nuclear China would be preferable, and as such placed heavy emphasis on counterproliferation measures. The Kennedy administration emphasized that non-proliferation policies were built on crisis bargaining i.e. that the more nuclear power there was, the more difficult non-proliferation would become. These difficulties would arise from the hypothesized adventurous behavior of new nuclear states. From the January 17, 1961, National Intelligence report: “An increase in the number of states capable of using nuclear weapons—even as a threat—will also increase the chances for irrational and desperate action...At

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<sup>19</sup> General Curtis E. LeMay, Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to Secretary of Defense, "Study of Chinese Communist Vulnerability," 29 April 1963, with report on "Chinese Communist Vulnerability" attached, Top Secret Source: RG 59, Records of Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Office of the Country Director for the Republic of China, Top Secret Files Relating to the Republic of China, 1954-65, box 4, 1963 Top Secret Nuclear Capability Briefing Book on US-Soviet Non-Diffusion Agreement for Discussion at Moscow Meeting, appendix page 1. NSA EBB 38 doc 6.

a minimum, the spread of nuclear weapons capabilities will stir up additional political turmoil by encouraging intransigence in their possessors and by encouraging fear and counteraction among those who might consider themselves threatened.”<sup>20</sup> In sum, Washington believed nascent nuclear powers would not be restrained. An ability to signal differently and demonstrate an understanding of the roles of the game for nuclear powers would ease the fear of nuclear acquisition.

*The Chinese Nuclear Threat...And Early Discussion on Restraint*

While the Soviet Union remained the number one threat to U.S. security in the 1960s, the focus began to shift towards China, especially over the Formosa issue. A memo from the Joint Chief of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara in March 1961 highlighted how the balance of power was slowly shifting as Moscow’s conventional and nuclear forces increased: “The basic threat to US security is the determination and ability of the hostile Soviet and Chinese Communist regimes to direct their political and ideological influence and their rapidly growing military and economic strength toward shifting the power balance away from the West and, ultimately, toward achieving world domination.”<sup>21</sup> A similar argument was made for Chinese intentions and growing strength. According to Secretary of State Rusk, who made this point at a bilateral meeting with the UK in 1961: “Peiping continues its extreme hostility toward this country and its attitude to the new Administration is equally uncompromising. It continues to take the position that Formosa must become a part of Communist China... It was reiterated that the U.S. must get its troops off Formosa which is Peiping's traditional way of pressing for our abandonment of Formosa.” Rusk mentions

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<sup>20</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume VIII National Security Policy, eds. David W. Mabon and David S. Patterson (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1996), document 2.

<sup>21</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, eds. David W. Mabon and David S. Patterson (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2013), Document 9.

that he believed the situation would not be rectified by Washington; that any compromises should come from the Chinese Communist.<sup>22</sup>

This position was espoused by President Kennedy as well, especially in the context of Communist China's threat to the security of Mainland China. In response to a letter sent to him by President Chiang in April 1961, Kennedy is clear on what he sees as the Chinese threat, and the role Washington must play in the defense of Taiwan:

My government is keenly aware of the expansionist aims of world communism and of the particular threat posed by its sustained efforts to divide the free world. The Republic of China faces most directly the threat of communist aggression. Here the Communists do not conceal their aims, but rather they proclaim their "right" to attack Taiwan. I assure you, Mr. President, that my Government will faithfully adhere to its commitments under the Mutual Defense Treaty between our countries. We are mindful of Communist attempts to manipulate the United Nations so that it may serve as an instrument in their drive for world domination.<sup>23</sup>

This passage denotes an understanding of Communist China's foreign policy as being aggressive in general, but in particular towards Taiwan. Some of these points were further discussed in a meeting which took place in Vienna between Kennedy and Khrushchev in June 1961. Kennedy was not impressed by how hostile Peiping had been towards Washington in general, and himself more specifically. Khrushchev mentioned the situation could rapidly be settled if the U.S. left Taiwan, which Kennedy refused to entertain on the basis of U.S. national security, which sounded "strange" to Khrushchev. Kennedy interjected that "the situation should be viewed in the light of Chinese hostility." Khrushchev replied that "the Chinese cannot reconcile themselves with US

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<sup>22</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia, eds. Edwards C. Keefer, David W. Mabon, and Harriet Dashiell Schwar (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1996), document 13.

<sup>23</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia, eds. Edwards C. Keefer, David W. Mabon, and Harriet Dashiell Schwar (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1996), document 21.

bases on Taiwan.” After some remarks about U.S. bases near the Soviet Union, he returned to the subject of China: “Thus, Mr. Khrushchev continued, the President's argument only fortifies the views of the Chinese. The US will not leave Taiwan and force will have to be used. This is a sad thing indeed.”<sup>24</sup> These statements and the hawkish positions espoused by Kennedy in this discussion would be echoed throughout the counterproliferation process.

By February 1961 the Department of the Air Force forecasted a Chinese nuclear detonation between 1962 and 1963. Their analysis offered two scenarios: one where the Soviets provided significant assistance to their ally, and one in which the Chinese go it alone. If the latter case materialized, the report stipulated it would delay by at least a decade Beijing's delivery capabilities. It also warns of possible aggressive behavior on the part of the Chinese: “CHICOMS [Communist China] may use their nuclear capability military as well as politically. Their foreign policy will become more aggressive and adventuristic, with emphasis on ‘nuclear blackmail’ of other Asian countries, particularly Taiwan and Korea, and possibility Japan, India, and Pakistan.” The above scenarios would be exacerbated if the Sino-Soviet entente remained strong. The proposed policy entailed selected nuclear technological transfers to U.S. allies in the region and beyond, including Australia, Japan, and India, as well as exploiting “any fissures in the Sino-Soviet relationships.”<sup>25</sup> On top of this, the Policy Planning Council recommended that, in order to reassure its allies in the region that a Chinese detonation would not change much, to “avoid statements or actions which unnecessarily contribute to the view that Communist China's military strength and

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<sup>24</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, document 29.

<sup>25</sup> Memorandum from Lt. General John K. Gerhart, Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans & Programs, U.S. Air Force, to Air Force Chief of Staff Thomas White, "Long-Range Threat of Communist China," 8 February 1961. 1-6. NSA EBB 38 doc 1.

expected acquisition of nuclear weapons make it too powerful for its neighbors to resist.”<sup>26</sup> At this point there was no ambiguity: the Chinese were seeking nuclear weapons. “The NIE made clear that fact that it is no longer a question of whether Peiping is engaged in a nuclear weapons program, but only of when a detonation may be expected.”<sup>27</sup> Washington in the early 1960s was primarily concerned by the potential instability of a nuclear China in Asia, but also the future of Chinese policy and action in Asia.

The Chinese nuclear threat depended greatly on geopolitical proximity. In a letter written by George McGhee, the Undersecretary for Political Affairs to the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Robert Manning, McGhee surmises Asian countries had a strong aversion to nuclearization in the area: “For the most part, public as well as governmental attitudes in Asia toward nuclear weapons are surcharged with strong negative overtones,” but that “[t]he further a country is removed from the borders of Communist China, the less chance there seems to be a panic or precipitate policy shifts.” Reactions from countries such as Japan and India were considered a mix between balancing and bandwagoning behavior, but McGhee had no doubt that “the Chicomps will launch an intensive, large scale propaganda campaign to exploit the event,” and they would sell their nuclear program as an inevitability to be lived with, but more importantly that this would soon “position [China] to dominate Asia militarily,” which would in turn affect Washington’s “political and military positions in Asia” and would create security issues for “overseas bases, the deployment of forces, and contingency plans for military operations.” The list of solutions provided in the memo included bolstering the U.S. deterrent posture in the region

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<sup>26</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, document 76.

<sup>27</sup> Memorandum from John M. Steeves, Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, to Roger Hilsman, Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "National Intelligence Estimate on Implications of Chinese Communist Nuclear Capability," 12 April 1961. NSA EBB 38 doc 2, 1.

as a way to maintain superiority and provide reassurances to allies. At this point, overt military actions were not discussed.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, in a memorandum addressed to George McGhee sent by Dean Rusk on September 20, 1962, he had decided to engage in a “Program to Influence World Opinion with Respect to a Chicom Nuclear Detonation,” as a way to reassure allies of U.S. commitments but also to reduce the relevance of a Chinese nuclear device.<sup>29</sup>

China sought to signal it would be a restrained nuclear power early on. Records of an August 1961 diplomatic discussion in Warsaw between Chinese ambassador Wang and Jacob D. Beam, who was the ambassador to Poland at the time, showcases this. During the meeting Wang is particularly upfront in arguing his country had no interest in adventurous policies that might be hurtful to Washington. Wang stated: “China will never threaten US interests and will never expand outwards. This is because not only does China have sufficient resources and territory for its own development, but also (and this is not least important) because socialist system forbids expansionist policy.” The argument is mostly couched in geopolitical terms: China is far from the U.S. As such, they have little to fear. To show its good faith, the Chinese proposed the “creation of a nuclear free zone in the Pacific.”<sup>30</sup> This is reminiscent of a similar argument made by Premier Chou-Enlai a few years prior where he argued in favor of a nuclear free-zone.<sup>31</sup> The proposal is not meant to convey that China would forgo its nuclear ambitions, but instead that it would be willing to constrain its own behavior the way the Soviet Union and the Americans had done in the past. This memo is one example of a constant signal China was sending: it would be responsible

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<sup>28</sup> Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs George McGhee to Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Robert Manning, “Program to Influence World Opinion With Respect to a Chicom Nuclear Detonation,” 24 September 1962, NSA EBB 38 doc 4.

<sup>29</sup> Decision memorandum by Secretary of State Rusk attached, dated 20 September 1962, 2, NSA EBB 38 doc 4.

<sup>30</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, document 52.

<sup>31</sup> “Documents on Disarmament 1960,” *Department of State Publication*, July 1961, 180-181.

nuclear power and Washington should not fear them. While this message was accepted by some in Washington, it was rejected by many as well, including President Kennedy.

Moreover, the fear of a particularly aggressive China was not shared across the board. Decision-makers in more general security positions, including the Secretary of State and of Defense, were having negative perceptions of future Chinese intentions and behavior, whereas individuals in departments with portfolios more closely affiliated with Asian affairs or nuclear proliferation had a more optimistic outlook. These optimistic arguments were generally made from a technological ineptitude standpoint, i.e. Peiping's nuclear ambitions are not particularly threatening as they won't be able to either enrich enough fissile material to be a problem, as argued by the "Panel on the Cutoff of the Production of Fissionable Materials for Weapons." However, it still allows for some hope that the Chinese might restrain their behavior in the near future and engage in broader confidence building measures with the United States.<sup>32</sup> The May 1962 NIE made similar points but instead of technology put emphasis on past Chinese behavior: "We believe that over the next few years Communist China will follow relatively conservative and rational policies of the kind recently instituted." While they expect China to remain aggressive in pursuit of its interests to the detriment of U.S. preferences, especially in trying to get Washington out of its sphere of influence, the report did not presume expansionist or predatory behavior in the future: "Communist China almost certainly does not intend to attempt the open military conquest of any Far Eastern country during the period of this estimate, although it would almost certainly be willing to take military action to defend Communist interests in North Vietnam and North Korea and, probably in Laos."<sup>33</sup> More pessimistic arguments, often from the Intelligence Community, saw

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<sup>32</sup> FRUS 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 11.

<sup>33</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, document 107.



China as negotiating solely for its own gain. For example, it was thought China only cared about the issue of arms control and disarmament in cases where it had something to gain, “Peiping’s primary interest in disarmament, therefore, lies in the political gains—diplomatic recognition, the return of Taiwan, admission to the UN—which it hopes to extract when its participation in disarmament negotiations is sought.”<sup>34</sup>

As the Chinese nuclear project progressed, so did Washington’s perception of it. While it was generally recognized that status concerns were an intrinsic part of China’s decision to nuclearize, the question of deterrence surfaced as well, namely deterring possible Western intervention in China. From the 1962 NIE: “They probably reason that possession of advanced weapons would support more aggressive Chinese policies in these areas and would tend to deter strong Western responses.” Nuclear capability would increase its deterrent posture while providing Peiping with “the international status they seek.”<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the language in most official declassified documents began to change as well. It began to be an accepted fact that China would become nuclear. For example, take this declaration made by President Kennedy to the 196<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Security Council: “When the Chinese get missiles and bombs and nuclear weapons, for example, what effect will that have on our dispositions in Southeast Asia?”<sup>36</sup> The statement is no longer whether Communist China develop nuclear weapons, but when. While the objective in many policy documents remained a non-nuclear South Asia,<sup>37</sup> a future with a nuclear China was beginning to be envisioned, and it fostered preventive strike debates.

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<sup>34</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 13.

<sup>35</sup> National Intelligence Estimate 13-2-62, “Chinese Communist Advanced Weapons Capabilities,” 25 April 1962, Top Secret. Source: Freedom of Information release by Central Intelligence Agency, 5. NSA EBB 38 doc 3.

<sup>36</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VIII National Security Policy, document 69.

<sup>37</sup> FRUS 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 181.

Similar assessments continued to be made, especially projection into the future. National Intelligence, in September 1961, delivered a ten-year projection of Chinese posture in which it would remain an adversary of the United States into the 1970s, but that their nuclear forces would not come close to what Moscow possessed. On Chinese leadership it stated: “In 1971 mainland China will probably continue to be under the control of a ruthless, determined, and unified Communist leadership which remains basically hostile to the US.” The increasing power capabilities of the Chinese would also make them significantly less beholden to Moscow when it came to foreign policy making, although the communist cause would still provide some unitary force in times of cooperative needs between the two powers. Finally, by 1971 it expected a “modest stockpile” of nuclear weapons, as well as a rudimentary assortment of delivery mechanisms and vehicles.<sup>38</sup>

The Intelligence Community was not particularly sold on the idea of an aggressive and dangerously adventurous China if it was to become nuclear. Take, for example, the following statement made by the then head of the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Roger Hilsman. Hilsman, acknowledging the “cautious,” of the Chinese during the Taiwan Strait Crisis, stated: “it [would] not change the balance of power in Asia, much less throughout the world.”<sup>39</sup> This awareness from the Chinese, and their lack of reckless adventurism in the Crisis, led Hilsman to predict a nuclear China would not seek to overthrow the status quo.

This restraint in the Taiwan Strait Crisis had been acknowledged in a February 19, 1961, memo from Parsons, the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, to Secretary Rusk. In

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<sup>38</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia, document 62.

<sup>39</sup> Gordon H. Chang, “JFK, China, and the Bomb,” *The Journal of American History* 74, no. 4 (1988): 1309

the document, Parsons discusses how the Chinese had respected the talks and did not show overt aggression. In fact, they were the ones who agreed to join the negotiating table first:

The talks have apparently acted as a partial damper on Chinese Communist military actions against Taiwan, i.e., since August 1955 Peiping has resorted to force in the Taiwan Strait area only during a period when the talks were not in session, and the subject of renunciation of force was not being actively pursued by us. After having failed to gain Kinmen (Quemoy) through its attacks of August-September 1958, Peiping then took the initiative in proposing that the meetings be resumed.<sup>40</sup>

This memo is also interesting because it highlights how they believed the diplomatic channels with the Chinese Communists were good and were an appropriate way to discuss nuclear issues.<sup>41</sup> This is important as the channels of communication between the U.S. and China made it possible for the latter to signal restraint to the other. There was some communication between the two, making it possible for both sides discuss any disagreement or misperceptions.

A later document sent by Harriman to Under Secretary McGhee follow-up on the argument stating he did not expect China to be aggressive (even nuclear) in the Offshore Islands because of previous signals: “This being said, it should also be remarked that Peiping's fundamental national interest would argue strongly against actual use of nuclear weapons against the Offshore Islands.” Since Beijing had always been overtly critical of Washington for their use of nuclear weapons against Japan, it would go counter to their interests to turn around and use the bomb. They might become a bit more risks acceptant in their foreign policy, but not in a way where it would risk escalation.<sup>42</sup>

This, however, was not the view of President Kennedy, who did not seem to be won over by arguments being made regarding future Chinese behavior. While members of the national

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<sup>40</sup> FRUS 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia, document 4.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia, document 114.

security community might have seen a nuclear China more as a status quo power, Kennedy saw it as the primary threat facing the United States moving forward. An excellent example of this is the following conversation between John McCone and McGeorge Bundy on January 10, 1963. Bundy mentioned the following after being asked the ETA on China's nuclear program:

the President felt that this was probably the most serious problem facing the world today and intimated that we might consider a policy of now indicating that further effort by the Chinese Communists in the nuclear field would be unacceptable to us and that we should prepare to take some form of action unless they agreed to desist from further efforts in this field. Bundy said that he felt the President was of a mind that nuclear weapons in the hands of the Chinese Communists would so upset the world political scene it would be intolerable to the United States and to the West. [...] It appeared to me that Cuba and the Communist China nuclear threat are two issues foremost in the minds of the highest authority and therefore should be treated accordingly by CIA.<sup>43</sup>

This quote showcases well how Kennedy believed China would be aggressive with the bomb, and would more than likely try to compel the U.S. Similar language will be used later on by supporters of a preventive attack against China. It is also much of the rationale used behind the test ban treaty, which served as the main non-proliferation vehicles towards the Chinese.

#### *Nonproliferation Efforts during the Kennedy Years: The Limited Test Ban Treaty*

While the Kennedy administration was divided on how a nuclear China would act and how threatening it would be, there was agreement that a non-nuclear China would be preferable. Containing Beijing's nuclear ambitions was part of larger counterproliferation calculation of the Kennedy administration. If it acquiesced to the nuclearization of some states and not others, it would make future nonproliferation efforts harder.<sup>44</sup> The Kennedy-Khrushchev years were marked by a powerful effort by both states to ratify the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT), which was eventually signed in Moscow on October 10, 1963. The Test Ban was the culmination of a decade

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<sup>43</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia, document 162.

<sup>44</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 80.

plus effort to restrict nuclear tests between Washington and Moscow. While the terms and scope of the treaty were initially larger and had provisions for no-test whatsoever, the final treaty was modified to accommodate some form of testing (subterranean) and ensure its ratification by the Soviet Union. An often-raised point during the negotiations was whether the treaty would survive without China as a signatory.<sup>45</sup> Importantly, the treaty was a way for the United States to constrain the Chinese nuclear program.

China expressed vocally, through state-controlled channels, its refusal to join any types of agreement which would constrain its nuclear ambition.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, Moscow had shown some reticence to the treaty as long as Paris and London remained out of it. Moreover, Moscow was ambivalent on whether the treaty could actually deter the Chinese from acquiring nuclear weapons. Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, for example, saw the treaty as a way to make the situation less tense but that “in and of itself it [the test ban] would not constitute disarmament.” He also rebuffed the implications that Moscow was stalling on the treaty due to Beijing’s motivations.<sup>47</sup> It is possible Gromyko had an eye to the future in making this argument. The test ban could work in reducing overall instability, and it would apply to the Chinese once they had acquired their nuclear capability. The Chinese would abide by the rules but would not be deterred of acquisition.

The initial reluctance by the Soviet Union did not stop Washington from seeking its cooperation on the issue. National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, in a letter to President Kennedy in November 1962, sounded the alarm on the necessity to engage Moscow directly on

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<sup>45</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 243, 259; FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia, document 164

<sup>46</sup> Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

<sup>47</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 231.

the question of Chinese non-proliferation. Stating that “A Red China nuclear presence is the greatest single threat to the status quo over the next few years,” and that it might be a good idea to officially “raise with Khrushchev directly the question of Chinese agreement to a test ban.” While Bundy believed Khrushchev would demure at the onset, it might be possible to bring him to see how “a test ban would give leverage for both of us against Peking.”<sup>48</sup> President Kennedy went further acquiescing that: “Our primary purpose in trying to get a treaty with Russia is to halt or delay the development of an atomic capability by the Chinese Communist.” If China became nuclear, Kennedy thought, it would be more difficult for Washington to deliver on its security guarantees made to allies in the region.

However, Kennedy did not see the absence of China from a potential treaty as such a problem. He stated: “A test ban including only the USSR, the British, and the U.S. would not be very meaningful except in regard to the Chinese problem which the Russians are believed to be as concerned as we are.”<sup>49</sup> This was reiterated more forcefully by Kennedy in a meeting he had on February 8, 1963, with the most important players of his administration, including Vice President Johnson, Secretary Rusk, Paul Nitze, and Robert McNamara among others. Paul Nitze, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, summarizing the words of the President mentions that “the whole reason for having a test ban is related to the Chinese situation. Otherwise, it wouldn't be worth the disruption and fighting with Congress, etc.” In a meeting of the Joint Chief of Staff taking place in the late summer of 1963, it felt “there would be “much life left in the treaty” if the Chinese Communists undertook extensive testing.”<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the President was fully cognizant that Moscow might try to shirk the terms of the deal. However, he

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<sup>48</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 243.

<sup>49</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VIII National Security Policy, document 125.

<sup>50</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 362.

believed that the implementation of the test ban should be viewed in terms: “compare what they might gain by cheating with the advantages that banning tests would have with respect to the Chinese situation.”<sup>51</sup> In fact, Moscow seemed to agree with Kennedy’s position on the issue. Moscow saw the test ban as a way to apply normative pressure on China. As stated, “if the United States and the Soviet Union agreed, world opinion would prevent China from acting independently.”<sup>52</sup>

Other problems stalled the negotiations on the test-ban treaty. First, Washington thought that the influence of the Soviet Union on the Chinese nuclear policies was all but gone, which led President Kennedy to believe the test ban treaty was a non-starter.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, by April 1963 Secretary of State Dean Rusk believed: “Khrushchev is not going to move on the test ban issue at this time... This and other evidence suggest that Khrushchev has probably given his agreement to further tests by the Soviet Union.”<sup>54</sup>

It is under those circumstances that the most salient discussions surrounding a possible preventive attack took place.

#### *Preliminary Discussions on Preventive Attacks*

Discussions about a potential preventive attack against Chinese nuclear installations in a bid to force Beijing into reconsidering its program picked up steam in early 1963, as intelligence

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<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, Kennedy floated the idea of transferred nuclear technology to Paris in an effort to buy them off and forgo testing. Paul Nitze disagreed with the idea believing that if the U.S. proceeded with this exchange, the Soviet Union were liable to believe Washington was planning on providing nuclear assistance to Germany as well, which could lead to an unpredictable chain reaction. See FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 262.

<sup>52</sup> Letter, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs W. Averell Harriman to President John F. Kennedy, 23 January 1963, Secret, enclosed with letter from Harriman to Evelyn Lincoln, 23 January 1963. NSA EBB 38 doc 5, 2-3.

<sup>53</sup> FRUS, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 272.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, Document 281.

reports began to predict a Chinese detonation for the end of the year at worse, and in 1964 at best. Some of the earliest indications we have of important individuals within the Kennedy administration floating the possibility of a preventive attack against Chinese facilities are found within the Harriman papers. W. Averell Harriman, who was Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. Recalling a discussion he had with an agent of Moscow on the normative effect a nuclear test ban would have on China, Harriman stated:

The earnest manner in which he spoke gave me the impression that what the Kremlin has in mind was that with such an agreement, together we could compel China to stop nuclear development, threatening to take out the facilities if necessary. In any event, I was glad to learn that you put this subject so high on your priority list.<sup>55</sup>

It seems here that Harriman was overly optimistic when it came to the meaning of the Soviet officer statement. It is possible additional talks were held between the two that were not reported by the author, which would explain why Harriman believed a preventive attack would be in the cards following this discussion. In any case, this statement appears to be part of the basis on which the Kennedy administration would eventually approach Khrushchev to discuss a potential attack on Chinese nuclear facilities.

A report prepared by General Curtis L. Lemay for Paul Nitze, who was Acting Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, at the end of April 1963 outlined the steps which could be taken in order to constraint nuclear development in China. The report is clear diplomacy has to come first, either directly engaging the Chinese so they accepted a negotiated settlement, or through multilateral engagement and sanctions. However, Lemay's report does not rule out preventive attacks through conventional means on nuclear facilities, even suggesting the use of "a tactical nuclear weapon on

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<sup>55</sup> Letter, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs W. Averell Harriman to President John F. Kennedy, 23 January 1963, Secret, enclosed with letter from Harriman to Evelyn Lincoln, 23 January 1963. NSA EBB 38 doc 5, 3.



a selected CHICOM target.”<sup>56</sup> However, force was not the preferred option. As Harriman had done, the possibility of cooperation with the Soviet was argued to be the most adequate solution.

Citing Lemay directly:

The Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that the best means of effectively bringing about Chinese adherence to a nuclear test ban treaty lies in joint US/Soviet measures, since the Soviets are in the better position to exercise the leverage on Communist China. They recognize the difficulties inherent in such a cooperative approach but still believe this has the major potential for success...The CHICOMs are capable of responding to any actions taken against them in a variety of ways ranging from propaganda, psychological warfare, and threats up to an including overt military aggression in many geographical locations...Under most circumstances, the United States has the military forces and capability to counter quickly any military action which may be initiated by CHICOMs. This assumes timely decisions by the United States and a determination to use requisite force as may be required by the situation.<sup>57</sup>

While the United States preferred trilateral diplomacy in this case as they did not think they could offer anything the Chinese might wanted, Washington was also cognizant that any windows of opportunity to engage militarily with the Chinese would need to be used swiftly as they had important military capabilities of their own.

Diplomatically, Moscow had shown some reluctance to engage China on its nuclear program due to NATO.<sup>58</sup> The West was expanding its deterrent community, and it is entirely possible Moscow was rethinking its aversion to a nuclear China. Washington arguably understood Moscow’s concern. Talking points prepared ahead of Harriman’s diplomatic visit to the Soviet Union in June of 1963 propose to seek a “tacit understanding” with Moscow on cooperative

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<sup>56</sup> General Curtis E. LeMay, Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to Secretary of Defense, "Study of Chinese Communist Vulnerability," 29 April 1963, with report on "Chinese Communist Vulnerability" attached, Top Secret Source: RG 59, Records of Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Office of the Country Director for the Republic of China, Top Secret Files Relating to the Republic of China, 1954-65, box 4, 1963 Top Secret Nuclear Capability Briefing Book on US-Soviet Non-Diffusion Agreement for Discussion at Moscow Meeting. NSA EBB 38 doc 2.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>58</sup> McGeorge Bundy, Memorandum of Conversation with Ambassador Dobrynin, at lunch May 17, 1963. NSA EBB 38 doc 7.

measures to constrain China's nuclear effort which would not be made public.<sup>59</sup> Harriman was given carte blanche on the issue. He could: "go as far as he wished in exploring the possibility of a Soviet-American understanding with regard to China."<sup>60</sup> We can infer from this discussion that Moscow would not be averse to add an additional deterrent force against NATO.<sup>61</sup>

The potential success of an overture to the Soviet was discussed again in a cabinet meeting held on June 21, 1963, William C. Foster, the director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, stated: "if we could get together with the USSR, the Chinese could be handled [DELETED] Bundy agreed that the Russians may insist to the Chinese that they desist from their nuclear weapons development."<sup>62</sup> What was redacted in the memo is open to speculations, but future discussions between the Soviets and the Americans make it plausible Foster believed Washington and Moscow deliver a successful preventive strike is acting in concert. This re-emphasizes an important theme going through the 1963 negotiations: The United States believed the Soviets were on the same page as them: a non-nuclear China would be in their best interest overall.

President Kennedy was also of the mind that it would not be particularly difficult to disarm the Chinese by force if need be. According to documents analyzed by William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, Kennedy was thinking of trading the multilateral force (MLF) to gain Moscow's help in a preventive strike. They further report Kennedy's thinking on the feasibility of such a strike:

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<sup>59</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 296.

<sup>60</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 241. Cited from Karl P. Mueller, Jasen J. Castillo, Forrest E. Morgan, Negeen Pegahi, and Brian Rosen, "Striking First: Preemptive and Preventive Attack in U.S. National Security Policy," *RAND* (2006): 157

<sup>61</sup> It has been argued elsewhere that the Soviet transferred sensitive nuclear technology to the Chinese in order to turn them into a proxy deterrent against the West. For this argument see Julian Schofield. *Strategic Nuclear Sharing* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

<sup>62</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 297.

“You know, it wouldn't be too hard if we could somehow get kind of an anonymous airplane to go over there, take out the Chinese facilities-they've only got a couple-and maybe we could do it, or maybe the Soviet Union could do it, rather than face the threat of a China with nuclear weapons.”<sup>63</sup> President Kennedy would recommend later on to approach the Soviets to see if they would be willing to participate in this type of action.

Reports begun to emerge in the summer of 1963 as to the actual effect of a nuclear capability in the hands of the Chinese, and how the U.S. expected them to behave. The June 1963 National Intelligence Estimate, which placed a potential nuclear test by Beijing near by the end of 1964, did not believe nuclear capability would change Chinese behavior much. The language used in the memo is reminiscent of restraint: the intelligence community did not believe China would become expansionist overnight, nor would they use nuclear weapons with this purpose in mind. It reads: “We do not believe that the explosion of a first device, or even the acquisition of a limited nuclear weapons capability, would produce major changes in Communist China’s foreign policy in the sense that the Chinese would adopt a general policy of open military aggression.” However, it did argue it would bolster their current hegemonic tendencies in the region. The report, however, mentions it might lead to broader insecurity in Asia, especially for Tokyo or Seoul.<sup>64</sup> The July estimate went a bit further. It argued Beijing would understand that their coercive power did not change much, and as such would be unlikely to be more aggressive: “China’s military leaders would recognize their limited capabilities had not altered the real power balancer among the major states...they would recognize that they remain unable either to remove or neutralize the US presence in Asia and would not become willing to take significantly greater military risks.”<sup>65</sup> In

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<sup>63</sup> Cited in William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, “Whether to ‘Strangle the Baby in the Cradle’: The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960-64,” *International Security* 25, no. 3 (Winter 2000): 54.

<sup>64</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 301.

<sup>65</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VIII National Security Policy, document 138.

other words, China understood the workings of deterrence and were rational enough not to engage in risk taking in their disfavor. While previous exercise of restraint through the practice of deterrence is not directly acknowledged, the report does base its recommendation on past behavior to make their assessment of the future.

Khrushchev and others continued to downplay the significance of a nuclear China, but more importantly questioned the assumption made by Washington that Beijing would behave differently than London or Paris. He mentioned to Foy D. Kohler, ambassador to the Soviet Union, on July 15, 1963, that “only US and USSR can ‘accumulate nuclear weapons.’ UK and France can't and China wouldn't be able to.”<sup>66</sup> Kennedy did not share the same view of the situation as Khrushchev. He thought, “small forces in the hands of people like ChiComs could be very dangerous.” Moreover, he asked Harriman to question Khrushchev directly on what the Soviets would be ready to do as counterproliferation. Kennedy stated: “You should try to elicit Khrushchev’s view of means of limiting or preventing Chinese nuclear development and his willingness either to take Soviet action or to accept US action aimed in this direction.” This request is made within context: Kennedy believed Khrushchev was part of the test ban as a way to “isolate Red China in the international communist movement.”<sup>67</sup> Secretary Rusk was of the same opinion as Kennedy when it came to the damage a small arsenal could do in the hands of the Chinese.<sup>68</sup> The request made by Kennedy to Harriman, to ask whether Moscow would stand aside if the U.S. got involved with China, is particularly important: it means they were considering unilateral military actions.

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<sup>66</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 325

<sup>67</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia, document 180.

<sup>68</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 326.

By July of 1963 the United States believed they had confirmation of what they thought was Moscow's objective when it came to China: containment. This was proven, according to Harriman, by how dedicated Khrushchev was to the test ban, but specifically on how insistent Moscow was on Paris' participation.<sup>69</sup> In sum:

His [Khrushchev] first preoccupation is his battle with ChiComs and particularly effect on Soviet leadership of international Communist movement. Khrushchev wants to use the test ban treaty in this connection. Since he is unable to get the ChiComs to agree to join the test ban, he will attempt to isolate them. He will attempt to get the maximum number of nations to adhere to test ban treaty, thus leaving the Chinese isolated if possible as the only nation refusing to cooperate on this highly emotional subject to the underdeveloped nations. This explains his particular emphasis on France's adherence.... This theory was substantiated by talk I had about Red China with Yuri Zhukov at Spaso House. When Zhukov was in Washington last year he told me that test ban agreement was imminent. When I asked him about the participation of Red China, he replied that if the US and USSR agree, world opinion would force Red China to adhere.<sup>70</sup>

At this point, however, Beijing had already stated they would not adhere to the treaty.<sup>71</sup> While Harriman's theory might have been sound, the Soviets were more lenient when it came to possible application of the treaty. While they did want it, they also believed the treaty itself could not be used in case non-proliferation effort failed. As Foreign Minister Gromyko stated: "We have to have this so that when those Chinese have their first nuclear explosion, we will have a basis on which to call them to account."<sup>72</sup> While Moscow may have been seeking to add to its deterrent power against the United States, it still saw the test ban as a way to control the Chinese.

The Soviets' thoughts were further clarified in a July meeting between Harriman and Khrushchev. During the meeting Khrushchev once again vouched for the future restraint of the Chinese and their intent to use the bomb as a deterrent, and not compellent. While Khrushchev is

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<sup>69</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 342.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, Document 331.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, Document 344.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, Document 349.

candid on the state of Moscow's relationship with China: the Chinese have been severing ties with the Soviets across the board, he did not seem particularly worried. The conversation soon turned to Chinese nuclear weapons. He once again downplayed the significance of a Chinese bomb. He stated Beijing was "developing very slowly in this respect."<sup>73</sup> Asked directly by Harriman if he was worried of a Chinese nuclear test: "he was not concerned at all, even if Chinese were to do it soon. UK and France had also exploded nuclear bombs but who was concerned?" Moreover, Khrushchev was less worried as he thought it would bolster deterrence on his side as China was developing its arsenal primarily to deter the West.<sup>74</sup> Prompted on whether China would become aggressive in the future, Khrushchev had the following to say: "If sometimes irresponsible or militant statements were made, that was only natural because whenever someone lacked means he was one who shouted loudest. On other hand, when one possessed means he was more restrained because he knew that his adversary was aware of what he had for defense and even for attack. (Gromyko interjected attacked should be understood as retaliation, and Khrushchev agreed he had meant attack in return for aggression.)"<sup>75</sup> This is a particularly clear statement by the Soviet leadership that they believed China would show restraint in the future because they understood how nuclear weapons worked, what they did, and how coercive diplomacy before and after nuclear ascendancy operated. A few weeks after this meeting took place, McCone spoke with the Joint

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<sup>73</sup> It is also important to note that Khrushchev blatantly lies to Harriman during the meeting. He is asked directly whether the Soviet Union provided technology to the Chinese, and replied they did not give "comprehensive assistance," which is not accurate. FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 354. On the nuclear exchange between the Moscow and Beijing see Lorenz Luthi. *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>74</sup> Khrushchev was also asked by Harriman if he did not fear that China's arsenal might not be used to deterrent Moscow instead, to which wondered: "whether US was distressed about UK and French nuclear capability, noting US also had differences with UK and France but basically was in agreement with them. Same situation applied to USSR and China; USSR had common basic Communist concepts with China." Khrushchev is essentially arguing here that the U.S. is worried about Chinese nuclear weapon because they do not share the same identity. See FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 354.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

Chief of Staff and mentioned he did not think Moscow “would mount any preventive strike against its [China] nuclear capability.”<sup>76</sup> This would not stop Washington to ask later on, however.

Additional indications the Soviets believed China would be restrained with the bomb due to past behavior can be found in a meeting between President Kennedy and Ambassador Dobrynin, which took place in late August 1963. While Khrushchev had previously mentioned to Kennedy the Chinese had been cautious in the past, Dobrynin argued they would be cautious in the future as well: “Dobrynin admitted that the Chinese felt entitled to have some bombs of their own, but that this would not affect the balance of power. He thought that when they had acquired some bombs and saw the effects of them, they would be more cautious.”<sup>77</sup> While the connection to previous deterrence posture is not made here, there is still an argument being made about the Chinese capacity to understand it. By acquiring the bomb, they would have an instinct as to how the rules of the game were with these types of weapons, which in this case is a deterrent and not offensive posture. While the argument made by Dobrynin here is similar to Kenneth Waltz’s optimist claim, states with nuclear weapons are more restrained due to the effect of the bomb, this imposes a counterfactual.<sup>78</sup> Would he have made this argument if he did not believe the Chinese to be restrained to begin with? The restraining effect of the bomb was not taken into consideration when Clinton sought to preventively strike against the North Korean nuclear program (Chapter 6), nor when it planned attacks on Iran, and struck Iraq (Chapter 6). Most of the argument presented by the Soviets until these remarks showcased a China who understood deterrence, had status quo aims, and had been restrained in past conflict. If this had not been the case, it is possible Dobrynin, and Khrushchev, would not have argued the bomb would make the Chinese leadership risk-averse.

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<sup>76</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 357.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, Document 365.

<sup>78</sup> Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better*.

However, while the Soviet Union was making the case to the Kennedy administration on Chinese restraint, the Government of the Republic of China (GRC) was making the opposite argument to U.S. representatives. The GRC saw an opportunity with the development of the nuclear program to engage their rival militarily. Moreover, the GRC was concerned with the geopolitical change a bomb would mean, and that it could lead to Chinese aggression towards Taiwan. In a meeting with McGeorge Bundy, General Chiang Ching-kuo relayed to the Americans that Chiang Kai-shek, the GRC president, was ready to take action if the United States backed the endeavor; actions short of large-scale conflict. The GRC was “prepared to assume full political responsibility for such action with U.S. support,” and they were “positive that if the GRC acts now, the Soviet Union will not go to the aid of the Chinese Communists.” Time was considered to be of the essence in order to “make it impossible for them to consolidate their position.”<sup>79</sup> While Bundy was sympathetic to the proposed course of action, he did not believe it was a realistic endeavor without Soviets support: “Mr. Bundy emphasized that the moment when action against the mainland can be taken without Soviet intervention is not yet here and may never arrive.”<sup>80</sup> Nonetheless, action on the nuclear issue was seen as desirable by both parties. Importantly, Bundy did not want to take any actions which might not be politically viable or useful, possibly signaling the U.S. might be able to live with a nuclear China.<sup>81</sup>

#### *Deterrence and the Chinese Nuclear Future*

Robert H. Johnson’s paper titled “A Chinese Communist Nuclear Detonation and Nuclear Capability: Major Conclusions and Key Issues,” is perhaps the best summary of the doves’ stance

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<sup>79</sup> Memorandum to McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President, from William E. Colby, for Deputy Director of Plans, Central Intelligence Agency, "Visit of General Chiang Ching-kuo," 19 September 1963, enclosing, "Meeting Between Mr. McGeorge Bundy and General Chiang Ching-kuo, 10 September 1963", Secret, 1-2. NSA EBB 38 doc 9.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 4.



on the Chinese understanding of deterrence and future restraint. Johnson, who was part of the State Department Policy Planning Council, argued China would not get more adventurous when it eventually gained nuclear capacity. First, "Apart from serving as an additional inhibition on some levels of U.S. attack upon the mainland, a Chinese nuclear capability need impose no new military restrictions on the U.S. response to aggression in Asia." Instead, it would make deterrence hold better due to the "unwillingness by the U.S. to assume the risks, in situations in which its interests were marginally engaged, of the absolute level of damage the ChiComs could inflict."<sup>82</sup> Previous restraint by the Chinese Communist informed the argument. In the paper he recalls how the Chinese had "sudden acceptance of a cease-fire and partial withdrawal after the invasion of India."<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Johnson believed "Chinese prudence in the use of military force reinforces conclusions emerging from military logic" that China would not use nuclear weapons to make gains in the future, ruling out the need for any preventive actions.<sup>84</sup> In fact, it was a potential lack of restraint by the United States that Johnson saw as more problematic. He believed that if the United States sought to fight the nuclear problem with China with increased emphasis on its own nuclear forces, it would push allies in the region from asking for assistance as they would not want to risk a nuclear conflict in their region. Moreover, it might push others to seek the bomb as it would be perceived as the proper foreign policy to adopt.<sup>85</sup> Johnson did not believe the Chinese

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<sup>82</sup> Robert H. Johnson, State Department Policy Planning Council, "A Chinese Communist Nuclear Detonation and Nuclear Capability: Major Conclusions and Key Issues," 15 October 1963, Secret. NSA EBB 38 doc 10.

<sup>83</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia, document 191. From the footnote: "The second major conclusion in the revised paper of October 15 reads: 'Whatever actual U.S. intentions, so long as the ChiComs have only soft, vulnerable delivery means, they will have to take account of the danger of a U.S. nuclear or non-nuclear counterforce attack as a possible U.S. response to major ChiCom aggression. This could increase ChiCom caution.' And 'Reference is to Issue No. 3 in the summary, which asked how the United States could meet probable Chinese Communist efforts to demonstrate peaceful intentions through proposals for Asian nuclear-free zones and the like with positive initiatives, without taking actions seriously unsettling to its Asian allies or inconsistent with other U.S. policies. Several actions were proposed, but bringing Communist China into the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Commission was specifically rejected.'"

<sup>84</sup> Robert H. Johnson, State Department Policy Planning Council, "A Chinese Communist Nuclear Detonation and Nuclear Capability: Major Conclusions and Key Issues," 15 October 1963, Secret. NSA EBB 38 doc 10.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

would be more aggressive, he expected them to act with restraint due to their previous measured behavior. While others in the administration disagreed, his point would gain some traction in the Kennedy, and later Johnson, administration.

Responses to Robert H. Johnson's paper carried a similar logic. Robert W. Komer, who was part of the National Security Council staff, had discussed with McGeorge Bundy the question of a nuclear China. Komer thought the Chinese would not be more aggressive once nuclear, but instead more restrained due to deterrence. They would maintain similar posture as in the past: "The consensus was that the Chinese would remain basically cautious in the overt use of force even after they acquired a few nucs; first use by them would be highly unlikely—instead they would see their nucs as a deterrent to escalation by us" and that any reasons to aggressively counter Chinese proliferation were now mostly moot.<sup>86</sup> Beijing understood nuclear weapons were meant to control escalation and help in war prevention.

However, President Kennedy would never see the paper. A possible preventive strike was "so far down the road I doubt JFK should be given this this year."<sup>87</sup> President Kennedy would be assassinated 17 days later on November 22, 1963, leading to his Vice President, Lyndon Johnson, to be sworn in on the same day. This would not stop discussion on possible preventive attacks, however. In October 1963 William Bundy, who was the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff for preventive attack plans against Chinese nuclear facilities. When the answer came in December, it explained it was possible to do so, but "recommended consideration of the use of nuclear weapons for such an attack."<sup>88</sup> The

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<sup>86</sup> FRUS, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia, document 193.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXX, China, eds. Harriet Dashiell Schwar (United States Government Printing Office, 1998), document 4.

planning for the attack would continue into 1964, as well as arguments as to the futility of doing so due to past Chinese behavior.

### **3. U.S. Non-Proliferation and China – The Johnson Years**

Since the Johnson administration was the closest in time to the detonation of a Chinese bomb, it saw its fair share of debates on the possibility of a preventive strike on Chinese facilities. While those in favor argued a nuclear China would be a significant threat to the U.S., and that a strike would not be too costly, those who argued against believed the strike would not be necessary because China understood how deterrence worked and as such would not be willing to use the bomb in a compellent and revisionist fashion. In the end, the latter arguably won the day, or at least delayed the decision to the point where acquisition was deemed a *fait accompli*, and no preventive plan was executed.

#### *Continued Planning for a Preventive Attack: Chinese Restraint and Second Overture to the Soviet*

In February 1964 the Joint Chiefs of Staff published the “Joint Strategic Objectives Plan for FY 1969-1971” outlining U.S. strategic interests and future threats. China figures prominently in the paper, but the language is reminiscent of the Robert Johnson paper: while another communist nuclear bomb would be a problem, it would not be destabilizing. The argument focuses on Beijing’s past military restraint and non-expansionist aims. The paper argues Beijing will continue its “wars of liberations” but mostly through non-military means. While it is expected the Chinese will continue to try and reduce American influence in Asia, it will do so in a risk-averse way. The entire paper speaks of risks and restraint and how China is expected to minimize the former and maximize the latter:

China's military force will probably not be used overtly except in defense of its own or satellite borders or, in the absence of US/Allied military power, to assert territorial claims against India. [...] Although it is possible that the ChiCom leaders would experience a dangerous degree of overconfidence, it is more likely that they will concentrate on furthering their established policies [...] *Communist China's military policy has always been characterized by caution in undertaking initiatives in the face of superior power. Hence, the decline in the relative effectiveness of its military equipment and weapons is likely further to temper its policy, especially in circumstances where it might confront US armed power or US-equipped Asian air forces.*[...] Considering the chances of retaliation, it is difficult to conceive of any situation in which Peiping would be likely to initiate the use of nuclear weapons in the next decade or so.<sup>89</sup>

Moreover, survival and territorial protection are listed as the highest priorities of Beijing. As such, a nuclear capability would not make them more adventurous, instead it would make them more cautious: “China’s leaders recognize that their limited capabilities will not alter the real power balance among the major states and could not do so in foreseeable future.”<sup>90</sup> Whenever the U.S. speaks of Chinese aggressivity it is generally in relation to Taiwan and a potential retaking by force, which is exacerbated if China becomes nuclear. An update to the aforementioned Joint Chief of Staff paper rebuffs this possibility stating: “While military limitations and concern over retaliation by the United States will deter Communist China from attempting a military conquest of Taiwan, they could undertake certain limited military action in the Taiwan Straits area to test Nationalist Chinese defenses and to probe US determination.”<sup>91</sup> Once again this debate showcases the dynamic behind U.S. decision-making when it comes to preventive attacks: proponents of the use of force will highlight the possibility of future aggression, whereas detractors will point to previous restraint and understanding of the principles of deterrence.

Policy Planning had a similar argument about the futility of a preventive attack against Chinese facilities. The paper overall agrees to Chinese restraint in the past, arguing that “the

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<sup>89</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume X, National Security Policy, eds. David S. Patterson (United States Government Printing Office, 2002), document 12. Emphasis is my own.

<sup>90</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume X, National Security Policy, document 12.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, document 43.

significance of such capability is not such as to justify the undertaking of actions which would involve great political costs or high military risks.” Moreover, an attack would not stop proliferation but only push it back a few years in the future. However, if a threat of an attack should be made, it should be done contingent on particularly offensive and adventurous Chinese policy:

Action against the ChiCom nuclear facilities which was incidental to other military actions taken against Communist China in response to Chinese aggression would generally be preferable to actions directed against nuclear facilities alone. Similarly, threats designed to deter ChiCom action should probably not be directed solely against nuclear facilities. (However, as stated in par. 3 there may be circumstances in which action limited to nuclear facilities may be preferred.)<sup>92</sup>

Diplomacy through arms control was advocated as the most efficient way forward on the issue because “[...] It is doubtful whether, even with completion of initial photographic coverage of the mainland, we will have anything like complete assurance that we will have identified all significant nuclear installations. Thus, even “successful” action may not necessarily prevent the ChiComs from detonating a nuclear device in the next few years.”<sup>93</sup> Overall the paper made the argument that arms control had better chances of success if the objective was to delay or completely stop proliferation. Not everyone agreed with this assessment, however. William Bundy and Michael V. Forrestal, a senior staff member of the National Security Council, believed the paper reduced the actual impact of a Chinese nuclear capability. The memo mentions they saw this “development would have far greater political consequences than does Rostow [who wrote “The Implications of a Chinese Nuclear Capability], and they are probably right since they are in a key position to influence our reaction.”<sup>94</sup> In the end, however, their perspective would be pushed away from the

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<sup>92</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XXX, China, document 24.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid..

<sup>94</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XXX, China, document 29

mainstream. Many subsequent policy documents referred to a nuclear China as a fact rather than a possibility.<sup>95</sup>

Further acknowledgement of previous restraint exercised by the Chinese came from a memo sent to President Johnson by his Secretary of State on May 1, 1964. The memo is a short summary of what a nuclear China would mean for the United States and Asia. Under the military effects subsection of the memo it read: “The ChiComs have demonstrated prudence in the use of military force. Their capability will be more important for its political-psychological than for its direct military effect – primarily because of the great disparity between U.S. and Chinese nuclear capabilities and vulnerabilities...This makes Chinese first-use of nuclear weapons unlikely.”<sup>96</sup> Regarding whether military means should be used to disarm Chinese nuclear facilities Rusk writes: “Would be undesirable except possibly as part of general action against the mainland in response to major ChiCom aggression.” The proposed course of action remained a mix of reassurances to allies and negotiations with the Soviet.<sup>97</sup> The restraint shown by the Chinese previously continues to condition U.S. response to its nuclear program.

The possibility of a preventive strike continued to be discussed at length through 1964. The shortcomings of this approach are summarized in a memo written by Robert H. Johnson in June 1964. While a preventive attack is seen as a way to reduce the likelihood of horizontal proliferation to India and Japan among others, many tangibles and intangibles made it a less than appealing option. Principally, Johnson wasn’t sure a preventive attack could stop China in its nuclear

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<sup>95</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XI, Arms Control and Disarmament, document 36

<sup>96</sup> Memorandum from Secretary of State Rusk to President Johnson, "Items for Evening Reading," 1 May 1964, enclosing W.W. Rostow, Chairman, Policy Planning Council to the President, "The Implications of a Chinese Communist Nuclear Capability," 30 April 1964, Secret. NSA EBB 38 doc 12.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

ambition. At best it would slow the process down. If it did destroy current Chinese capabilities, they could potentially be rebuilt in more secure fashion.<sup>98</sup> The political ramifications for the United States were not particularly appealing either:

In general, action against Communist Chinese facilities is subject, in varying degree, to the following kinds of adverse international political reaction: (a) it is an illustration of the U.S. unwillingness to accept the existence of Communist China as a major world actor; (b) it conflicts with U.S. efforts to argue the limited military significance of ChiCom nuclear capability; (c) it is an action with strong racist overtones – the white man (including the French) can develop the bomb, but it is not considered safe for colored people to possess them; (d) it is highly dangerous involving grave risk of precipitating war (or escalation of existing conflict) in Asia and even of bringing the Soviets to the support of the Chinese; and (e) it is another illustration of the U.S. preoccupation with military considerations.<sup>99</sup>

Due to the perceived pitfalls of a U.S. attack on Chinese facilities, the report proposes instead arms control efforts as the most viable solution. Moreover, going counter to the argument made by Rusk in the memo sent to President Johnson in 1964, the president did not believe it was more credible to attack Chinese nuclear facilities in case of conflict as they are located deep within China and “the action would be somewhat difficult to relate to a limited war action and could be readily misinterpreted by Peiping, Moscow, and/or non-Communist countries as a preface to broad-scale military action against the mainland.”<sup>100</sup> A counter proposition was to reach out to the Soviets and jointly provide assurance of retaliation in case of nuclear use by China.<sup>101</sup> Even Secretary Rusk, Robert McNamara, McCone, and President Johnson moved in this direction. In a cabinet meeting dated September 15, 1964: “we are not in favor of unprovoked unilateral U.S. military action against Chinese nuclear installations at this time. We would prefer to have a Chinese test take place

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<sup>98</sup> Memorandum, Robert H. Johnson, Department of State Policy Planning Council, "The Chinese Communist Nuclear Capability and Some 'Unorthodox' Approaches to the Problem of Nuclear Proliferation," 1 June 1964. NSA EBB 38 doc 13.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

than to initiate such action now... we would expect to give very close attention to the possibility of an appropriate military action against Chinese nuclear facilities.” Overture to Dobrynin on potential military actions towards China was requested.<sup>102</sup> Discussions remained vivid, however, as a detonation by the Chinese, and a tacit acquiescence by the United States, could easily open the flood gate of proliferation.<sup>103</sup> These statements made it clear the Americans had already acquiesced to a nuclear China because they did not believe it would be fundamentally dangerous. At that point in time, China had successfully demonstrated restraint.

One month before the first Chinese test, in September 1964, Robert H. Johnson sent a memo to the Policy Planning Council concerning the adequate nonproliferation policy to adopt towards Peiping. Preventive attack once again appeared as a potential solution. The logic behind an attack rested on maintaining stability in the region as an attack would “temporarily eliminate an important source of a possible chain reaction of proliferation and temporarily deprive the ChiComs of the political-psychological advantages of a nuclear capability.” These positive did not, however, outstrip the negative externalities of such an attack: “However, even if attack is successful effects will be temporary; political costs (except where we were responding to major ChiCom aggression) would be very great and long-lasting; such action might provoke a serious ChiCom military response.”<sup>104</sup> The memo is also revealing as to why the U.S. saw a nuclear China as a problem for its grand strategy in the region. Johnson writes: “it seems likely that ChiCom nuclear capability will increase fear that future wars in Asia will be nuclear and that for this and

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<sup>102</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XXX, China, document 49.

<sup>103</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XI, Arms Control and Disarmament, document 44.

<sup>104</sup> Memorandum, Robert H. Johnson, Policy Planning Council, to Henry Owen, "Thursday Planning Group Discussion of 'Communist China and Nuclear Proliferation,'" 2 September 1964. NSA EBB 38 doc 15.



other reasons there will be increasing pressure on U.S. land bases in the area.”<sup>105</sup> The memo instead proposes a variety of military and non-military means of non-proliferation.<sup>106</sup> It is interesting here how the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons is not the main concern for Johnson. We would expect the U.S. to be reluctant to let China develop a capability as it would not be able to engage it the same way. Instead, we see a larger deterrent issue, but this time one that seems closer to self-deterrence: the U.S. is afraid of not being able to wage war if necessary.

The two sides of the preventive (preemptive at this point) attack debate truly came to a head at the September 18, 1964, planning lunch in D.C. The memo reporting this lunch has Rowen arguing in favor of a preventive attack against China, and criticizing the paper prepared by Robert Johnson. On the other side, Rostow and Johnson argued there were reasons to doubt future Chinese aggressiveness. Rowen saw the nuclearization of China as a license for more aggressive policies moving forward, and proceeded to highlight the possible geopolitical and balance-of-power ramifications of a nuclear China. Recalling the nuclearization of Moscow, he stresses how they increased in relative power in the decade plus following their first detonation, and how this increase in capability probably made Moscow bolder, which led to the onset of the Korean War. While China would not reach the same level of capability as Moscow, it could “be more adventuresome once they went nuclear than the Soviet has been.” The second fear was they could develop intercontinental missile capability in the short to medium future, making America vulnerable. Finally, a nuclear China would be threatening to U.S. allies in the region, meaning Washington would have to up its security guarantees, which comes with a hefty price tag and could mean the nuclearization of others, including New Delhi. As such, a preventive attack did make sense:

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<sup>105</sup> Memorandum, Robert H. Johnson, Policy Planning Council, to Henry Owen, "Thursday Planning Group Discussion of 'Communist China and Nuclear Proliferation,'" 2 September 1964. NSA EBB 38 doc 15.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

Rowen thought it technically feasible to destroy the two key ChiCom installations by a limited non-nuclear air attack. We could (a) handle this as a completely open matter and justify it at the time; or (b) seize on any opportunity created, say by a major blow-up in SEA; or (c) make a secret attack. In the latter case, it was quite possible that Peiping would prefer to say nothing about it. Such a spoiling operation would gain us a 2–5 year delay, and also deter ChiCom rebuilding. How valuable were 2–5 years? To Rowen they could be quite important.<sup>107</sup>

China might want to retaliate, but Rowen wasn't particularly concerned about what they could actually do. As for Moscow, they would most likely agree with the action behind closed doors.<sup>108</sup>

George G. Rathjens, in a later rebuttal of the Johnson memo, argued in similar terms as Rowen. Rathjens dismissed the argument of insignificance of the Chinese arsenal, and as such, its minimal impact on Washington's capabilities. Rathjens believed the Chinese could use its newfound capabilities in an aggressive fashion, threatening U.S. security. He argued the asymmetry of stockpile sizes could work in China's favor: it could still threaten, and deliver, enough punishment on the U.S. even with a few bombs. Moreover, it could still place U.S. cities at risk and increase the likelihood of nuclear use by the Chinese in the Far East. In light of these developments, Rathjens proposed a more aggressive approach: "If it is judged that the Johnson paper may be deficient in these respects, further consideration of direct action against Chinese nuclear facilities, or at least consideration of exploration of that possibility with the Soviet Union, may be warranted."<sup>109</sup> However, according to the Nuclear vault, this option proposed by Rathjens was rejected by the authors of the Gilpatric report and did not appear in its print form.<sup>110</sup> The hawk position did not seem to take hold completely.

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<sup>107</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XXX, China, document 51.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> George G. Rathjens, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Destruction of Chinese Nuclear Weapons Capabilities, December 14, 1964. NSA EBB 38 doc 21.

<sup>110</sup> National Security Archives briefing book 38: "The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960-1964," eds. William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson. Washington, D.C: The George Washington University. Available at: [https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB38/ notes to document 21](https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB38/notes%20to%20document%2021). (assessed October 15, 2018).

Robert Johnson's disagreement rested on future power projection and restrained Chinese behavior. He did not believe China would achieve the kind of capability the Soviet did, and even if they did grow in relative power, "The US would still have great nuclear superiority as a deterrent, and perhaps an effective counter-force capability. The ChiComs would have to take into account possible pre-emptive US action if they brandished missiles in a crisis or at the least assume a disproportionate US retaliation if ChiComs used nucs." Chinese behavior, therefore, wouldn't change much. While Johnson conceded a possible increase in proliferation would be an issue, most countries who sought nuclear weapons would not be stopped by the souvenir of a U.S. attack on Chinese facilities. On the potential adventurism coming from China, Rostow dismissed the possibility:

With nuclear weapons comes caution. The Soviets advanced less after they had gone nuclear than before. They were more cautious in the 1959–61 Berlin crisis than in 1948–49. As soon as the ChiComs got nuclear weapons, they'd have to worry lest we might be more inclined to use nucs against them in a local conflict. So a ChiCom nuclear capability might actually operate to make the ChiComs more cautious.<sup>111</sup>

Rostow's point is most possibly made on the premises he had argued earlier in 1963: that China had shown restraint in the past.<sup>112</sup>

There was, at least from the available declassified documents, one last overture made by Washington to Moscow on a potential attack on Chinese nuclear facilities. Harriman had raised the point again to Dobrynin in later September 1964. Harriman had directly made Dobrynin aware that a joint attack was always an option for the Americans. The memo mentions that Dobrynin did not specifically address the question of a potential preventive attack. Harriman, however, thought the meaning of the reply given was: "he gave me clearly to understand that in the thinking of the

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<sup>111</sup> FRUS, Volume XXX, China, document 51.

<sup>112</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XXX, China, document 29.

Soviet Government the Chinese nuclear capability was already, in effect, taken for granted. He argued that Chinese nuclear weapons had no importance against the Soviet Union or against the U.S., and that therefore they had only a psychological impact in Asia, and he implied that this impact had no importance for his government.”<sup>113</sup> From the Soviet, the message was clear: it was ready to accept a nuclear China. U.S. documents from late September 1964 demonstrate how they had reached the same conclusion as the one provided by the Soviet Union. From the Department of State: “The United States has fully anticipated the possibility of Peiping’s entry into the nuclear weapons field and has taken it into full account in determining our military posture and our own nuclear weapons program. We would deplore atmospheric testing in the face of serious efforts made by almost all other nations to protect the atmosphere from further contamination and to begin to put limitations upon spiraling arms race.”<sup>114</sup> China officially became a nuclear power on October 16, 1964, following the test of their first fission bomb.

The Chinese were quick into publicly stating the doctrine for their newfound nuclear capability. Following the nuclear test, the Chinese leadership declared it would “not be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstances.”<sup>115</sup> The Chinese wanted to be clear they developed nuclear weapons strictly for deterrent purposes, and not to compel nuclear, and non-nuclear, states alike.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, China had made overture towards the United States to formalize non-use of nuclear weapons between the two, which the Chinese say the U.S. refused. In the words of Chou Enlai: “China has proposed to the United States that the two countries

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<sup>113</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XXX, China, document 54.

<sup>114</sup> Department of State, Transcript of Daily Press Conference, Thursday, September 29, 1964. NSA EBB 38 doc 17.

<sup>115</sup> Statement by the People’s Republic of China on 16 October 1964,” People’s Daily, 17 October 1964.

<sup>116</sup> Zhenqiang Pan, “A Study of China’s No-First-Use Policy on Nuclear Weapons,” *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 1, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 115–19.

undertake the obligation of not being the first to use nuclear weapons against each other. But U.S. imperialism has rejected China's proposal.”<sup>117</sup>

The immediate effect of the Chinese demonstration of its nuclear capabilities was an increase in U.S. allies' security concerns. Interestingly, the argument made by Washington to reassure them did not indicate it feared future Chinese adventurism. Upon being briefed by the CIA on the effect of a Chinese bomb and given reassurances by the U.S. it would extend its nuclear umbrella to Taiwan, President Chiang Ching-kuo painted a different picture. He stated, as reported in the cable, that: “CCNE had placed entirely different slant on views of Asian peoples. They are disturbed and scared. Said US statement on our foreknowledge and our reaffirmation of our defense commitment could be understood by Govt and leaders but not by the people...He said US policy statements could be understood by European nations but could not be sold here on Taiwan as this is a small island and could be obliterated with a few weapons.”<sup>118</sup> The issue with the nuclear umbrella was that it might not be available in time: “He said an attack on Taiwan would leave the Island desolated and US retaliation would be too late.” The cable focused on the U.S. success in deterring the Soviet Union: “[redacted] presented excellent case for US deterrent capability and its success in preventive nuclear attack by Soviets on [redacted].”<sup>119</sup> More importantly, while not outright saying it, the documents make the case of China as a rational and deterrable actor, just like the Soviet:

Europe and the US said Soviet threat to US far greater for many years than present ChiCom threat to Taiwan and that US had never been attacked and never would be because of Soviet fear of obliteration in retaliation. Said ChiCom threat not nearly so great and our defense commitments to GRC should afford equal protection against attack ever happening.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XI, Arms Control and Disarmament, document 137.

<sup>118</sup> U.S. Embassy, Taipei, cable number 347 to Department of State, 24 October 1964. NSA EBB 38 doc 20.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> U.S. Embassy, Taipei, cable number 347 to Department of State, 24 October 1964. NSA EBB 38 doc 20.

The Taiwanese president did not buy the reassurances and kept doubting the efficacy of extended deterrence. He believed the Chinese Communists had the same belief as him on extended deterrence which would make them more assertive in the region. He once again asked the U.S. for the means to carry out a preventive attack against Chinese facilities:

He said [President Chiang-Kuo] speaking as one friend to another that if the US had for the Republic of China the firm friendship they professed she could provide them now with the necessary means to destroy the ChiCom nuclear installations. He said the US forces not needed, only equipment and support. ChiNats would do the job... Said this must be done now as a delay would permit buildup of ChiCom nuclear capability and it would then be too late.<sup>121</sup>

Comments were added by the author of the memo highlighting how “frustrated” the President seemed on the issue and how incredible extended deterrence was. The thinking of the author, however, was that if no tests were forthcoming the situation would calm down and Taiwan would move away from its desire to engage in preventive attack. The author believed that in the end “[redacted] briefing highly successful in strengthening GRC confidence in US [redacted].”<sup>122</sup> The tone of the cable, and especially the comment section, demonstrates how the United States was not willing to engage in preventive attacks at this point, even in preventive attacks by proxy, which would have even less of a burden materially and politically. President Johnson reaffirmed his dedication and belief in extended deterrence in December 1964:

The United States is fully alive to the Chinese Communists' aggressive designs against Taiwan. You may be assured that the American people regard their Mutual Defense Treaty with the Republic of China as one of their basic international commitments, and that their determination to stand by it would in no way be weakened by Chinese Communist development of nuclear weapons. I believe that the continuing strength of our alliance will deter the Chinese Communists from any thought of a nuclear attack on Taiwan, as the NATO alliance has deterred the Soviet Union from an attack on Western Europe.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> FRUS, Volume XXX, China, document 74.

The final passage and its analogy to the NATO-USSR relationship are evidence of the U.S. beliefs in future appropriate deterrent behavior by the Chinese, but more importantly, that the Chinese actually understood how the game is played.

By the end of 1964 the conversation was slowly moving away from non-proliferation and counter-proliferation against the Chinese, and more about how to stop other countries from proliferating, and how to engage a nuclear Beijing. While “The Chinese detonation was a great disappointment to us and we did not believe it was a good thing for us or the Soviet Union or anyone else” the reality was that China was now nuclear. It would remain a “modest strategic threat” moving forward.<sup>124</sup> The Joint Chief of Staff did not believe the status quo in the region would be changed following the detonation, although “expansion of this capability will post difficult problems in the future.”<sup>125</sup> The Committee on Nuclear Proliferation believed some of those future issues could be handled if China “is willing to participate responsibly in arms control measures.”<sup>126</sup> Secretary Rusk expressed this very idea in a meeting on disarmament between the U.S. and the UK in which he mentioned: “the U.S. does not exclude the possibility of Chinese

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, document 76.

<sup>126</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XI, Arms Control and Disarmament, document 64. A question that remained was whether China would transfer nuclear technology to other proliferator, including Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates. A memo from Thomas L. Hughes to the Secretary of State, dated April 23, 1965, stated doubts, but advocated caution, on the issue. He wrote ““The Chinese Communists themselves have not yet indicated any such willingness [to transfer nuclear technology], and there are a number of factors which make it unlikely that they will render substantial assistance to any country within the next two or three years...Until Peiping builds up for itself at least a modest stockpile of nuclear weapons, we expect that the Communist Chinese will be unwilling to spare either fissionable materials or finished weapons for transfer to other nations. Such a stockpile probably will not be accumulated for at least several years and may take as long as a decade.” Hughes adds the importance of maintaining secrecy for the Chinese in building their arsenal as a further reason why Beijing may not share nuclear technology. However, he recommends caution as the Chinese could use the threat of exporting nuclear technology or fissile material as part as either threat or carrot to either “win the friendship of a nation or to threaten an antagonistic neighbor of that nation.” Hughes still advocates for caution, however, as Beijing had been vocal prior to its own nuclearization on the need for more nuclear assistance to allied countries coming from Moscow. This stance, however, has been absent from official Chinese communications since they became nuclear. On the Hughes memo see Thomas L. Hughes to the Secretary, "Will Communist China Assist Other Nations in Acquiring Nuclear Weapons?" Intelligence Note, 23 April 1965. NSA EBB 549 doc 14.

Communist participation in disarmament negotiations. We have always recognized that at a certain stage their participation will be necessary.”<sup>127</sup>

#### **4. A Nuclear China: Some Conclusions**

The empirical evidence presented here demonstrates how the United States had the means to carry out a preventive attack on China’s nuclear facilities and very clearly debated whether to put the plan forward or not. The empirical material presented here has showcased the debates within the U.S. administration when it came to launch a preventive strike against Chinese nuclear installations. The case also demonstrated how divided the Kennedy and Johnson administration were on the issue. On the one hand, decision-makers were afraid the nuclearization of China would upset the balance of power in the region, but also globally. Additionally, some were averse to the geopolitical ramification of a new nuclear power, and the uncertainty of future Chinese behavior. The GRC in Taiwan for example was particularly afraid China might use nuclear weapons in a conflict over Taiwan, and they made it known to the Kennedy and Johnson administration. President Kennedy himself believed an additional nuclear power would increase the risk of nuclear war, and as such was determined to curb Chinese nuclear ambitions. Others, including George W. Rathjens, believed the Chinese arsenal would put U.S. security directly at risk.

On the other hand, many individuals and external actors, including Robert Johnson, the intelligence community, the Joint Chief of Staff, and Moscow argued the opposite: China would not be more aggressive with nuclear weapons that they had been without them. These individuals and groups highlighted the past actions of China when it came to deterrence, war prevention, and

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<sup>127</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XI, Arms Control and Disarmament, document 72.



status quo inclinations to support their argument. Throughout the case, it has been demonstrated that Washington and Moscow would have preferred a non-nuclear Beijing, but that when push came to shove, all parties concerned accepted them as a nuclear power. Moscow in particular did a lot to advocate for the status quo inclination of a nuclear China and the strictly deterrent nature of their interest in nuclear weapons. Through their apparent restrained behavior, China was able to demonstrate it would not become more adventurous or aggressive moving forward. These advocates were for the most part successful, which explains the absence of preventive attacks in this case.

This is not to say, however, that this was the only argument made by opponents of preventive attacks. While the past restraint of China was mentioned early, other considerations were part of the equation. First, there was a desire to save face within the U.S. administration. Secretary Rusk and Robert McNamara, among others, believed an attack on Chinese facilities should only be conducted if the Chinese attacked first. Second, the asymmetry in power capabilities was highlighted as well. China would have difficulties developing capabilities to hurt the United States in the first place. Third, assumptions were made that the Chinese would become more cautious once they were in possession of the bomb. Whether they had been restrained in the past did not count as much as the actual effect of the bomb on their behavior. Finally, there seemed to be a general sense of *fait accompli* by 1964 on the nuclearization of China. It was as if little could be done to stop it. I would like to take a moment to link the last two observations to the restrained behavior of the Chinese.

Finally, the context and the support of the Soviet Union definitely played a role in the ability of China, and advocates against preventive attacks in the U.S. government, to signal restraint. Deterrence, both conventional and nuclear, was becoming the centerpiece of the security

arrangement between Moscow and Washington. As such, if self-restraint is demonstrable in the past, it will be more persuasive at this point in time.

Moreover, an interesting point that is made in the cases is that U.S. decision-makers did not seem averse to a preventive attack based on normative concerns. Scott Silverstone had argued that the United States was acting out of an aversion towards preventive attack and wars in the early Cold War period, which transformed into a nonproliferation norm at the end of the Cold War.<sup>128</sup> From the archival material presented here, it does not seem that it was a strong inhibition. While it is entirely possible that normative restriction was underlying some of the arguments made by U.S. decision-makers against a preventive attack, it was never stated overly as such.

There is contradictory evidence to the argument presented here which also need to be addressed. First, in a few instances U.S. decision-makers, and Soviets officials, pointed to the actual pacifying effect of the bomb as an important mechanism. They argued, in essence, that the bomb itself would dictate restraint to China due to its effect. If this is truly the case, it makes restraint *ex ante* less important. The bomb, therefore, would make all states more cautious. Additionally, if this was the case we should see this argument in most cases of proliferation. If we refer to chapter 3 we can see this is not the case. For example. U.S. decision-makers never discussed the pacifying effect the bomb would have on Iraq. Instead, it was argued Hussein would become more belligerent. The same can be said about Israel which attacked the Osiraq reactor in 1981.<sup>129</sup> The same can be argued from the case presented in Chapter 6 on the proliferation of North Korea. As such, the pacifying effect of the bomb is only argued if the state is not understood as

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<sup>128</sup> Scott Silverstone, *Preventive War and American Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>129</sup> Feldman, "The Bombing of Osiraq-Revisited."

desiring the bomb for revisionist and compellent purposes. If they do, the argument is not brought up and attacks are more likely.

Second, during the Kennedy years some decision-makers voiced the concern that it was already too late to strike the Chinese. While this is problematic, this assessment was not shared widely as the case demonstrated. Moreover, the ability of doves to demonstrate Chinese restraint perhaps helped re-assurance U.S. leadership. If they had been truly afraid of a nuclear China, they would have most likely attacked.

## Chapter 5

### Pakistan: A Limited Strategic Partnership?

Pakistan developed its nuclear program over the span of 25 years, from its beginning in 1972 to their first nuclear test in 1998, but with the actual acquisition of a device somewhere between 1985 and 1990. The Pakistani program was a response to the 1971 defeat at the hands of India and the subsequent creation of Bangladesh. The detonation in 1974 by India of a nuclear weapon accelerated the demand within Pakistan for a nuclear deterrent. Following the Indian test Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto is quoted as saying: “It is well established that the testing of a nuclear device is no different from the detonation of a nuclear weapon. Given this indisputable fact, how is it possible for our fears to be assuaged by mere assurances, which may in any case be ignored in subsequent years?”<sup>1</sup> The chairman of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, Munir Ahmad Khan, argued that New Delhi’s acquisition of nuclear weapons would lead to horizontal proliferation, and that the “membership of the nuclear club will not stop at six,” perhaps telegraphing Pakistan’s intentions.<sup>2</sup>

As this chapter will demonstrate, the two nuclear programs were intrinsically linked: non-proliferation efforts including pledges of non-use or non-development had to be a joint affair, something India refused throughout the 1970-1990s period. There was little trust between the two rivals which eventually made it impossible for the United States to reach out a negotiated settlement which would have made the relationship non-nuclear.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Khan, *Eating Grass*, 119.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, India had to worry about the nuclearization of China which had taken place 10 years earlier. Moreover, both countries had great power aspirations, and the development of nuclear weapons was an integral part

The nuclearization of Pakistan is an important case because at its onset it goes counter to the argument presented in this dissertation. Pakistan was not on good terms with the U.S. once they got their program under way. Moreover, many scholars have labeled Pakistan as a clear case of a revisionist state: Islamabad sought to settle the Kashmir issue in a fashion that would leave nothing to India.<sup>4</sup> The Pakistanis had engaged in reckless and aggressive behavior over the Kashmir issue.<sup>5</sup> Yet, they were never preventively attacked. The Carter administration had a plan drafted but did not execute it. This was the case principally because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Overnight, Pakistan became an important strategic partner to the United States. As such, the U.S. discarded most of the discordant signal of recklessness and relaxed its nonproliferation efforts against Islamabad in the 1980s despite the repeated lies and obfuscation of its nuclear intentions. As such, the U.S. did not feel threatened by the Pakistani program at that point in time.

However, there are some indications that the U.S. believed Pakistan would be restrained in the future as a nuclear state. As the chapter will demonstrate, Washington recognized that Islamabad had changed its military doctrine in recent years to focus more on defense against India.

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of this particular status claim. On the India-China rivalry and its military and nuclear dimension see Zhen Han and Jean-Francois Belanger, "Balancing Strategies and the China-India Rivalry," as well as Vipin Narang, "Nuclear Deterrence in the China-India Dyad," in T. V. Paul, ed., *The China-India Rivalry in the Globalization Era* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018); On status and nuclear weapons see Scott D Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1997): 54–86; T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth, eds., *Status in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), Chapter 2; T. V. Paul, ed., *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Stephen P. Cohen, *Shooting for a Century: The India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2013); T. V. Paul, *The Warrior State: Pakistan in the Contemporary World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Dilip Hiro, *The Longest August: The Unflinching Rivalry Between India and Pakistan*, First Edition edition (New York: Nation Books, 2015); Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2010); Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006).

The U.S. was also inclined to assume future restraint in part because Pakistan tacitly agreed not test a nuclear weapon in the 1980s, which was meant to ensure stability in the region.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, there is some evidence that this belief in Pakistani understanding of deterrence made it a logical choice against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

Finally, this case is relevant because it shows the temporality of reputations, and its transformative nature. While Pakistan was able to appear as desiring a bomb for deterrent purposes, later actions would completely change its reputation. The past actions of Pakistan were relevant in the 1970s because they matched more or less with what they did at the time. It was supported by their positive relationship with the United States. The change in the relationship has come once the interest of Islamabad and Washington dovetailed. Once this relationship was broken, discordant behavior by Pakistan was rapidly assessed in a negative light, leading to a negative reputation. By that time, however, it was too late, and Pakistan was already nuclear.

While the Americans did not entertain preventive attacks, India, and to some extent Israel, did. It is in large part due to this reputation and its strategic partnership with Washington that the United States reached out to India and Israel and made sure no attack took place. It is also important to note how receptive Pakistan was throughout the whole process to arms control efforts. While these overtures were received with skepticism, they showcase an interest in preserving deterrence and demonstrating restraint. India, on the other hand, refused all attempt at arms control during this period. However, India and Pakistan concluded a treaty in 1989 in which they agreed not to attack each other's nuclear assets.

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<sup>6</sup> They would, however, test one in 1998. By this time, their relationship with the United States had drastically soured due to reckless behavior by Pakistan, including the Kargil War, its aggressive behavior towards India, as well as its link to terrorist groups. See Paul, *The Warrior State*; Or Rabinowitz, *Bargaining on Nuclear Tests: Washington and Its Cold War Deals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

## 1. Pakistan's Nuclear Program Overview

For Pakistan, a nuclear program became a necessity following its defeat in the India-Pakistan war of 1971, and the eventual detonation of a nuclear device by India in 1974. Without the bomb, Pakistan's quest for parity would be futile. During the 1970s, India's effort to increase its capabilities, including its development of a naval force, was perceived negatively by Pakistan.<sup>7</sup> The rapprochement with Kashmir, which occurred in February 1975, did nothing to reduce tensions.<sup>8</sup> It is important to note here that the United States never saw the nuclearization of Pakistan as a good occurrence. Circumstances made them refocus their nonproliferation goals, but the possibility of Pakistan as a nuclear weapons state was not taken lightly by the Americans. Aid in all forms was interrupted many times in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>9</sup>

The assessment by the Carter administration of the Pakistani nuclear ambitions did not characterize it as adventuristic. However, Washington saw potential instability in the region due to the risk of an arms race between India and Pakistan, and also horizontal proliferation elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> By the end of 1979, the State Department believed Pakistan was "two to three" years out of achieving a nuclear capacity, but in all possibility could "test a device within the next six months."<sup>11</sup> Still, the discussions taking place in Washington were squarely focused on what new nuclear states would mean for the legacy, and effectiveness, of the non-proliferation treaty, as well as the impact on regional stability, than a fear of an adventurous Pakistan.<sup>12</sup> As will be

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<sup>7</sup> Memorandum to Holders, Special National Intelligence Estimate, "Prospects for Further Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," SNIE 4-1-74, 18 December 1975. NSA EBB 333 doc 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> A.Z. Hilali. *US-Pakistan Relationship: Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 18.

<sup>10</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States 1977-1980, vol. XXVI, Arms Control and Disarmament, edited by Chris Tudda (Washington D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 2015), document 327.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. document 376.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, document 393.

demonstrated below, Pakistan was also an important part of the effort to contain the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, which altered U.S. policy.<sup>13</sup>

## **2. Nonproliferation Efforts Towards Pakistan: The Carter Years**

The Carter administration was not fond of the idea of a nuclear Pakistan. Once Carter was elected he immediately decided not to go ahead with the sale of A-7 bombers to Pakistan, which led Pakistani Prime Minister to leave the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), the objective of which was to deter Soviet aggression.<sup>14</sup> This entire period is one in which the U.S. and the Pakistanis will be at odds with each other over the nuclear issue.

### *Threat Assessment and Nonproliferation Efforts*

Part of Washington's effort to stop Pakistani proliferation was to curb its ability to import sensitive nuclear material. The U.S. was particularly interested, by 1977, in getting France to recant on its decision to sell a reprocessing plant to Pakistan.<sup>15</sup> They believed France was receptive to the idea. Due to domestic issues, however, Paris could not unilaterally stop the transaction, which prompted Washington to engage directly with Pakistan. An aid package was put together to try and buy-off the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto government. The package included the sales of F-5es and A-4s airplanes, as well as radar technology and helicopters. On the economic front the memo proposed development aid in the range of \$76 million for FY1977 and 98\$ million for fiscal year

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<sup>13</sup> See for example Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Khan, *Eating Grass*, 137.

<sup>15</sup> Acting Secretary of State Warren Christopher to the President, "Reprocessing Negotiations with Pakistan: A Negotiating Strategy," 2 April 1977, Secret. NSA EBB 333 doc 2.



1978.<sup>16</sup> The use of positive inducement in such a way also explains why Washington did not stop aid to Islamabad under the Symington Amendment.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, aid to Pakistan was eventually cut in September 1977 since the Pakistanis had “rejected the French offer of a restructured reprocessing plant, thus highlighting their desire for Plutonium for which there is no economic justification.”<sup>18</sup> The military overthrow of the Bhutto government by Zia ul-Haq in 1977 did not significantly alter the U.S. non-proliferation strategy towards Pakistan.

Once Zia assumed power, Washington moved to express its desire to see Pakistan stop its nuclear program. The ambassador to Pakistan, Arthur W. Hummel, proposed to restart development aid to Pakistan, whereas Ambassador Hartman believed it would not be a good idea to do so without French assistance. Fearing possible leaks in the press of such a proposal at a time where the U.S. Congress sought to pass the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act, recommendations were made to maintain the status quo.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, the 1977 coup in Pakistan led Washington to believe the new regime was unstable “We also share [with the French] their view that the political situation in Pakistan is highly unstable and that the weakness of the present government makes decision-making very difficult.” The United States was also cognizant it did not have much in terms of bargaining chips with Pakistan “our leverage with Pakistan is distinctly limited. The US has not been the major military supplier to Pakistan since the 1965 war with India. Under our policy we do not provide grants or credits for

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<sup>16</sup> Acting Secretary of State Warren Christopher to the President, "Reprocessing Negotiations with Pakistan: A Negotiating Strategy," 2 April 1977. NSA EBB 333 doc 2.

<sup>17</sup> Assistant Secretaries Alfred L. Atherton and Douglas J. Bennet, Jr. through Mr. Habib to the Acting Secretary, "Pakistan's Purchase of a Nuclear Fuel Reprocessing Plant: the Symington Amendment and Consultations with Congress," 23 June 1977. NSA EBB 333 doc 3.

<sup>18</sup> Alfred L. Atherton and George S. Vest thru: Mr. Christopher, Mr. Habib, Mrs. Benson to the Secretary, "The Nuclear Reprocessing Issue with Pakistan and France: Whether to Resume Aid to Pakistan," 18 October 1977. NSA EBB 333 doc 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

military purchases by either India or Pakistan.”<sup>20</sup> And “we will of course reaffirm to the Pakistanis whenever we have an opportunity the fact that the reprocessing plant poses an obstacle to continuing good relations and if it goes forward would require a cutoff of development assistance.”<sup>21</sup> Finally “we consider it important to keep our lines open to Pakistan at this crucial juncture and would like to resume aid as soon as it is feasible. The Glenn Amendment does not preclude this since to the best of our knowledge, no transfers have taken place since August 4.”<sup>22</sup>

By the end of 1977, the U.S. objective was to make sure Pakistan could not reprocess uranium.<sup>23</sup> France eventually canceled its sale of a Chashma reprocessing plant to Pakistan despite it being in compliance with the IAEA.<sup>24</sup> Paris canceled the sale when it became evident the reprocessing plant would be used with the purpose of developing a nuclear program.<sup>25</sup> Concurrently, U.S. ambassadors showed concern that Congress would want assurance Pakistan would not continue its proliferation efforts: “I noted that we might have a problem with Congress, in that it was likely to insist on evidence that Pakistan would not continue. Soutou noted wryly that Zia’s press statement wasn’t much help there.”<sup>26</sup> Zia has mentioned in an interview to a Saudi Arabia journalist that the acquisition of a nuclear weapon by Pakistan “would reinforce the power of the Muslim world.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Alfred L. Atherton and George S. Vest thru: Mr. Christopher, Mr. Habib, Mrs. Benson to the Secretary, "The Nuclear Reprocessing Issue with Pakistan and France: Whether to Resume Aid to Pakistan," 18 October 1977. NSA EBB 333 doc 4.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Hilali. *US-Pakistan Relationship*, 64.

<sup>25</sup> Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press ; Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 408.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Embassy Paris cable 28414 to State Department, "French Views on Pakistan Reprocessing Plant," 25 August 1978. NSA EBB 333 doc 17.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Embassy Islamabad to cable 7624 to State Department, "Nuclear Reprocessing," 6 August 1978. NSA EBB 333 doc 11.

Despite this comment, some within the U.S. wanted to keep providing aid to Islamabad in order to maintain the nonproliferation effort. In a state department memo to Islamabad the following is stated: “we believe our chances of achieving these goals are enhanced if we can offer Pakistan a package of tangible inducements and some political support.”<sup>28</sup> And “we look forward to an early resumption of our close and friendly ties. In this connection, and in light of Afghan events, I have asked my staff to suggest ways we can be of assistance. We will, of course, lift the secret freeze on new aid disbursements. We will also consider requests for military sales which fall without our global military sales.”<sup>29</sup>

In order to gain Pakistan’s support, Washington designed a strategy which would provide peaceful atomic energy to Pakistan,<sup>30</sup> and resumed economic aid if Pakistan agreed to abandon its nuclear program.<sup>31</sup> Military, economic, and food aid was part of the plan. Emphasis was put on the necessity to monitor activity in Islamabad and that the current policy would be put in jeopardy if there were any signs of proliferation detected.<sup>32</sup> The wording in the text leaves little to interpretation: “In making the following presentation to the GOP you should stress that our support for Pakistan is based on assumption that Pakistan will not acquire a nuclear explosive capability.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> State Department cable 136685 to Embassy Islamabad, "Reprocessing Issue," 30 May 1978. NSA EBB 333 doc 6.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Memo to Chris [Warren Christopher] from Steve [Oxman], 4 October 1978, enclosing edits to draft cable to Islamabad and "Evening Reading" reports to President Carter on Pakistan, Secret, excerpts Source: National Archives, Record Group 59, Department of State Records, Records of Warren Christopher, 1977-1980, box 56, Pakistan I Handwritten on cable. NSA EBB 333 doc 18.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Memo to Chris [Warren Christopher] from Steve [Oxman], 4 October 1978, enclosing edits to draft cable to Islamabad and "Evening Reading" reports to President Carter on Pakistan, Secret, excerpts Source: National Archives, Record Group 59, Department of State Records, Records of Warren Christopher, 1977-1980, box 56, Pakistan I. NSA EBB 333 doc 18.

By January 1979 the U.S. was starting to believe Islamabad might already have the reprocessing technology they had sought: Indeed, Pakistan may already have succeeded in acquiring the main missing components for a gas centrifuge plant and ancillary facilities that are probably being built to produce highly enriched uranium for weapons, perhaps by 1982.<sup>34</sup>

The discussions taking place in early 1979 turned to ways in which the U.S. could prevent Pakistan from becoming a nuclear power while finding solutions to maintain aid to Islamabad due to the events unfolding in Iran and the loss of an ally for the U.S. in the region. However, the Symington Amendment posed problems for the resumption of aid as it barred Congress from providing assistance to countries seeking nuclear material. Additionally, Washington was worried Islamabad could receive financing from other Arab countries. For example, in 1975 when Pakistan faced issues with repayment of loans, Iran and Saudi Arabia had loaned it money.<sup>35</sup> The proposed strategy was resumed to approach Islamabad's allies and have them put some pressure on Pakistan, including China, Saudi Arabia, and the Soviet Union. Overture to the USSR was also proposed in the memo as it was believed they had similar non-proliferation objectives as the United States. The U.S. would also extend an invitation to Zia for him to come to Washington to confirm U.S. support of Pakistan while being clear continued assistance was linked to a reversal on the nuclear front.<sup>36</sup> One way to maintain a deep relationship was to find ways around the Symington amendment to provide further leeway to the Carter administration in handling the nuclear problem and signaling to Zia that the U.S.-Pakistan relationship was important for Washington.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> John Despres, NIO for Nuclear Proliferation, to Interagency Intelligence Working Group on Nuclear Proliferation, "Monthly Warning Report," 18 January 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 22.

<sup>35</sup> Husain Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions: Pakistan, the United States, and an Epic History of Misunderstanding*, Reprint edition (New York: PublicAffairs, 2015), 205.

<sup>36</sup> Harold Saunders and Mr. Pickering through Mrs. Benson to Mr. Newsom, "Mini-PRC Meeting on the Pakistan Nuclear Program," 20 January 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 23A. See also 23B-C.

<sup>37</sup> Presidential Review Committee Meeting, January 22, 1979, "Summary of Conclusions: Mini-PRC on Pakistani Nuclear Matters," 23 January 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 23C.

This financing of some Pakistani programs by Saudi Arabia led to another issue for Washington: what U.S. decision-makers have labeled the “Muslim bomb.” This in part came from a statement by Zia that a Pakistani bomb would be good for the Muslim world, quoted earlier. Washington, in part, was afraid that Pakistan would sell sensitive nuclear material and know-how to other “Muslim states.”<sup>38</sup> The U.S. feared, due to the cooperation operating between Muslim countries, that Pakistan would be willing to share. The statement by Bhutto did not help the matter.<sup>39</sup> This would increase the demand within Washington for counterproliferation. Eventually, however, the issue would be discarded once the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan.

By March 1979 the GOP had clear indications that Pakistan would move forward with its nuclear program. From the U.S. embassy in Islamabad: “Paks did not deny that both reprocessing and enrichment programs are building – nor would they agree to discontinue their movement toward weapons-secret.”<sup>40</sup> The cable discusses again the impending enactment of the Symington or Glenn Amendment if Pakistan continues developing its program, and the problems it would cause between Pakistan and the U.S. at a time where Islamabad was needed in the Persian Gulf. Namely, Washington was afraid it could push Islamabad to the Russian: “I also speculated effect may be to encourage some Pak moves toward an accommodation with Soviets on perceived security needs.”<sup>41</sup> There was also fear that Pakistan would restart commercial nuclear agreement

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<sup>38</sup> U.S. Department of State Cable 145139 to U.S. Embassy India [repeating cable sent to Embassy Pakistan], “Non-Proliferation in South [Asia],” 6 June 1979. NSA EBB 377 doc 1.

<sup>39</sup> Brij Mohan Kaushik, “The ‘Islamic’ Content of Pakistan’s Bomb,” *Strategic Analysis* 3, no. 11 (February 1980): 393–95.

<sup>40</sup> U.S. Embassy Islamabad to cable 2655 to State Department, “Pakistan’s Nuclear Program: Hard Choices,” 5 March 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 27.

<sup>41</sup> Those involved in this discussion did not believe this likely, but still entertained the notion. This goes to show how important Pakistan to U.S. foreign policy in the region. The U.S. seemed to believe Russian assurances when it came to proliferation: “Re Soviet option, Bushell said there is a certain “honesty” about the Soviets in their non-proliferation policy. They would be, he thinks, hesitant to support actively any Pak weapons program.” But “I replied, that may be so, but that they could not forego the opportunity to make political gains.” U.S. Embassy

with Libya: “He also asked if this trade off resurrected the old bugaboo of a Pak-Libyan nuclear cooperation program. I told him I thought it might include Libya, Saudi Arabia, and, perhaps, others.”<sup>42</sup> This fear was a constant issue when it came to Washington’s non-proliferation policy towards Pakistan.

Non-proliferation efforts, however, became more complicated by the end of March 1979. Newspapers in India and the United Kingdom began reporting on the development of the Pakistani nuclear program. Washington did use this opportunity, however, to reaffirm to Pakistan that its security might not be appropriately guarded with nuclear weapons. In the letter written by President Carter to President Zia: “Our shared objective should be to pursue a course that will both strengthen Pakistan’s security and avert the spread of nuclear weapons to the Subcontinent and beyond. Failure to avert such a development would severely jeopardize Pakistan’s real security and undercut the ability of the US to help Pakistan with its most urgent problem.”<sup>43</sup> The letter sent by the President either did not have the expected effect, or did not have time to take effect, as on April 6, 1979, the Symington Amendment was invoked and Washington canceled its aid program towards Pakistan in light of the nuclear development.<sup>44</sup>

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Islamabad to cable 2655 to State Department, "Pakistan's Nuclear Program: Hard Choices," 5 March 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 27.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Embassy Islamabad to cable 2655 to State Department, "Pakistan's Nuclear Program: Hard Choices," 5 March 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 27.

<sup>43</sup> Ambassador Pickering, Paul Kreisberg, and Jack Miklos through Mr. Newsom and Mrs. Benson to the Secretary, "Presidential Letter to President Zia on Nuclear Issues," 21 March 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 31.

<sup>44</sup> It might be connected to the event or not but two days prior to the announcement of aid suspension former Prime Minister Bhutto was executed. See The National Security Archives Briefing Book 333: “The United States and Pakistan’s Quest for the Bomb,” ed. William Burr. Washington, DC: The George Washington University. Available at: <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb333/index.htm>. (assessed October 15, 2018). Notes to document 33.

On October 10, 1979, the Director of the CIA circulated a memo stipulating a Pakistani nuclear test was near.<sup>45</sup> Washington renewed its non-proliferation efforts, especially multilateral efforts: “Our review of the Pakistan nuclear problem has convinced us there is no “quick fix” and that multilateral efforts are essential if there is any hope of resolving the problem.”<sup>46</sup> As part of their security commitment, the U.S. was considering selling destroyers to Pakistan. The goal was, of course, to stop proliferation and that “there are politically acceptable alternatives to the continuation of their sensitive nuclear facilities.”<sup>47</sup>

The U.S. by that point had received assurances by Zia that Pakistan would not test a nuclear weapon, but the wording of the memo makes it unclear as to whether these reassurances were seen as credible: “In our recent discussions with the Pakistanis, they provided assurances that they would not manufacture nuclear weapons or assist others to do so and that the present government would not undertake a nuclear test. We are going back to the Pakistanis to try to obtain some expansion on these assurances. In particular we propose that the letter from President Carter to President Zia ask that no-test assurance be extended to include, inter alia, any future government headed by Zia.”<sup>48</sup>

By November 1979 Washington had reached out to most of its Western allies to help put pressure on Pakistan. The Netherlands, France, the UK, and West Germany were probed to gather their thoughts on the situation and to get them to agree to a multilateral effort. All responses made

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<sup>45</sup>Richard Lehman, National Intelligence Office (Warning) to Distribution, "Alert Memorandum on Pakistani Plan for an Early Nuclear Test," 10 October 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 43.

<sup>46</sup> Assistant Secretaries Harold Saunders, Thomas Pickering, and Anthony Lake through Mr. Christopher, Mr. Newsom, and Mrs. Benson to the Secretary, "November 14 PRC Meeting on South Asian Nuclear Issues," 10 November 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 44.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

it clear that a nuclear test from Pakistan would be problematic for diplomatic relationships. However, some of Washington's allies believed "the US and Europe did not "punish" India in 1974" and this would possibly be brought to the table by Pakistan.<sup>49</sup> The situation would once again change with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979.

Overall, Washington was not enthusiastic at the prospect of a nuclear Pakistan. However, the geopolitical situation made Islamabad indispensable to Washington's containment of Moscow. It is this strategic partnership that led to the use of positive inducements by the United States as part of its counterproliferation strategy. Moreover, this also explains why Washington believed it had few options available to stop Pakistan's ambitions: it could not push it too far. The following sections look at the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, how Pakistan sought to signal restraint, and how it was perceived and used by American decision-makers.

*The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the Need for New Allies: Evaluating the Reputation for Restraint*

There is an important link between the robustness of the nonproliferation measures deployed by the United States, and the need for allies in containing the Soviet Union and their own allies. This linkage is summed up by Gerard Smith, an ex-diplomat appointed to questions of non-proliferation by President Carter, succinctly puts it, "where other interests have appeared to conflict with non-proliferation constraints—in the Tarapur and Pakistan cases, for example—the former have appeared to prevail (although our actions in these cases were supportive of or consistent with our non-proliferation interests)."<sup>50</sup> Smith was also cognizant that the special

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<sup>49</sup> Gerard C. Smith to the Secretary, "Consultations in Europe on Pakistan," 15 November 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 45.

<sup>50</sup> FRUS 1977-1980, vol XXVI, Arms Control and Disarmament, Document 395.



treatment of Islamabad had been noted by other nuclear states, and the larger international community.<sup>51</sup> Pakistan, in turn, had criticized Washington many times on its support of an Indian bomb, but their strong nonproliferation efforts against Pakistan.<sup>52</sup>

The following quote from Brzezinski provides more insight about the linkage between proliferation and geopolitical concerns in the case of Pakistan:

Recent events in Afghanistan and South Yemen and the uncertain future of Iran have highlighted the consequences for U.S. interests and the global economic order of instability across this region. Our direct interests in Pakistan are limited, but that country plays an important role in the region and can either be a positive influence for stability or contribute to the erosion of the US position in the area... Looking ahead at this entire area, we see a level of instability not seen there for a decade with two or three exceptions (Bangladesh secession, '73 war, '70 Jordan crisis).<sup>53</sup>

The geopolitical importance of Pakistan was further argued by Brzezinski:

We are faced with a very real and serious dilemma. In the present context in the Persian Gulf region, Pakistan is important to us, especially given the chaotic situation in Iran and Soviet penetration in Afghanistan. Politically, Pakistan is among the more moderate states in the Moslem world and contributes to stability in the region. To virtually cut our ties with Pakistan at this time would be highly disturbing to other Moslem moderates including Saudi Arabia and the states of the Persian Gulf.<sup>54</sup>

While there were some concerns a nuclear Pakistan would lead to arms racing in the region,<sup>55</sup> there are some indications that Washington believed Islamabad capable of restraint. Brzezinski, however, does not touch on previous actions of Pakistan in order to make this point. At the same time, the Americans did need Islamabad's help in the region. In fact, Feroz Khan reports that this

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Secretary of Defense Harold Brown to Ambassador-at-Large Gerard C. Smith, 31 January 1980, enclosing excerpts from memoranda of conversations with Geng Biao and Deng Xiaoping, 7 and 8 January 1980. NSA EBB 377 doc 3.

<sup>53</sup> Harold Saunders and Anthony Lake through Mr. Newsom and Mrs. Benson to the Secretary, "PRC Meeting, November 30, 1978 - Pakistan," 29 November 1978. NSA EBB 333 doc 20.

<sup>54</sup> Harold Herbert J. Hansell through Lucy Wilson Benson to Mr. Newsom, "Pakistan and the Symington Amendment," 17 March 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 30.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

need for help was argued against “punishing Muslim country for wanting the bomb.”<sup>56</sup> This is why Washington continued its nonproliferation efforts, yet in a minimally coercive way.

During this period, Washington sought the signature of a non-use/non-development treaty between India and Pakistan. In a January 22, 1979, Presidential Review Committee Meeting, the idea of an India-Pakistan entente was discussed, to be suggested at a later date to Ambassador Goheen. This is the wording of the proposal: “We will sound out Ambassadors Goheen and Hummel (Arthur Hummel, the American ambassador to Pakistan) on the utility of having Goheen talk privately with Indian Prime Minister Desai about the possibility of a joint Indo-Pakistani agreement not to develop **or use nuclear weapons**. (This, is successful, could eliminate most of the motivation for the Pakistani program).”<sup>57</sup> While the goal remained to have non-nuclear India and Pakistan, the later end of the proposal putted forward that under the right circumstances, and with the right mindset from all concerned actors, that nuclearization could happen and be tolerated.

At this point in time most intelligence agencies in the United States believed Pakistan was between two and five years away from being able to proceed to a nuclear test, which decision-makers believed provided them with some flexibility.<sup>58</sup> Some of these estimates were based on photographic evidence of the Kahuta facility.<sup>59</sup> Following discussions with Ambassador Hummel on the photos, President Zia offered to have inspectors look at the Pakistani nuclear facilities. This proposal was refused by the GOP because, according to Hummel, India would not agree to similar

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<sup>56</sup> Khan, *Eating Grass*, 211.

<sup>57</sup> Presidential Review Committee Meeting, January 22, 1979, "Summary of Conclusions: Mini-PRC on Pakistani Nuclear Matters," 23 January 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 23C. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>58</sup> There was also in the text reference to a three months estimate to nuclear capacity that the author of the memo showed incomprehension to. Department of State cable 22212 to Embassy New Delhi, "Ad Hoc Scientific Committee and Related Topics," 27 January 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 24.

<sup>59</sup> Ambassador Hummel did confront Zia with the photos but the Pakistani president denied any reprocessing activities taking place at the site. He offered a strong denial : "That's absolutely ridiculous. Your information is incorrect. We have to clear this up. Tell me any place in Pakistan you want to send your experts and I will let them come and see." NSA Briefing Book 333. Notes to document 24.

treatment: “carefully constructed on the basis of Indian refusal to accept similar inspections and included offer to permit bilateral reciprocal Indo-Pak inspection, with or without U.S. participation. I expressed deep regret that GOP [Government of Pakistan] was now reversing offer twice affirmed by Pres. Zia (Jan 24 and Feb 9); noted that serious discrepancies remained between our information about Pak nuclear programs and GOP assurances thereon, which could have serious impact on our relations if unresolved.”<sup>60</sup> Whether the proposal was sincere is of less relevant. At this point in time Pakistan continued to show some level of transparency towards its program in a bid to appease U.S. suspicions.

The United States did understand the reasons behind the Pakistani nuclear program. Decision-makers in Washington saw how Pakistan sought to deter India, but the Soviet Union as well, especially since Moscow was now on its border in Afghanistan.<sup>61</sup> As such, Islamabad would not “forego efforts to achieve its nuclear option unless it is satisfied that its security is assured by other means.”<sup>62</sup> This is evidence that Washington did not expect Pakistan at the time to be adventuristic with the bomb. Yet, it was worried of the potential instability it could bring to the region.

Throughout this period Pakistan sought to signal restraint by negotiating the creation of its nuclear program. They proposed a South Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SANWFZ) or “reciprocal inspections” in case Delhi refused a formal treaty.<sup>63</sup> Demonstrating some level-

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<sup>60</sup> U.S. Embassy Islamabad to cable 2413 to State Department, "Pakistan Nuclear Program: Technical Team Visit," 27 February 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 25.

<sup>61</sup> Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusion*, 217.

<sup>62</sup> U.S. Embassy Islamabad to cable 2655 to State Department, "Pakistan's Nuclear Program: Hard Choices," 5 March 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 27.

<sup>63</sup> This material is taken from handwritten notes in a memo sent by Warren Christopher. I have relied on the deciphering of it by the Nuclear Vault archives. Handwritten notes, Warren Christopher Meetings with General Zia and Foreign Minister Shahi, 1 and 2 March 1979; For the nuclear vault discussion on the issue see NSA Briefing Book 333, notes to document 26b.

headedness Pakistan continued to be restrained in its demand and to put forward ways in which they would agree to stop their proliferating efforts:

The GOP had repeatedly said it would open up all facilities to India or other inspectors if India would do the same. Similarly, it would sign the NPT if India would do so. Some form of enforceable regime of Indian guarantees that GOI had not undertaking a nuclear weapons program could head off Pakistan's efforts to achieve nuclear parity with India. From Islamabad it seems very unlikely that the USG or others could bring about an accommodation between India and Pakistan that forces India to forego permanently its already achieved nuclear option, and which seeks to equate India and Pakistan on this fundamental question.<sup>64</sup>

Cable 2655 from the U.S. embassy discussed some ways to deal with this conundrum, namely using "multilateral security guarantees for Pakistan" which involved an increase in military aid and the extension of the nuclear umbrella to Islamabad, but "We lack the leverage to force Pakistan out of the nuclear business. Conventional carrots of the magnitude we can muster are insufficient to induce Pakistan to forego what it sees (erroneously in our view) as its only option to achieve security against an Indian threat."<sup>65</sup> Washington, in the end, would never offer its nuclear umbrella to Pakistan.

The proposal by Pakistan of a non-nuclear treaty with India, however, came at the same time as Pakistani ambassador Shahi denied any strategic nuclear activities due to technological ineptitude.<sup>66</sup> Whether the treaty propositions were done in good faith or not has less relevance here than the response provided by India. India's continued refusal to constrain its own choices when it came to its nuclear program played in favor of Pakistan. Moreover, Washington's recognition of

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<sup>64</sup> U.S. Embassy Islamabad to cable 2655 to State Department, "Pakistan's Nuclear Program: Hard Choices," 5 March 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 27.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> This material is taken from handwritten notes in a memo sent by Warren Christopher. I have relied on the deciphering of it by the Nuclear Vault archives. Handwritten notes, Warren Christopher Meetings with General Zia and Foreign Minister Shahi, 1 and 2 March 1979; NSA EBB 333 notes for document 26b.

the deterrence issue and the need to maintain Pakistan as a stable ally in the region removed most of the more aggressive policy options when it came to counterproliferation efforts.<sup>67</sup>

This multilateralism coupled with security assurances and economic side payments is best exemplified in a paper, titled “South Asia Nuclear Security Issues,” presented to an interagency working group on possible U.S. strategies toward Pakistan. Importantly, it discussed whether a pact of non-nuclear development between India and Pakistan should be sold to New Delhi: “whether to press on the Indians the concept, already proposed by the Pakistanis, of some form of mutual self-denial of nuclear weapons. A bilateral India-Pakistani “no development, no use of nuclear weapons.” Agreement to which the five nuclear weapons states would adhere by protocol has been proposed as a basic approach. India has proposed a non-aggression agreement.”<sup>68</sup> In the

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<sup>67</sup> It is important to note that throughout the whole ordeal the number one issue for American decision-makers was instability regionally. They believed a Pakistani bomb would lead to an arms race with India. Similarly, ignoring Pakistan’s nuclear ambitions is most likely to set off a nuclear arms competition with India rekindling its “explosives” program.” To avoid this situation Harold Saunders and Thomas Pickering sent a memo proposing to “buy-off” the Pakistani. The memo had interesting military assistance attached to it. I have reproduced it here in full. It would consist of “conventional armament to deal with Pakistan’s deep security concerns regarding India, Afghanistan, Iran and Baluchistan. We will have to make a hard decision, in the face of the collapse of Iran, that provision (for cash) of modern conventional weapons in Pakistan, such as the F-16, should take priority over the proliferation of a nuclear weapon there...In addition to F-16s, we should consider Cobra helicopters with TOW missiles, some sophisticated air defense and other modern weapons. FMS credit at about the \$50m. level for FY 1980 (through supplemental\_ and FY 1981 should be part of the military package...In the economic area, we should continue our high level of PL 480 assistance and consider an immediate economic assistance program by reprogramming current development aid and ESF (SSA) funds at about the \$30m. level (\$11.8m. in Afghan money, \$8m. in Latin American Development aid and \$11.0m. in MESRF funds). More importantly will be the need to consider supplementary economic aid to Pakistan this year through a \$60m. ESF package allocated in the main to projects in Baluchistan, with an FY 1981 package to follow of the \$100m. level. Debt rescheduling should also proceed on the basis that Pakistan can be expected to be persuaded to accept the IMF stabilization program...Debt could be rescheduled at the 70 percent level which means that Pakistan would be relieved from paying the U.S. this year \$70m. out of the \$100m. owed to us. Others consortium members, if they could be brought to follow suit, could relieve Pakistan of any additional \$70m.” If this worked, the idea was to than move to see if the Indian would agree to a “no weapons-building, no weapons use” agreement between India and Pakistan.” The third stage would be “in which we might consider a waiver of the March 1980 nuclear fuel cutoff date for India if it adhered to the “no nuclear weapons pact, would consider positively adhering also to future CTB.” See Steve [Oxman] to Chris [Warren Christopher], 5 March 1979, enclosing memorandum from Harold Saunders and Thomas Pickering through Mr. Newsom and Mrs. Benson to the Secretary, "A Strategy for Pakistan," 5 March 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 28.

<sup>68</sup> Anthony Lake, Harold Saunders, and Thomas Pickering through Mr. Newsom and Mrs. Benson to the Deputy Secretary, "PRC Paper on South Asia," enclosing Interagency Working Group Paper, "South Asian Nuclear and Security Problems, Analysis of Possible Elements in a U.S. Strategy," 23 March 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 32A. See also 32B-C.

paper they argue that the U.S. used a “do nothing approach” when it came to “USSR, the PRC, France, and Indian detonation of a nuclear device, the PRC, does not appear to be a real option for us.” However, they do mention deterrence and the wording does not show it as a negative “It is possible that if India permitted Pakistan to reach nuclear parity at least in a minimal capability, the nuclear “balance of terror” which has constrained other nuclear powers would come into play on the subcontinent.” Non-proliferation goals, however, had an impact on this “Nevertheless, the Congress and the President have made the control of proliferation a central element of our foreign policy, and the Pakistan case will be viewed as a test of our resolve to pursue this policy.”<sup>69</sup>

During the summer of 1979 both Washington and Islamabad proposed formal solutions to the nuclear conundrum. In a May 23, 1979, National Security Council meeting, it was reiterated how a “South Asian regional nuclear non-use/non-development arrangement” was a good idea. To have Beijing on board was also part of the discussion. “In pursuit of this, Ambassador Goheen should conduct an introductory exploration with (Prime Minister Morarji) Desai. Depending on the results, we will have discussions on the subject with Beijing.” The U.S. also reiterated they would be willing to provide help to Pakistan if they modified their behavior “It was further agreed that we would continue to be receptive to any Pakistani response to the overtures that we had made in the context of the 1959 agreement.”<sup>70</sup> The Pakistani leadership continued to demonstrate restraint on the issue by proposing to agree to interactive solutions which could mitigate the security issues in the region, namely with India. The U.S., however, remained skeptical of the overture and

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<sup>69</sup> Anthony Lake, Harold Saunders, and Thomas Pickering through Mr. Newsom and Mrs. Benson to the Deputy Secretary, “PRC Paper on South Asia,” enclosing Interagency Working Group Paper, “South Asian Nuclear and Security Problems, Analysis of Possible Elements in a U.S. Strategy,” 23 March 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 32A. See also 32B-C.

<sup>70</sup> Policy Review Committee Meeting, 23 May 1979, “PRC on Pakistan and Subcontinent Matters -- Summary of Conclusions,” n.d., NSA EBB 333 doc 34B. See also 34A.

wondered whether those were simply delaying tactics. From a cable sent by the Department of State to the embassy in New Delhi on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1979:

As we explore ways of breaking the present impasse, we continue to come back to Pakistan's repeated public and private offers to accept any restrictions on its nuclear activities which are also accepted by India. It may be that Pakistan is bluffing and would find some excuse not to participate meaningfully even if India were to accept restrictions. However, we will never know this unless we can test it. We believe Indo-Pakistani nuclear restraint may prove to be the only way the nuclear issue can be resolved.<sup>71</sup>

India was shown not to be particularly receptive to the proposal because it "equates India and Pakistan" and "need to include China." Moreover, while the U.S. remained cognizant of the role India had to play to defuse the situation, Washington believed it could not handle the situation alone.<sup>72</sup>

It was suggested on June 2, 1979, to Ambassador Goheen to sit down with Prime Minister Desai to discuss the India-Pakistan nuclear situation, and whether India would be amenable to enter negotiation for a non-use/non-development treaty.<sup>73</sup> The ambassador was not able to get the Prime Minister to commit to any plans of action:

The PM will not accept the idea of a joint-non-development, non-use agreement with Pakistan. He said that when they had suggested that he had told them that he had already made a unilateral pledge; if Pakistan did likewise, the two pledges would be as good as a joint statement. When I said that government changes, and more formal agreements may have greater influence on future governments than unilateral pledges, he laughed said that was not necessarily so, and added, 'look at you and Tarapur.' He could not bind a future government in any case, but he hoped the course he had laid down would have influence."<sup>74</sup>

The answer hints at New Delhi's mistrust of Islamabad's motive, or the PM did not want to tie his hands and constrain his flexibility on the matter. When Ambassador Goheen asked the Prime

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<sup>71</sup> Department of State cable 140858 to embassy New Delhi, "Nuclear Dialogue with India," 2 June 1979. NSA EBB 333 35A.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> U.S. embassy New Delhi cable 9979, "India and the Pakistan Nuclear Problem," 7 June 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 35B.

Minister about his thoughts on the current development of the Pakistani nuclear program, he had strong and aggressive words on the issue, possibly hinting at preventive attack:

He said that he proposed to take Zia at his word for now, but if he discovered that Pakistan was ready to test a bomb or if it exploded one, he would act at one "to smash it." ("If" I take to be the Pak explosives capabilities.) HE said he had recently assured Pak Fonsec Shahnawaz that India had only good intentions toward Pakistan and wished to do nothing to cause it difficulties, but also that "If Pakistan tries any tricks, we will smash you." I gather that he went on to remind Shahnawaz of 1965 and 1971 in order to emphasize India's readiness to react forcibly when sufficiently provoked.<sup>75</sup>

On the question of a nuclear free-zone, Desai replied that as long as the U.S. and the USSR continued to test weapons themselves a free-zone would not work, and that he could not agree to a policy that puts his country to a disadvantage. Moreover, he said that he had unflattering words for the proposal in public because he did not think Pakistan was honest in its proposal.<sup>76</sup> In sum, Prime Minister Desai did not want to commit to any type of proposals which would rob his government of the flexibility it believed it needed for its national security. Nor did he trust the Pakistani to abide by any negotiated settlements. The history of conflict between the two did not help the situation. However, Desai did mention his aim was to get better relations with Islamabad and that "before it is too late, get more sense about the utility of the limited nuclear capability they may be able to develop."<sup>77</sup> There was in this statement some tacit acknowledgement that nuclear capabilities could increase deterrence between the two parties.

#### *A U.S. Preventive Attack: Some Discussions Within the Carter Administration*

During the 1970s the U.S. had mostly used export control strategies to stop the transfer of sensitive material to Pakistan, and the removal of assistance to force Islamabad to move away from

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<sup>75</sup> U.S. embassy New Delhi cable 9979, "India and the Pakistan Nuclear Problem," 7 June 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 35B.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



its proliferation goals. Individuals within the Carter administration were questioning the validity of current policies and sought alternatives. It is within this context that a possible preventive attack might have been seriously discussed. Possible because the publicly available sources from the time, namely newspaper articles, and recent declassified documents, are at odds.

There were tensions within the administration as to how Pakistan's nuclear ambitions should be handled. In a memorandum to the President written on June 8, 1979, Gerard Smith disagreed with a Charge Constable's proposal in cable 3293 that Pakistan may only seek enrichment capabilities and would not detonate a nuclear device as a test. He argued: "Whether or not this is true, it would be a mistake to acquiesce in Pakistan's acquiring un-safeguarded sensitive facilities, treating South Asia differently from the rest of the world as regards non-proliferation. We are already vulnerable to the charge of such behavior with respect to Israel. A second exception would drain most of the consistency out of your nonproliferation policy." Carter, in the margin, wrote "agree" beside the mistake statement and "true" beside the nonproliferation policy issue.<sup>78</sup>

In light of the non-dissuading effects that the U.S. counterproliferation policies have had on Pakistani nuclear development, Zbigniew Brzezinski penned a memo for the Secretary of State on June 19, 1979, urging to develop new strategies: "In view of the impasse in our dealings with Pakistan and India, both our non-proliferation goals are in great jeopardy in the near term. We must at least consider alternative positions even if, in the last analysis, we come to the conclusion that our present courses must be pursued for policy reasons." He proposed "a small interagency working group, chaired perhaps by Gerry Smith, charged with the task of a complete rethinking of our approach to South Asian nuclear issues."<sup>79</sup> It seems incredibly likely that some within the national security apparatus of the U.S.

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<sup>78</sup> Gerard C. Smith, Special Representative of the President for Non-Proliferation Matters, to the President, "Nonproliferation in South Asia," 8 June 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 36.

<sup>79</sup> Brzezinski to the Secretary of State, "The South Asian Nuclear Problem," 19 June 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 37.

believed the nuclear issue was not as worrying as often exposed, but that by allowing Pakistan to nuclearize it could put in jeopardy nonproliferation objective. The report from the Smith-led group allegedly discussed the possibility of attacking Pakistani nuclear enrichment facilities in order to delay the program and force Pakistan to denuclearize.<sup>80</sup> Richard Burt of the New York Times, wrote that the administration quickly dismissed the idea as “too dangerous and politically provocative.”<sup>81</sup> Feroz Khan states that the Americans had plans to attack the Kahuta facility, but backed down in part due to angry response they received from the Pakistani.<sup>82</sup> Since the report is not declassified it is impossible to know whether the relationship with Pakistan, or future restraint based on past actions, was discussed by doves in a bid to discourage the administration of an attack.

The closest we have is a meeting of the General Advisory Committee (GAC) on Arms Control and Disarmament held on September 14, 1979, about a month after the publications of Richard Burt’s articles. It provides some insights on U.S. preventive plans. When asked by Mr. Doty “No preemption plans?” Mr. Van Doren replied: “We have categorically denied that we were discussing preemption plans.” However, it was acknowledged during the meeting that Israel might be willing to engage in prevention in this case due to the nature of windows of opportunity: “I [MS. Pfeifer] guess I keep wondering is there a window in time when you can stop something and that window isn’t open very long, and if you don’t do that, you’ll never stop them.”<sup>83</sup> The real fear was not Pakistan itself being

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<sup>80</sup> Richard Burt “U.S. will Press Pakistan to halt A-Arms project” *NYT* August 12, 1979. Cited in Kux. *The United States and Pakistan*, 240.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Burt, “US aides say Pakistan is reported to be building an a bomb site, *NYT*, August 17, 1979. Cited in Kux. *The United States and Pakistan*, 238

<sup>82</sup> Khan, *Eating Grass*, 211.

<sup>83</sup> Friday Morning Session, September 14, 1979, General Advisory Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament, Secret. NSA EBB 333 doc 42. The following is the full transcript of this segment of the conversation on preventive/preemptive attacks (p. 320-322): “Mr. Doty: The Israelis are the most highly motivated of our friends – with respect to doing something? Certainly, that’s what I get informally.  
Mr. Van Doren: We get that informally, in the newspapers, but we don’t have any direct –

Mr. Bundy: Say again, the Israelis are what, Paul?

nuclear, it was that it could export nuclear material to other countries including Libya “I’m more concerned about the other Arab countries getting into this act. The Pakistanis have firmly denied that they have any deal with the other Arab countries, and I think we have no –”<sup>84</sup> continuing a bit later “we do share evidence of this with several of the friendly countries, and I don’t think there is any difference in judgment. We’re all deeply concerned about it and most of us are scratching our head over what is the best thing to do.”<sup>85</sup> Asked whether the Chinese could be approached on this, the answer was noncommittal: “We have approached them several times within the last year. They don’t want to get actively involved in stopping this, but I think they are not in favor of a Pakistani nuclear explosive program, and I don’t think they are doing anything to help it.”<sup>86</sup> This belief was false, however. The Chinese actually were in favor of a nuclear Pakistan, from the same meeting “But they advise us to, for goodness sake, to help out the Pakistani conventional nuclear capability against the Soviet peril, and that we shouldn’t be “cutting off our nose to spit our face–” interpreted as “Conventional.” In other

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Mr. Van Doren: The most highly motivated to do something about this, he says. [redacted] certainly, they are concerned about it. But, what they are doing to do about it –

Ms. Pfeifer: May I ask you, unless you are almost willing to go in and stop something, is it realistic to think that you can do anything about Pakistan, or any other country, that begins to get started? I think it’s nice to delay suppliers and I think it’s nice to do all these things, but I wonder if that’s – I guess I keep wondering is there a window in time when you can stop something and that window isn’t open very long, and if you don’t do that, you’ll never stop them?

Mr. Doty: That’s essentially what the Israelies are saying when they speak about Entebbe Two.

Mr. Bundy: Can’t hear you, Paul.

Mr. Doty: I say that that’s what the Israelies say; informally, and they speak of Entebbe Two.

General Scowcroft: [redacted]

Mr. Agnew: The Russians have said the same thing about China.

Mr Bundy: “They know what it is that has to be stopped.”

<sup>84</sup> Friday Morning Session, September 14, 1979, General Advisory Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament, Secret. NSA EBB 333 doc 42.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

words, they said, “it’s foolish to enforce your law there and to cut off this protection against the Soviet threat when that’s what you should be doing, so don’t use that sanction.”<sup>87</sup>

This section highlighted the strong debate within the U.S. regarding the best course of action against Pakistan. While the sources do not discuss restraint much, the geopolitical situation is front and center, as with it the importance of the relationship with Pakistan. At least at this juncture, the evidence points that whether Pakistan was restrained or not, the U.S. were not ready to use coercive means to bring proliferation to an end due to what it would mean for the situation in Afghanistan. The U.S. was, however, particularly concerned about the Pakistani nuclear program. The Carter administration was mainly marked by severe tensions.<sup>88</sup> The cuts and reallocation of aid, as well as the plan for a preventive attack, are all indicative of this situation.

However, in December 1979 the Soviet Union would invade Afghanistan following the overthrow of the Afghan communist government. A memo sent on 28 January 1980 explains what the U.S. is ready to do for Pakistan in light of this new development. “The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has created a serious threat to the states of the South Asia region, particularly Pakistan. President Carter has announced that the United States would provide military equipment, food and other assistance to help Pakistan defend its independence and territorial integrity.”<sup>89</sup> From this moment on, the relationship between Pakistan and Washington would grow closer. Pakistan would become an important player in containing the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, and the discordant signal it sent on its restraint with the bomb would be mostly accommodated.

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<sup>87</sup> Friday Morning Session, September 14, 1979, General Advisory Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament, Secret. NSA EBB 333 doc. 42.

<sup>88</sup> Kux, *The United States and Pakistan*.

<sup>89</sup> State Department cable 25686 to U.S. Embassy Switzerland et al., "Non-Proliferation Policy and Renewed Assistance to Pakistan," 30 January 1980. NSA EBB 333 doc 46.

### **3. Non-Proliferation and the Reagan Years: The Continued Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan: 1980-1990.**

The Reagan administration was marked by intense debates when it came to the best way to handle the Pakistani situation. On the one hand, strong nonproliferation advocates wanted strong negative consequences for the continued nuclearization of Pakistan. On the other hand, President Reagan favored a more lenient approach, and even lied to Congress in order to keep aid flowing to Pakistan. President Reagan, while interested in nonproliferation and the effect a nuclear bomb in Islamabad would have on the India-Pakistan rivalry, and the broader region,<sup>90</sup> was mainly focused on countering and containing the Soviets in Afghanistan. As Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown said: "We will continue to maintain our position against Pakistani nuclear development, but we will also provide aid to Pakistan."<sup>91</sup> It also became clear by the 1980s that Pakistan had no interest in turning back, in part due to domestic politics. It would have been near suicide for Zia to abandon the program. There were, however, some possibilities of being able to bring Islamabad to "refrain from testing any device" but it was judged to be a hard sell, mostly because Zia had to maintain the appearance of parity with New Delhi.<sup>92</sup> Nonetheless, many documents showcased how the United States believed Pakistan had demonstrated a clear understanding of deterrence, and how they had progressively changed their military doctrine towards a more defensive posture over the years. Despite repeated lies from Zia and some of its closest advisers on their nuclear

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<sup>90</sup> U.S. Department of State Cable 145139 to U.S. Embassy India [repeating cable sent to Embassy Pakistan], "Non-Proliferation in South [Asia]," 6 June 1979. NSA EBB 377 doc 1.

<sup>91</sup> Secretary of Defense Harold Brown to Ambassador-at-Large Gerard C. Smith, 31 January 1980, enclosing excerpts from memoranda of conversations with Geng Biao and Deng Xiaoping, 7 and 8 January 1980. NSA EBB 377 doc 3.

<sup>92</sup> Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State, "Pakistan and the US: Seeking Ways to Improve Relations," Report 97-PA, 23 March 1981. NSA EBB 377 doc 4.

ambitions, Islamabad did signal they would not become adventurous when it came to eventually become a nuclear power. Its close relationship with Washington at the time helped the matter.

*Between Aid and Sanctions: Non-Proliferation efforts in the 1980s.*

The 1980s were marked, however, by an increase in classified documents discussing what to be done once Pakistan became nuclear. Lewis A. Dunn, for example, in a memo presented to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, discussed the ways in which the United States could help reduce the potential instability in the region. Among other things, he suggested either “de facto or de jure agreements on force size, deployment, types of weapons, and so on. Confidence-building measures, ranging from the stationing of observers in each other’s country to reduce the fear of surprise attack to discussion of command and control arrangements might also lessen pressures for augmented nuclear weapons arsenals.”<sup>93</sup> This memo was written in June 1981. At this point in time it was already known within Washington that Islamabad had at least one operational nuclear reactor.<sup>94</sup> It was later discovered by the IAEA in August 1981 that the security measures surrounding the Karachi plant were not adequate. On the safeguards: “Islamabad has instructed its Ambassador in Washington to inform US officials that Pakistan will resist a proposed upgrading of safeguards at the plant. President Zia may have concluded that Pakistan will be able to parry the IAEA findings and that no damage is likely to be done to the prospective military assistance agreement with the United States.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Lewis A. Dunn, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, "Implications for U.S. Policy of a Pakistani Nuclear Test," 11 June 1981. NSA EBB 377 doc 6.

<sup>94</sup> National Security Archives briefing book 377: “New Documents Spotlight Reagan-Era Tensions Over Pakistani Nuclear Program,” ed. William Burr. Washington DC: The George Washington University. Available at: <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb377/> (assessed October 15, 2018). Notes to document 7.

<sup>95</sup> Acting Special Assistant for Nuclear Proliferation Intelligence, National Foreign Assessment Center, to Director and Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, "Warning Report – Nuclear Proliferation," 20 August 1981. NSA EBB 377 doc 8.

The Non-Proliferation efforts of the United States were made more difficult by the situation in Afghanistan. The Soviet occupation, by 1981, had escalated and was met by Mujahideen fighters who had been trained by the CIA. Moscow had performed many offensive operations against Mujahideen's locations in Afghanistan, but also in Iran. Part of the Afghan resistance was hosted within Pakistani borders. Washington supported the Mujahideen and saw Islamabad has an important actor in containing the Soviets in the region. The cooperative efforts were meant to reduce the *marge de manoeuvre* enjoyed by Moscow. To that end, Washington had increased its monetary and material assistance to Pakistan. In fact, Zia had rejected aid from the Carter administration because he had judged it insufficient. He did well as the Reagan administration would approve \$3.2 billion in aid, as well as F-16s. The CIA and ISI would work closely on the issue, as they had often done in the past.<sup>96</sup> As part of the deal, the Symington Amendment would be paused for five years under the condition that the President could attest the Pakistanis did not continue their nuclear program.<sup>97</sup> Part of the issue lies here. While the Reagan administration seemed to have been partly OK with a nuclear Pakistan because it did not think it would devolve into an offensive doctrine in the future, Congress saw the issue in a different light. As such, this led to some inconsistencies in U.S. policies.

On the one hand, President Reagan remained averse to another nuclear power in the region. In fact, the President had, in 1982, established a "red line" when it came to proliferation: "U.S. security assistance would come to an end if Pakistan assembled or tested a nuclear device, transferred nuclear explosives technology to another country, conducted unsafeguarded reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel to produce plutonium, or violated its International Atomic

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<sup>96</sup> Coll, *Ghost Wars*, chapter 3, ebook.

<sup>97</sup> NSA Briefing 377. Introductory Notes.

Energy Agency safeguards obligations.”<sup>98</sup> The U.S. worked very hard to block exports of nuclear material to Pakistan. It worked particularly closely with the UK to control exports to Pakistan.<sup>99</sup> Washington had knowledge of various acquisition attempt made in the early 1980s.<sup>100</sup> These efforts included Turkey, India, Sweden, and Japan.<sup>101</sup>

There is evidence the Reagan administration disregarded some of the proliferating efforts from Pakistan. Pakistani nationals Nazir Ahmed Vaid and Arshed Pervenz sought sensitive nuclear material from the U.S. and were caught doing so. The illegal procurement by Pervez, and the response by the Reagan administration, especially the decision not to apply the Solarz amendment to Pakistan, the amendment was designed to deny aid to non-nuclear countries seeking to export sensitive nuclear material from the United States, is indicative of the lenience of the President towards Islamabad’s nuclear program. Moreover, Reagan would testify a few times in front of Congress that Pakistan was not seeking a nuclear device.

It also highlights the heterogeneous opinions on the subject in Washington.<sup>102</sup> While the President engaged in a softer response towards Pakistan, Kenneth Adelman, who was the director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, wanted a stronger message to Pakistan: “your

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<sup>98</sup> Document 4: Arnold Kanter, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs and Richard Murphy, Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs, to Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Michael Armacost, “Memo on Pakistan Nuclear Issue for the NSC,” 24 August 1984, with enclosure, “Responding to Pakistan’s Continuing Efforts to Acquire Nuclear Explosives,” Secret. NSA EBB 531 doc 4.

<sup>99</sup> National Security Archives, Electronic Briefing Book 352: “Non-Papers and Demarches,” ed. William Burr. Washington D.C.: The George Washington University. Available at:

**<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb352/index.htm>** (assessed October 15, 2018).

<sup>100</sup> Terry Jones, Office of Nonproliferation and Export Policy, Department of State, to J. Devine et al., enclosing summaries of State Department cable traffic during 1981-1982 relating to demarches on attempted purchase of sensitive nuclear-related products, 17 June 1982. NSA EBB 377 doc 12.

<sup>101</sup> Kathy Strang through Dean Rust to Lewis Dunn, NWC [Bureau of Nuclear Weapons and Control], Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, “Pakistan/India Activities During Your Absence,” 13 March 1984. NSA EBB 531 doc 1.

<sup>102</sup> Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Memorandum from Norman Wulf, Director to the Director, “Solarz Amendment Applicability to the Pakistani Procurement Case.” 16 July 1987. NSA EBB 446 doc 5; Department of State, Memorandum from Ted Borek to Mr. Peck [et al.], “Letter to Justice on Pakistan Export Case,” 15 July 1987. NSA EBB 446 doc 6.; Department of State, Memorandum from Ted Borek to Mr. Peck [et al.], “Solarz Amendment: Legal Memorandum for Mr. Armacost,” 20 July 1987. NSA EBB 446 doc 7.



approach should not be business as usual...[but] more outraged indignation. Anything less and I fear Pakistan will continue its bomb program and continue to lie to us.”<sup>103</sup> Adelman, in the end, was right.

However, the Reagan administration discussed the question of nuclear proliferation as often as they could. The ambassador to Pakistan at the time, Ronald I. Spiers, had brought up the issue in a July 5, 1982, meeting with Zia. Importantly, what the American ambassador put emphasis on was how Congress would take issue with the fact Islamabad continued its proliferation efforts. The State Department would eventually have to let them know, which would trigger the removal of aid at the minimum. Zia emphatically stated Pakistan “would not develop a nuclear weapon and would not explode a nuclear device,” and “he could give his word of honor as a soldier that they would not develop, much less explode, a nuclear weapon or explosive device.”<sup>104</sup> Zia had no interest to “put [our whole relationship] at risks again by the nuclear issue.” To show his good intentions on the matter, Zia vowed he would go above and beyond what had been negotiated in the agreement regarding the safeguards on the Kanupp reactors, but that they would not come back to the table on it.<sup>105</sup> Similar discussions would come up many times during the 1980s. For example, in October 1982 Zia had General Walters convey to President Reagan “give him my word of honor as President of Pakistan and as a soldier that I am not and will not develop a nuclear device or weapon.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Memorandum from Kenneth Adelman to Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, "Your Meeting with Ambassador Merker," 14 July 1987. NSA EBB 446 doc 4.

<sup>104</sup> Documents 13A-B: "The Most Superb and Patriotic Liar" A. U.S. Embassy Pakistan cable 10239 to State Department, "My First Meeting with President Zia," 5 July 1982, Secret.

<sup>105</sup> U.S. Embassy Pakistan cable 10276 to State Department, "My Final Meeting with President Zia," 6 July 1982, Secret. NSA EBB 377 doc 13B.

<sup>106</sup> U.S. Embassy Pakistan cable 15696 to State Department, "Pakistan Nuclear Issue: Meeting with General Zia," 17 October 1982, A. U.S. Embassy Pakistan cable 15696 to State Department, "Pakistan Nuclear Issue: Meeting with General Zia," 17 October 1982. NSA EBB 377 doc 13A.

Washington used military transfers as a way to provide some security guarantees to Zia's regime and as a way to forestall the nuclear program, thinking military capability would be more efficient at deterring India than strategic weapons. For example, in November 1982 Washington authorized the sale of F-16s to Pakistan to, according to the CIA, "leverage over the Pak-nuclear program." Negotiations on arms transfer were seen as the perfect opportunity to discuss denuclearization with Zia. If transfers were canceled, it would remove ground for bargaining.<sup>107</sup> This point is brought up by the CIA because some within Central Intelligence, but also within the State Department, were concerned Pakistan would sell some of the technology it received from the U.S. to China. A previous report issued on November 8, 1982, mentioned Washington should withhold from the sale of the F-16 the radar technology it possessed, the ALR-69, in case it ended up in Chinese hands.<sup>108</sup> This point was forcefully rebuffed by Henry S. Rowen, member of the National Intelligence Council, addressing CIA deputy chief McMahon. From his perspective, potential transfer to China was a small price to pay if the objective was to strengthen nonproliferation efforts towards Pakistan. The memo itself was written "because no single intelligence assessment has pulled these various threads together, and we do not believe policymakers have examined this close linkage."<sup>109</sup> A similar example is the sale of AIM-9L to Pakistan, but with some caveat: "At that time, and before taking the AIM-9L to the Congress, we

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<sup>107</sup> Henry S. Rowen, National Intelligence Council, to DDCI [Deputy Director of Central Intelligence McMahon], 19 November 1982, with attached memorandum from National Intelligence Council staffer [name excised], "Pakistan," same date. NSA EBB 377 doc 15B.

<sup>108</sup> Excerpt from Intelligence Report, "Pakistan-US: Demarche on F-16 Equipment," 8 November 1982, enclosed with memorandum from Deputy CIA Director John N. McMahon to Deputy Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci, "Risk Assessment of the Sale of AN/ALR-69 Radar Warning Receiver to Pakistan," 8 November 1982, with excerpt from National Intelligence Estimate on Pakistan attached, n.d. NSA EBB 377 doc 15A.

<sup>109</sup> Henry S. Rowen, National Intelligence Council, to DDCI [Deputy Director of Central Intelligence McMahon], 19 November 1982, with attached memorandum from National Intelligence Council staffer [name excised], "Pakistan," same date. NSA EBB 377 doc 15B.

will have to assess where we are on one issue that continues to plague our relationship: the nuclear issue.”<sup>110</sup>

The constant tension between the need to help an important strategic partner, and the desire for a non-nuclear Pakistan was slowly coming to a head. By July 1984 the State Department could no longer pretend Islamabad was not pursuing nuclear weapons, nor “assure ourselves or to convince congress that Pakistan is not in a position to fabricate nuclear weapons” which would have to ultimately lead to scaling back its aid program to Pakistan.<sup>111</sup> By the end of the summer 1984 President Reagan was determined to restate directly to Zia the non-proliferation aims of Washington. Kenneth Adelman argued the letter should send a very strong message when it came to proliferation as he believed that “Acquiescing in Pakistan’s stockpiling of nuclear weapons material would gut out long standing non-proliferation efforts.”<sup>112</sup>

At this juncture, the United States was convinced that Islamabad was reprocessing uranium to a higher percentage than it had agreed to. The letter ultimately written by Reagan followed most of the recommendations proposed by Adelman. While it opens by telling Zia how important the current relationship was to him, and how impressed he was with the behavior shown by Islamabad when it came to Afghanistan, he quickly moved on to the nuclear issue. While Reagan took to heart the reassurances sent by Zia on his enrichment activity, the President still added: “I must candidly state that enrichment of uranium above 5% would be of the same significance as those nuclear activities, such as unsafeguarded reprocessing, which I personally discussed with you in December 1982. And would have the same implications for our security program and

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<sup>110</sup> State Department draft telegram to U.S. Embassy Pakistan, “Demarche on Nuclear Issue,” 5 July 1984. NSA EBB 531 doc 2.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Kenneth Adelman, Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, to the President, “Pakistan Nuclear Weapons Program,” 4 September 1984. NSA EBB 531 doc 6.

relationship.”<sup>113</sup> The talking point written for the Pakistani ambassador meant to deliver the letter to Zia re-enforced the written message. While the talking points reaffirm the importance of the U.S.-Pakistani relationship, as well as the important support provided by Pakistan in Afghanistan despite Soviet attacks on Pakistani positions, the intent here is to dissuade Pakistan from its enrichment business. Especially, “We were disappointed that your recent non-paper on the nuclear issue did not reiterate the oral assurance you had given me that Pakistan would not enrich uranium above the five percent level. Such a written assurance would help our efforts.”<sup>114</sup> The letter also expresses fear of an Indian preventive attack on Pakistani facilities as a prompt to restart bilateral discussions between the two parties despite India’s refusal to do so.<sup>115</sup>

Zia’s response to Reagan’s letter puts emphasis on the action already taken by Pakistan. When it comes to nuclear proliferation, he reminded the President that Pakistan understood the issue of proliferation. They have proposed a variety of ways to handle the situation, including a nuclear free-zone, or to have both India and Pakistan become signatories of the NPT. They are also in favor of transparency measures if New Delhi agreed as well. If India did not follow suit, President Zia “confess[ed] to some misgivings about the value of unilateral gestures” in this case.<sup>116</sup> Zia denies any activities designed to create a nuclear weapon and closed with the reassurances that Islamabad “will do nothing to embarrass your administration.” Nowhere in the letter, however, is a promise to limit uranium reprocessing to 5 percent.<sup>117</sup> Whether the response by Zia is genuine, i.e. he would abandon the nuclear program if India did cooperate when it came

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<sup>113</sup> President Reagan to General Zia, 12 September 1984. NSA EBB 531 doc 7A.

<sup>114</sup> Document 7B: “Talking Points for Use in Delivering Letter to General Zia,” NSA EBB 531 doc 7B.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> National Security Archives Briefing Book 531, “The United States and the Pakistani Bomb, 1984-1985L President Reagan, General Zia, Nazir Ahmed Vaid, and Seymour Hersh. Washington DC: The George Washington University. Available at : <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb531-U.S.-Pakistan-Nuclear-Relations,-1984-1985/> (assessed October 15, 2018). Notes to document 9

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

to nuclear policies, it is relevant to note New Delhi continuously refused such overture. During the 1970s and 1980s Islamabad was the sole power seeking some form of arms control or non-proliferation mechanisms between the two rivals. Most of those efforts reinforces the argument made by the Pakistani regime that it sought nuclear weapons for deterrent purposes, but also that it understood the ramifications and limits generally placed on such weapons.

Despite the desire for a tougher stance, it was still recognized within Washington that Pakistan had security issues when it came to India. Muhammad Junejo, the recently elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, had made similar points to Stephen Solarz (D-NY) when he visited Islamabad. Solarz reminded Junejo that the U.S. had proof of uranium enrichment activities did not stop at the 5 percent threshold as promised, and that this would have negative ramifications for the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. Junejo, mentioned that “what they did, they did for deterrence purposes.”<sup>118</sup> He reminded Solarz of an “Anti-Pakistan lobby” in India inventing stories of a possible Pakistani bomb, which he argued Islamabad could not make. Once prompted for more safeguards, however, Junejo replied: “Irrespective of who is in power, no Pakistani government would allow its sovereignty to be challenged, and verification by the U.S. would constitute such a challenge.”<sup>119</sup>

By the mid-1985 onwards it was clear that the U.S. would continue its nonproliferation efforts towards Pakistan but would not use coercive measures to stop it. The geopolitical need for Pakistan was too important for Reagan. Moreover, there was the issue of U.S. credibility as Kenneth Adelman explained well:

we may eventually be forced to conclude that the "least bad" alternative is to accept Pakistani enrichment while toughing it out with Congress on the aid relationship. Even so, we should attempt to force Zia to face the choice between enrichment and security

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<sup>118</sup> Embassy Islamabad cable 11791 to Department of State, "Nuclear: Solarz Conversation with GOP," 29 May 1986. NSA EBB 446 doc 2.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

assistance before conceding him both. If successful, the payoffs are high: Presidential credibility strengthened, the prospects for favorable Congressional action on aid enhanced, and the risks of an overt nuclear arms race in South Asia reduced.... Increasing pressure on Pakistan has risks. Should Zia "stonewall," we may well have to reverse ourselves, thereby damaging our credibility. I assume we would not want to terminate aid, thereby damaging our Afghan interests.<sup>120</sup>

By 1987 President Reagan had certified to Congress that Pakistan was not a nuclear capable state despite the intelligence it possessed, making it possible to wave the Symington agreement.<sup>121</sup> There were divisions within the government on this. Solarz accused Pakistan in this context of "flagrant violation and arrogant contempt" of U.S. policies when it came to attempt at getting sensitive nuclear material.<sup>122</sup> Adelman supported the use of the Solarz amendment to force them to cooperate on enrichment and procurement.<sup>123</sup> He went as far as recommend not to waive the Symington Amendment as a way to put pressure on Islamabad, but was overruled by Secretary of State Shultz who was in favor of certification.<sup>124</sup> This is Reagan's full statement:

I have also taken into account the fact that the statutory standard as legislated by Congress is whether Pakistan possesses a nuclear explosive device, not whether Pakistan is attempting to develop or has developed various relevant capacities. Based on the evidence available, and on the statutory standard, I have concluded that Pakistan does not possess a nuclear explosive device [...] the proposed United States assistance program for Pakistan remains extremely important in reducing the risk that Pakistan will develop and ultimately possess such a device. I am convinced that our security relationship and assistance program are the most effective means available to us for dissuading Pakistan from acquiring nuclear explosive devices.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Kenneth Adelman, director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, o Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Programs and U.S. Security Assistance," 16 June 1986. NSA EBB 377 doc 20.

<sup>121</sup> NSA EBB 377. Notes to document 23.

<sup>122</sup> National Security Council, Memorandum from Shirin Tahir-Kheli to Robert Oakley, "Dealing with Pakistan's Nuclear Program: A U.S. Strategy," 23 July 1987. NSA EBB 446 doc 9.

<sup>123</sup> Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Memorandum from Kenneth Adelman to Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, "A Strategy on Pakistan," 4 November 1987. NSA EBB 446 doc 20.

<sup>124</sup> Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Memorandum from Kenneth Adelman for the President, "Certification on Pakistan," 21 November 1987. NSA EBB 446 doc 22. See notes to the document as well.

<sup>125</sup> President Reagan to Speaker of the House, 17 December 1987. NSA EBB 446 doc 24.

The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency wanted President Reagan to add additional security measures to the aid package to be delivered in 1987, including firm safeguards against the development of a nuclear capability.<sup>126</sup>

Eventually, President Reagan did agree that the Pakistani were in breach of the Solarz Amendment but believed the relationship with the Pakistani was more important and “waive the prohibitions of Section 669 of the Act with respect to that period [until 01/04/1990].”<sup>127</sup>

### *Restraint during the Reagan Years*

The Reagan government did not drastically change its assessment of the motivations behind the Pakistani nuclear program from previous governments. It still recognized that “Pakistan’s nuclear quest is fueled by its deep-seated fear of India and its increasing conventional military inferiority. ...Pakistan’s nuclear program is meant to provide a deterrent to the conventional Indian threat. Urgency is dictated by India’s “PNE.””<sup>128</sup> Moreover, “moving toward a demonstrated deterrent may seem a necessary move to prevent unacceptable external influence over Pakistani policy.”<sup>129</sup> It was also acknowledged by CIA director McMahan that U.S. security guarantees when it came to any kind of conflict between India and Pakistan were near worthless: “Pakistan is aware that it cannot count on US support against India, and therefore continues to view a nuclear capability as its ultimate deterrent.”<sup>130</sup> Brzezinski had also made similar

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<sup>126</sup> Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Memorandum from Norman Wulf for Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, "Next Steps on Pakistan-Solarz and Symington," 21 December 1987. NSA EBB 446 doc 25.

<sup>127</sup> "Presidential Determination No. 88-5 of January 15, 1988," Federal Register, Vol. 83, No. 24, 5 February 1988. NSA EBB 446 doc 27B,

<sup>128</sup> Special Assistant for Nuclear Proliferation Intelligence, National Foreign Assessment Center, Central Intelligence Agency, to Resource Management Staff, Office of Program Assessment et al, "Request for Review of Draft Paper on the Security Dimension of Non-Proliferation," 9 April 1981. NSA EBB 377 doc 5.

<sup>129</sup> Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State, "India-Pakistani Views on a Nuclear Weapons Options and Potential Repercussions," Report 169-AR, 25 June 1981. NSA EBB 377 doc 7.

<sup>130</sup> Excerpt from Intelligence Report, "Pakistan-US: Demarche on F-16 Equipment," 8 November 1982, enclosed with memorandum from Deputy CIA Director John N. McMahon to Deputy Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci, "Risk Assessment of the Sale of AN/ALR-69 Radar Warning Receiver to Pakistan," 8 November 1982. NSA EBB 377 doc 15A.

comments.<sup>131</sup> Nonetheless, Central intelligence recommended to continue to seek a trade-off between U.S. security guarantees for promises to abort the nuclear program.<sup>132</sup> Within the intelligence community, the Pakistani quest for a deterrent against India due to its lost in relative power experience was well noted: ““Bhutto and others saw in a Pakistani nuclear weapon a means to punish another Indian attack so severely it would serve as a deterrent to aggression.” Washington believed New Delhi’s compellent threat to stop any force accumulation from Pakistan did not help in making Islamabad feel secure.<sup>133</sup>

However, the potential use of nuclear deterrence in the region to reduce tensions was not a given within the intelligence community. It was instead expected to lead to an unstable arms race, mainly due to the fact that Pakistan would not emerge from a nuclear test with a secure arsenal able to deter New Delhi at the onset.<sup>134</sup> The Intelligence Community also thought it might be possible for Pakistan to become more adventurous if it possessed a nuclear capability, especially when it came to its claims on Kashmir due to its past behavior.<sup>135</sup> The debate on Pakistani restraint was ambivalent to this point, and we can surmise that its relevance to U.S. security interests help mitigate its aggressive policies of the past.

Due to most of these factors, Washington was under no illusions when it came to Pakistan nuclear ambitions. At the end of the day, Islamabad security concerns, and their perceived need for a nuclear deterrent, was greater than any kind of reassurances the U.S. could provide. If Zia was ever placed in front of the choice: “The intelligence community on balance believes that if

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<sup>131</sup> Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusion*, 249.

<sup>132</sup> Special Assistant for Nuclear Proliferation Intelligence, National Foreign Assessment Center, Central Intelligence Agency, to Resource Management Staff, Office of Program Assessment et al, "Request for Review of Draft Paper on the Security Dimension of Non-Proliferation," 9 April 1981. NSA EBB 377 doc 5.

<sup>133</sup> Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State, "India-Pakistani Views on a Nuclear Weapons Options and Potential Repercussions," Report 169-AR, 25 June 1981. NSA EBB 377 doc 7.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.



forced to choose between U.S. aid and a nuclear weapons capability, Zia will opt for the latter.”<sup>136</sup> Pakistan’s argument when it came to the bomb was to reach strategic parity, and increase its bargaining leverage, with New Delhi. Moreover, “the Pakistanis have alleged that we have publicly ignored the Israeli nuclear program and that it has not affected in any way our military and economic aid to Israel. Zia may think he is offering us diplomatic cover: the Pakistanis will not acknowledge publicly when and if they acquire a nuclear capability.”<sup>137</sup> This is a fair assessment as Pakistan had previously been “informed...that a nuclear test would have drastic consequences for our bilateral relationship.”<sup>138</sup> The strategy used by Islamabad to develop and not test a nuclear device during this period was a particularly strong signal of restraint, but also a clear demonstration of understanding on the part of the Pakistani of the context of their nuclearization. They did not seek the most aggressive and destabilizing demonstration of their capability.

In any case, the State Department commissioned in 1983 a report from Stephen P. Cohen to provide, among other things, and outlook of which type of doctrine could a nuclear Pakistan adopt.<sup>139</sup> Cohen’s conclusions are similar to the argument made in this dissertation: Pakistan had shown, in the past, 1) an understanding of deterrence both theoretical and in practice, 2) reduced its aggressive military posture towards a doctrine more defense, and deterrence, oriented, 3) and as such can be believed when they argue they wish to develop nuclear weapons for deterrent

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<sup>136</sup> Secretary of State George Schultz to President Reagan, "How Do We Make Use of the Zia Visit to Protect Our Strategic Interests in the Face of Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Activities," 26 November 1982. NSA EBB 377 doc 16.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> “India-Pakistan Nuclear Issues: Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations,” United States Senate, Ninety-sixth Congress, Second Session, on Pending Nuclear Issues Between the United States, India, and Pakistan, March 18, 1980, 14.

<sup>139</sup> The discussion in this paragraph comes from the following memo: Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State, "Pakistan: Security Planning and the Nuclear Option," Report 83-AR, 1983. NSA EBB 377 doc 17.

purposes. Pakistan cannot hope to rival India in relative conventional military strength, Cohen argues. Compounding the issue is the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, putting another flank at risk.

Importantly, he had this to say on Pakistan's evolving military doctrine:

To overcome its manpower deficiencies vis-à-vis India, Pakistan until recent years relied on taking the initiative in hostilities. However, the factors that made taking the offensive an acceptable risk in the past no longer prevail. Deterrence of attack, rather than initiation of war, has become the dominant theme of Pakistan's defense planners. But a satisfactory conventional force strategy is difficult to devise, given Pakistan's manpower situation and short supply of high-performance weapons.<sup>140</sup>

Islamabad had demonstrated they understood their situation and had been effectively deterred from more aggressive policies. They were therefore modifying their doctrine: "Pakistani strategic doctrine has been the use of military force to deter an Indian attack. In recent years this has become the dominant theme of Pakistan's defense planners, because they realize that the risks involved in initiating war have become greater."<sup>141</sup> Citing a major-general in the Pakistani army, he writes: "The posture that we have decided to adopt is a policy of 'strategic defense.' You can call it a policy of deterrence or whatever, but it is our policy to maintain adequate armed forces to ensure that our territorial integrity and independence are assured." Pakistan's approach to deterrence is one of punishment: threaten as much damage as possible as a deterring mean.<sup>142</sup> His own suggestion was to slow down on counterproliferation and let Indians and Pakistanis figure out their own arms control agreements.<sup>143</sup> During the mid-1980s the argument put forward by Cohen started to be echoed in various declassified documents coming from the U.S. There is a clear understanding that the India-Pakistan nuclear issue was dynamic mostly due to threat perception

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<sup>140</sup> Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State, "Pakistan: Security Planning and the Nuclear Option," Report 83-AR, 1983. NSA EBB 377 doc 17.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, Emphasis is mine.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

on both sides. In public opinion polling, for example, 87 percent of the Pakistani population wanted the state to develop a nuclear arsenal, which is linked to the 53 percent of the population polled that fears India would use its nuclear capability in a conflict with Pakistan.<sup>144</sup>

The deterrent capability on both sides would be evident and immediate even with small arsenals, believed the director of the India Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, K. Surbrahmanyam, who argued India and Pakistan “would achieve mutual deterrence in a regional ‘balance of terror’...a new level of stability in South Asia.”<sup>145</sup> Moreover, in a meeting between Gerard Smith and Foreign Minister Agha Shahi, the Pakistani official had argued that “the value of a nuclear capability lies in its possession, not in its use.”<sup>146</sup>

By December 1985 the U.S. had indications that Pakistan was already in possession of a bomb, but that they did not test it. From the Defense Agency: “[redacted] suggested Pakistan produced an atomic weapon in early October with onsite Chinese technical assistance...comment: similar allegations have appeared before in open sources...nonetheless, efforts to verify this latest report are continuing.”<sup>147</sup> This is in line with previous report who hypothesized that Pakistan would use the Israel method: produce a bomb but never test it. This demonstrates an understanding by Pakistan of the context it was in and the potential trouble a test would mean 1) for its national security, 2) its relationship with the U.S., 3) its rivalry with India. In the end, whether they were in possession of a bomb or not at that point in time is less relevant. What is relevant is how they chose the less aggressive, and more responsible, path to the bomb.

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<sup>144</sup> Briefing Book, "Visit of Prime Minister Junejo of Pakistan, July 15-21, 1986," NSA EBB 377 doc 21.

<sup>145</sup> Hugh Montgomery, director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State, to Ambassador Ronald Spiers, 17 February 1984, enclosing "India-Pakistan: Pressures for Nuclear Proliferation," Report 778-AR, 10 February 1984. NSA EBB 377 doc 18.

<sup>146</sup> Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions*, 239.

<sup>147</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency cable to [excised location], "Pakistan-China: Nuclear Weapons Production and Testing," 7 December 1985. NSA EBB 377 doc 19.

Another aspect the United States found reassuring of the Zia government was how stable it was. While the regime faced its share of issues, Washington was not particularly concerned those could lead to larger problems. Speaking directly about the Pakistan regime John McMahon, the then director of the CIA, argued: "His largely benign authoritarian regime had given Pakistan general political stability and substantial economic growth."<sup>148</sup> While not directly addressed or acknowledged in the memo, such assessment can be inferred to support a larger argument of a responsible and restrained Pakistan as a nuclear stakeholder. At least, this is how it could have been perceived at the time.

#### *Preventive Attack Plans by India and Israel*

The specter of preventive attacks by India and Israel became ever present during this period. During a June 29, 1979, CIA meeting, Richard Lehman reminded those present of the danger of the publicity around the Pakistani and preventive attacks that could lead to war. While not mentioned directly, we can infer from the memo that the United States was in no way prone to see a preventive strike launched from the Indian "I called attention to the potential dangers arising out of the Pakistani nuclear program. The more attention is called to it, the more alarmed the Indians will become. Given that they have fought two wars with Pakistan in the last 15 years and that the military balance is even more in their favor than before, they will be strongly motivated to prevent Pakistani acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability by military force."<sup>149</sup> Again the

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<sup>148</sup> Excerpt from Intelligence Report, "Pakistan-US: Demarche on F-16 Equipment," 8 November 1982, enclosed with memorandum from Deputy CIA Director John N. McMahon to Deputy Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci, "Risk Assessment of the Sale of AN/ALR-69 Radar Warning Receiver to Pakistan," 8 November 1982. NSA EBB 377 doc 15A.

<sup>149</sup> "Morning Meeting – June 29, 1979," Memorandum by Richard Lehman, NIO [National Intelligence Officer] for Warning. NSA EBB 333 doc 39.

worry stemmed from the potential reaction of the region to the Pakistani program and not the future behavior of a nuclear Pakistan.

Further confirmation of India's position can be gleaned from a memorandum for the Director of Central Intelligence sent on July 24, 1979. It is mentioned that India would more than likely seek to keep its options open when it came to Pakistan but "Still, almost certainly, it will act deliberately to improve its unilateral military options and to expand its freedom of action in case diplomacy fails to arrest Pakistan's production of weapons-usable nuclear materials. To minimize uncertainties in their estimates of Pakistani nuclear capabilities and to hedge against the possibility of Chinese military support for Pakistan, India's leader will also be inclined to strengthen their security ties with the USSR."<sup>150</sup>

While concrete, the threat was not judged to be imminent: "However, actual military moves to prevent Pakistan from acquiring nuclear weapons will probably not be planned for execution until after Indian authorities decide that, either: A) Pakistan's production of nuclear explosives is imminent, or b) Pakistan will soon achieve an invulnerable capability to stockpile weapons-usable nuclear materials."<sup>151</sup> Moreover, the document argues that as the risk of preventive attacks increases, so would Pakistan's resolve, which might prompt its leadership to accept "political and financial support from sympathizers in the Islamic world, particularly among the oil-rich Arab states. [...] it might already have been induced to share with unidentified foreigners some sensitive nuclear equipment and to propose terms for possible future nuclear cooperation with Saudi Arabia, Libya, or Iraq."<sup>152</sup> None of these options were palatable to the United States.

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<sup>150</sup> John Despres, NIO for Nuclear Proliferation via Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment [and] National Intelligence Officer for Warning to Director of Central Intelligence, "Monthly Warning Report—Nuclear Proliferation," 24 July 1979. NSA EBB 333 doc 41.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

While the Americans could live with a nuclear Pakistan, there was real anxiety as to whether India, and later Israel, would be willing to preventively strike Islamabad's installations. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had already qualified a nuclear Pakistan of having a "grave and irreversible" impact on the stability in the area but would wish to keep options open in handling the situation.<sup>153</sup> At the least, by September 1981, the intelligence community in the U.S. was not convinced India was ready to strike Pakistan yet, however "we believe India would be willing to use military force to eliminate the threat of a nuclear-armed Pakistan; a decision which would be dependent critically on political and strategic circumstances prevailing at the time."<sup>154</sup> More structured talks of preventive attack will arise again by late 1982.

In a meeting between Zia, General Walters, and Ambassador Spiers, Zia mentioned he had received some information a potential "Joint Indian-Israel actions against Pakistan in the near future." He believed it was in part due to the fear of "Islamic bombs," the fact that Pakistan could sell some of its material to enemies of India and Israel.<sup>155</sup> Washington had received similar indications but did not believe an attack was forthcoming in the immediate.<sup>156</sup> In fact, in the early 1980s the U.S. did not believe an attack was credible as the cost would be high, even in victory:

a preemptive Indian military strike against Pakistan's nuclear facilities is not a likely reaction, considering the risks of failure and even the costs of success to India, in terms of its foreign relations, exposure of Indian territory to the resulting radiation, and the danger of Pakistani retaliation. [...] It almost inevitable would mean war with Pakistan. It would

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<sup>153</sup> Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State, "India-Pakistani Views on a Nuclear Weapons Options and Potential Repercussions," Report 169-AR, 25 June 1981. NSA EBB 377 doc 7.

<sup>154</sup> John N. McMahon, Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment, to Ambassador Richard T. Kennedy, Under Secretary of State for Management, "Special National Intelligence Estimate on Indian Reactions to Nuclear Developments in Pakistan," 21 September 1981, enclosing SNIE 31-32/81. NSA EBB 377 doc 9.

<sup>155</sup> U.S. Embassy Pakistan cable 15696 to State Department, "Pakistan Nuclear Issue: Meeting with General Zia," 17 October 1982, A. U.S. Embassy Pakistan cable 15696 to State Department, "Pakistan Nuclear Issue: Meeting with General Zia," 17 October 1982. NSA EBB 377 doc 14A.

<sup>156</sup> Secretary of State George Schultz to President Reagan, "How Do We Make Use of the Zia Visit to Protect Our Strategic Interests in the Face of Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Activities," 26 November 1982. NSA EBB 377 doc 16.

draw international sanctions and possible embargo of Middle Eastern oil and expulsion of Indian workers from the Persian Gulf. A preemptive strike against Pakistan likely would bring Pakistani retaliation against Indian nuclear reactors, and India would not want to bring such destruction upon itself.<sup>157</sup>

American assessment was likely pessimistic as they did not believe a preventive attack necessary, nor were they party to a rivalry with Pakistan.

Despite U.S. assessment of credibility, Israel did plan an attack in 1982. The plan was dismissed, however, once New Delhi's government refused Israel's demand for access to its airfields.<sup>158</sup> The possibility would re-emerge 2 years later. By July 1984, however, the CIA modified its assessment of a possible preventive attack. Suggesting New Delhi saw a nuclear Pakistan as a present danger, "it is our view that a preemptive military strike by India is a near-term possibility...The recent increases in tension between India and Pakistan could be a precursor to military action by India." The CIA expected that "An Indian attack on Pakistani nuclear facilities would almost certainly prompt retaliatory attacks against Indian nuclear facilities and would probably lead to full-scale war." They also had indicators that India felt threatened by the current developments.<sup>159</sup> Indian officials had even made the trip to Tel-Aviv to "buy electronic warfare equipment to neutralize Kahuta's air defenses."<sup>160</sup>

While the Indians had the necessary capabilities to attack the nascent nuclear facilities of the Pakistani, doing so was considered too costly at the time.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, China had extended its

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<sup>157</sup> Hugh Montgomery, director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State, to Ambassador Ronald Spiers, 17 February 1984, enclosing "India-Pakistan: Pressures for Nuclear Proliferation," Report 778-AR, 10 February 1984. NSA EBB 377 doc 18.

<sup>158</sup> McNair Paper Number 41, Radical Responses to Radical Regimes: Evaluating Preemptive Counter-Proliferation, May 1995, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/mcnair41/41ind.htm>; T. V. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, 2009), Chapter 6.

<sup>159</sup> Memorandum from David W. McManis, National Intelligence Officer for Warning to Director of Central Intelligence, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, "Monthly Warning and Forecast Meetings for July 1984," 6 August 1984. NSA EBB 531 doc 3.

<sup>160</sup> Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark, *Deception : Pakistan, The United States And The Global Nuclear Weapons Conspiracy* (New York: Atlantic Books, 2007). Ebook.

<sup>161</sup> Ashok Kapur. *Pakistan's Nuclear Development* (New York: Routledge, 1987).

nuclear umbrella to Pakistan while they built their own deterrent.<sup>162</sup> However, decision-makers in India in their calculation kept two important variables in mind at all times: that a preventive strike might bring India in conflict with China, Pakistan's patron, and that a strike might not be sufficient to stop Pakistan's nuclear ambitions completely.<sup>163</sup> The ineffectiveness of a potential attack seems to have been an important aspect of the decision-making process at the time.

However, there are also traces of discussions having taken place where it was not believed that Pakistan had an interest to use the bomb.<sup>164</sup> A certain expectation of future deterrence was present. *Ex post facto*, the minimum deterrence doctrine used by Pakistan certainly provide some credence to this argument.<sup>165</sup> There are also indications that the United States had reached out to India to signify it would not tolerate a preventive attack, because the attack in itself would be more destabilizing than the nuclear program.<sup>166</sup> This led to the signature of a non-aggression on nuclear facilities treaty between India and Pakistan in 1985.<sup>167</sup>

#### 4. Conclusions

The case of Pakistan is different than the Chinese case due to its important relationship with the United States during the 1970s and the 1980s. As such, the strategic partnership between the

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<sup>162</sup> John Arquilla, "Nuclear Weapons in South Asia: More May be Manageable," *Comparative Strategy* 16, no. 1 (1999): 13-31.

<sup>163</sup> George Perkovich. *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1999); John Garver. *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 2001)

<sup>164</sup> Rizwana Abbasi. *Pakistan and the New Nuclear Taboo: Regional Deterrence and the International Arms Control Regime* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012)

<sup>165</sup> Muthiah Alagappa. *The Long Shadow: Nuclear Weapons and Security in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 498.

<sup>166</sup> Devin T. Hagerty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation: Lessons from South Asia* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1998); Kanti P. Bajpai et al., *Brasstacks and beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995).

<sup>167</sup> Leonard S. Spector, *Going Nuclear* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Pub Co, 1987), 81.



two made the option to carry out a preventive attack short-lived, at least from the available declassified documents. The cost of war, normative constraint, and balance of power considerations had less impact once the U.S. needed Pakistan's help in Afghanistan. Moreover, the issue of restraint did not appear as much as in the Chinese case. This is still an important finding, however. It shows that the reputation for restraint is principally for adversaries who are seeking admission into the nuclear club. As Pakistan was an ally of the United States at the time, its previous reckless behavior in the Kashmir conflict was discarded and no preventive attack launched. The core of the nuclearization of Pakistan occurred during the Cold War as well, a period where the United States was more open to new nuclear powers due to the practice of deterrence. This made it easier to discard the Pakistan nuclear program, but also to believe some of the restraint signals sent by Islamabad.

Moreover, the case also provides interesting evidence to support the argument that the nonproliferation policy choices of the United States are rarely homogeneous. We saw several struggles, during the Carter and Reagan administration, as to how to handle the proliferation of Pakistan. Since it was an ally, however, coercive means were often removed from the equation, which, led many in the administration to believe they did not have much leverage, which is not wrong. It also demonstrates that the United States would have preferred a non-nuclear Pakistan. The U.S. recognized the potential instability the nuclearization of Pakistan could bring to the region, as well as the shift in the balance of power it would have with India. This shift could lead New Delhi to seek to preventively strike. If there is a lesson here is that the reputation for restraint is difficult to accumulate in rivalries. There are indications India were afraid of a nuclear Pakistan but backed down once the United States intervened. On the other hand, there has been public declarations that New Delhi never believed Pakistan would use a nuclear weapon in conflict. In

sum, while Washington did need the help of Pakistan, it also engaged in extensive non-proliferation policies seeking to curb Islamabad's nuclear ambitions.

There is, however, some evidence that Pakistan had been able to develop some reputation for restraint. However, these findings should not be overstated as they came from two sources only, and sources outside of the government. Nonetheless, in recent years Pakistan had been shown to have modified its military doctrine to deterrence and defense, instead of the more aggressive posture it had during the 1960s, and it had been recognized. This is in part why Stephen Cohen argues that a nuclear Pakistan would not be too adventurous. Moreover, at most juncture Pakistan sought to bolster deterrence with India. It proposed many disarmament and verification accords which were rejected by New Delhi. It clearly signaled it wanted the bomb due to its conventional force asymmetry with India, and not for any adventurous goals, which eventually led to the acceptance of its nuclear ascendancy. Importantly, it decided not to test its nuclear device at the time following a promise made by Zia to Reagan, which he followed. This cognizance of the context shows important moderation and restraint.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> For more on this type of deal by the U.S. see Rabinowitz, *Bargaining on Nuclear Tests*.

## **Chapter 6**

### **North Korea: Restraint and the End of the Cold War**

The case of North Korea is included in the in-depth case study because it demonstrates to important dynamics of U.S. nonproliferation choices. First, it shows U.S. behavior when the proliferator is unable to establish a reputation for restraint and consistently acts recklessly. North Korea continued to act aggressively before and during its nuclearization, shirked its arms control commitments, obfuscated its proliferating behavior, and had past actions which made Washington believe it would use a potential nuclear capability in an adventurous fashion i.e. it would not only use it for deterrence, but for compellence as well. Deterrence is partly based on certainty and on communication. North Korea, instead, relied on uncertainty when it became clear they were nuclearizing. Second, this case is important to showcase the difference in nonproliferation policy of the United States after the Cold War. As proposed by this dissertation, in the post-Cold War states should find it difficult to signal restraint and to justify nuclear weapons programs out of the need for deterrence.

Importantly, the case of North Korea demonstrates how the sharing of nuclear and missile technology became seen as reckless, and as such antithesis to restraint, in the post-Cold War. There is evidence throughout the years that North Korea sold nuclear and missile technology to third parties who the international community did not deem to be restrained actors, namely Iraq and Iran. Pakistan seems to be in a gray area in this regard. The reason why the state was not attacked preventively was due to its artillery capability on its border with Seoul. Moreover, their past behavior made it so they did not accumulate a positive reputation.

However, there are some indications that the Americans might have pulled back from a preventive attack because of a transfer of reputation from South Korea. While Washington believed North Korea would be fundamentally aggressive with the bomb, the prognostic was not the same in Seoul. As the case will show, there was at least some within South Korea who believed that North Korea would behave if they received some consideration. While the Americans did not believe the North would make good on any of their commitments, the South saw the actions of the North in a different light and did not expect overt aggressivity in the future. This assessment, in part, led Seoul to ask the U.S. not to attack the North and to continue with its diplomatic efforts.

This chapter will proceed as follows. First, it will provide a brief overview of the North Korean nuclear program. Second, it will engage in the non-proliferation efforts of the Reagan, Bush Sr., and Clinton administrations. The chapter will conclude with the nonproliferation efforts of the George W. Bush administration and the ascendancy of North Korea to nuclear status despite U.S. efforts.

## **1. North Korea's Nuclear Program Overview**

The Korean war was an important event in creating the interest for nuclear weapons in the North Korean leadership. Washington's threat of nuclear retaliation in 1953 during the final stretch of the Korean War helped create the desire for a nuclear deterrent.<sup>1</sup> The leadership sought to avoid

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<sup>1</sup> We now know that the plans to use nuclear weapons during the Korean War had been carefully laid out and was more than mere assessment of possibilities. See Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); TV. Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons* (Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, 2009).

another American intervention and believed nuclear weapons would be part of the solution.<sup>2</sup> By the end of the 1950s, the Soviet Union had agreed to provide nuclear know-how to Pyongyang, an entente which would be made official in 1959.<sup>3</sup> Their first nuclear reactor would become operational in 1962. Pyongyang made an approach to the Chinese in 1964 to acquire sensitive nuclear and missile technology, which Beijing rejected.<sup>4</sup> They had made public a year prior that they would not be a part of the Partial Test Ban Treaty. By the end of the 1970s, Pyongyang possessed a modest research reactor as well as crude missile technology. By that time, beginning in the mid-1970s, the South Korean government had also embarked on a nuclear program of its own. It would eventually abandon it in the mid-1980s, but this development provided additional urgency to the North Koreans in the development of their own capability.<sup>5</sup>

The North truly began its nuclear weapons program in 1979 after repeated demands to the USSR and China for sensitive security and nuclear assistance, but both rejected Pyongyang's demands. Still in 1979, Pyongyang built a second research reactor at Yongbyon. In the early 1980s, the North Koreans sought sensitive Nuclear expertise from the Eastern Bloc, mostly from Czechoslovakia, the East Germans, as well as the Hungarians. All three refused to either provide

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<sup>2</sup> James Clay Moltz and Alexandre Y. Mansourov, eds., *The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy and New Perspectives from Russia* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> "From the Journal of Gromyko, Record of a Conversation with Ambassador Ri Sin-Pal of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," April 28, 1958, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVPRF fond 0102, opis 14, delo 4, p. Translated for NKIDP by Gary Goldberg <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116019>

<sup>4</sup> Walter C. Clemens Jr., "North Korea's Quest for Nuclear Weapons: New Historical Evidence," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 10, no. 1 (2010): 127–54.

<sup>5</sup> For declassified documents on South Korea's nuclear ambition and the U.S. efforts to make it reconsider please see "Stopping Korea from Going Nuclear, Part I," and "Stopping Korean from Going Nuclear, Part II," available <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault/2017-03-22/stopping-korea-going-nuclear-part-i>, and <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault/2017-04-12/stopping-korea-going-nuclear-part-ii>

specialists or receive North Korean students.<sup>6</sup> Hungary referred Pyongyang directly to Moscow.<sup>7</sup> Eventually, with the economic downturn of the 1990s, the North Korean regime would increase its nuclear efforts. It would eventually detonate its first device in 2006.

## **2. Nonproliferation under Reagan – Mixed Signals for Restraint**

### *Threat Assessment and Non-Proliferation Efforts*

Early assessments by the United States did not believe Pyongyang would be able to achieve nuclear capabilities with the installations they had. A 1982 report by the CIA on a new North Korean facility being built stated: “The reactor, which will not be completed for several years, is not designed to produce the quantities of plutonium needed for a nuclear weapons program.”<sup>8</sup> While Washington had received indications Pyongyang demanded nuclear assistance, Central Intelligence by 1982 did not believe they had “either the facilities or materials necessary to develop and test nuclear weapons”<sup>9</sup> the report notes the lack of information available on whether they could develop the explosive technology necessary for a nuclear capability. The report did note, however, that Pyongyang already had the means of using a potential weapon: “The North Koreans already

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<sup>6</sup> “Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” April 30, 1981, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1981, 86. doboz, 72, 003729/1981. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Balazs Szalontai.  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110137>; “Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” April 30, 1981, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1981, 86. doboz, 72, 003729/1981. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Balazs Szalontai.  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110137>

<sup>7</sup> “Letter, Hungarian Foreign Ministry to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences,” April 06, 1983, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-k Korea, 1983, 73. doboz, 81-73, 2856/1983. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Balazs Szalontai.  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110139>

<sup>8</sup> [CIA], North Korea: Nuclear Reactor, July 9, 1982. NSA EBB 87 doc 1.

<sup>9</sup> CIA, A 10-Year Projection of Possible Events of Nuclear Proliferation Concern, May 1983. NSA EBB 87 doc 2.

have a suitable nuclear delivery system in the MiG-23 fighter.”<sup>10</sup> At that point in time, the nuclearization of North Korea was not seen as particularly credible.

The Reagan years were mostly marked by uncertainty when it came to Pyongyang’s nuclear ambitions. While they had some indication the North Koreans might have sought nuclear weapons, the likelihood of such event was either judged low, or Washington believed the nonproliferation efforts deployed by Moscow, namely its insistence on Pyongyang’s ascension to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, were sufficient. While I found no evidence indicating possible preventive attack plans on North Korean facilities at the time, Washington’s assessment of future North Korean behavior pointed to a fear of aggressive behavior towards Seoul if they ever gained the bomb. North Korean’s actions during this period did nothing to reduce U.S. fears. Moreover, this era was marked by strong shirking behavior from the North Koreans on their agreed upon international commitments, namely its ratification of the NPT and its safeguards agreement with the IAEA on its civil nuclear programs. The stalling witnessed on implementation was linked by the North Korean government to the U.S. strategic arsenal stationed in South Korea: if Washington opened the doors to its installations, Pyongyang would follow suit. The inability by Pyongyang to properly signal restraint made it difficult to assess its motives, a fact many times acknowledged by Washington.

There is evidence that Moscow sought, as much as possible, to stop North Korea from becoming nuclear. Their nuclear assistance to Pyongyang rested on the latter’s acquiescence at joining the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).<sup>11</sup> Moscow expressed early on, by 1981, some reservations as to the motivations of the North Korean to acquire nuclear weapons. Vitkor

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<sup>10</sup>CIA, A 10-Year Projection of Possible Events of Nuclear Proliferation Concern, May 1983. NSA EBB 87 doc 2.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

Tikhonov, a Ukrainian statesman and diplomat, in a conversation with a Hungarian diplomat “expressed that the policy the DPRK was pursuing in Southeast Asia was incomprehensible to the Soviet Union.”<sup>12</sup> Allies of the North, and of the Soviet Union, also put some pressure on Pyongyang to join the NPT. A Hungarian memo relating a Bulgarian conversation with Pyongyang mentions the effort made to have the North join the treaty, which they were vacillating on: Pyongyang “evaded giving and unequivocal and final answer” and whether they would join the treaty as long as Washington continued to base nuclear weapons on the Peninsula.<sup>13</sup> Doing so, the North was signaling to its allies it sought the weapon for deterrent purposes, an assessment that was not received as such by the Americans and their allies.

The United States saw the effort by Moscow in a favorable light. The clear optimism found in the May 1983 CIA assessment of North Korea’s nuclear future may have to do with the active role Moscow was taking in constraining the ambitions of its ally. Moscow had made the request as part of their own commitment to provide civil nuclear energy to Pyongyang.<sup>14</sup> This was noted by the United States as an interesting commitment by the Soviet Union as it “put Moscow’s prestige on the line in guaranteeing a peaceful program, with renewed economic and military aid to lever to enforce it.”<sup>15</sup> It is not a stretch from this observation to conclude that Washington believed the Soviet Union had clear incentives at that point to constrain North Korea in its nuclear ambitions.

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<sup>12</sup> “Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” March 12, 1981, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1981, 86. doboz, 103, 002477/1981. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Balazs Szalontai.  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110136>

<sup>13</sup> “Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” August 04, 1983, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1983, 78. doboz, 81-40, 004628/1983. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Balazs Szalontai  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110141>

<sup>14</sup> CIA, A 10-Year Projection of Possible Events of Nuclear Proliferation Concern, May 1983. NSA EBB 87 doc 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



However, American assessment of future posture and behavior by North Korea was negative in the early 1980s. A CIA report dated May 1983 and titled “A 10-Year Projection of Possible Events of Nuclear Proliferation Concern,” at once recognized the deterrent value Pyongyang attached to nuclear weapons, but also how they could use it to either compel adversaries or engage in more aggressive foreign policy. From the report:

It [Pyongyang] might see nuclear weapons as a means of forcing political concessions from Seoul, as a hedge against possible South Korean development of a nuclear weapons capability, as leverage to gain a freer hand in paramilitary operations without provoking military response, as deterring a US nuclear response to an attack on the South, or as a means of carrying out offensive operations in an all-out attack.<sup>16</sup>

More than likely, this assessment took into consideration the recent aggressive behavior of Pyongyang towards its adversaries, namely Japan and South Korea. In the 1970s, for example, the North Korean regime had abducted 12 Japanese citizens, as well as provided sanctuary to the Japanese Red Army.

More importantly, not long after the CIA report, the North would bomb South Korean officials in Rangoon, killing 21. We know at the least that Beijing was “absolutely disgusted” by the attack, especially at a time where they sought to bring Washington, Seoul, and Pyongyang to the negotiating table.<sup>17</sup> Charles W. Freeman, who was at the State Department at the time and an important actor when it came to diplomatic engagement with China, had this to say about Deng Xiaoping’s overture when it came to a negotiated settlement with the North Korean:

actually [Deng Xiaoping] proposed to Weinberger a meeting in Beijing between the South and North Koreans, with the U.S. in attendance, all hosted by the Chinese. I was astonished...we confirmed with the Foreign Ministry that indeed Deng had said this, that

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<sup>16</sup> CIA, A 10-Year Projection of Possible Events of Nuclear Proliferation Concern, May 1983. NSA EBB 87 doc 2.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Charles W. Freeman, excerpted from *China Confidential: American Diplomats and Sino-American Relations, 1945-1996*, compiled and edited with introduction and conclusion by Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (Columbia University Press, New York, 2001. NSA EBB 87 doc 3.

indeed it was very important, and that indeed he was making a major policy initiative. And we sent off a cable saying that, only to discover that Paul Wolfowitz [assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs] had edited this comment out of the conversation, alleging that he hadn't heard any such things. Then he denied adamantly that it had been said, and accused us of having put words in Deng's mouth. Washington was mystified by our cable reporting a Chinese initiative in Korea.<sup>18</sup>

Freedman goes on to say the Korean issue, "was very ideological question for us as well as for the Chinese."<sup>19</sup> Asked why Wolfowitz would have acted this way Freeman offers the following hypotheses: "I would speculate...Mr. Wolfowitz took a very jaundiced, rather ideological view of China, and was inherently suspicious of any initiative originated with the Chinese. Second, with regards to contacts with North Korea, he was apprehensive about the political reaction from the Republican right...And he might also have been concerned about the adequacy of prior consultation with South Korea."<sup>20</sup> This recollection by Freeman is important in two aspects. First, it demonstrates the importance of the North Korean nuclear issue, and the desire to reach a negotiated settlement. Second, it highlights how suspicious some members of the U.S. administration were towards North Korea. It indicates a mindset in which it would be difficult for Pyongyang to signal restraint to the Republican administration due to ideological and domestic concerns, but also due to the previous history of aggressive behavior shown by the North. These events, and the history of the Korean War onwards, likely informed the projected posture of the North Korean by Washington.

The second term of the Reagan Presidency saw an important turning point when it came to Washington's assessment of the North Korean nuclear program. First, a CIA report released in

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Charles W. Freeman, excerpted from *China Confidential: American Diplomats and Sino-American Relations, 1945-1996*, compiled and edited with introduction and conclusion by Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (Columbia University Press, New York, 2001). NSA EBB 87 doc 3.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

April 1984 informed decision-makers of Pyongyang's efforts to develop a uranium nuclear reactor. While the report doubts the North Korean regime's human resources when it came to handle the output of a nuclear reactor, they nonetheless believed Pyongyang was "technically capable of building the reactor without foreign assistance."<sup>21</sup> Importantly, the authors of the report were suspicious as to whether the North Korean regime would follow its international commitment when it came to this new addition to their nuclear program: "North Korea has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; and it is unlikely to put the reactor under IAEA safeguards."<sup>22</sup> Additionally, 1984 is the year in which Pyongyang manufactured its own SCUD missiles, the Hwasong-5, and Hwasong-6. As such, while Washington is unsure as to whether Pyongyang will abide by its NPT commitment, it is also developing missiles which could serve in the future as delivery systems for nuclear weapons.

Moreover, in early 1985 Washington received indications North Korea sought ways to refine plutonium. This development unnerved the U.S. in large part due to the uncertainty over Pyongyang's intentions. Moreover, while "Western supplier nations" had refused to sell reprocessing technology and material to Pyongyang, it was not necessarily the case when it came to Moscow. When Robert Kennedy mentioned this issue while in the USSR, "the Soviets this time asked for additional information (which we are providing) rather than their usual non-reply."<sup>23</sup> It was later confirmed on December 27, 1985, that Pyongyang would receive nuclear assistance from Moscow. The report stated that the "Soviet probably agreed to get North Korean accession to Non-Proliferation Treaty," which North Korea would eventually do.<sup>24</sup> The nuclear power plant "would

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<sup>21</sup> CIA, East Asia Brief, April 20, 1984. NSA EBB 87 doc 4.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Department of State Briefing Paper, ca. January 5, 1985. NSA EBB 87 doc 5.

<sup>24</sup> CIA, East Asia Brief, December 27, 1985. NSA EBB 87 doc 6.

be in accordance with the standards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.”<sup>25</sup> Pyongyang ratified the NPT in December 1985. The mention in the January 1985 CIA report of the difficulty of figuring out the intentions of North Korea is important here. If North Korea was able to develop a reputation for restraint, the reputation would mitigate the lack of information Washington had to work with.

There is some evidence to be found supporting the claim made by North Korea that their nuclear program was strictly built as a deterrent for its own security and not part of a larger aggressive foreign policy towards South Korea. Reporting on his visit to Pyongyang General Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany Erich Honecker remarked that the North Korean regime seemed in favor of implementing a “nuclear free-zone” in the region as a measure of war prevention.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the report made it clear that part of the rationale for the North Korean nuclear program, deterring Washington, could be validated by the evidence of basing of several nuclear ballistic missiles by the United States in South Korea “[m]ore than 1,000 US nuclear warheads” as Kim Il Sung believed.<sup>27</sup> The North Korean chairman recognized the vast superiority of forces on the side of Washington and argued it would be ludicrous for the North to strike the South and expect a positive outcome.<sup>28</sup> While the United States was not privy to this particular conversation, the claim made in private to the German General Secretary echoes statements made

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<sup>25</sup> “Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” March 09, 1985, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-k Korea, 1985, 76. doboz, 81-532, 2745/1985. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Balazs Szalontai.  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110142>

<sup>26</sup> “Report on a Erich Honecker's visit to North Korea, October 1986,” October 18, 1986, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Foundation Archive of the Parties and Mass Organizations in the Federal Archive [Berlin] (SAPMO-BA), DY 30, 2460. Translated by Grace Leonard.  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110758>

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

by the North to the Americans. As we've seen, Washington was more inclined to believe in a future aggressive policy by Pyongyang due to its previous actions.

The United States was aware the signature of the NPT by Pyongyang did not mean it might automatically abandon its nuclear ambition. However, it did recognize: "if North Korea intends to pursue a nuclear weapons program, it has made its job much more difficult by signing the NPT" in part due to the transparency measures and the safeguards attached to its signature.<sup>29</sup> However, by April 1987 North Korea had not yet fulfilled its NPT commitment with regards to safeguards. It had not made public the existence of its enrichment program as well, which might be indicative of foul play from the DPRK.<sup>30</sup> The aforementioned reactor, located at Yongbyon, was believed by Washington to be possibly part of a weapons program as it was believed "could produce weapons-grade uranium."<sup>31</sup> It was believed, however, that Pyongyang might have waited on unveiling the reactor to "gain maximum propaganda value."<sup>32</sup> The delaying by the North Korean in entering the safeguards agreement was unnerving to Seoul and prompted questions as to the possibility of a nuclear Pyongyang in the not too distance future, a fear which was not echoed by the Americans.<sup>33</sup>

A CIA memo dated May 26, 1988, once again noted the delaying tactics used by the North Korean in their obligation to agree to safeguards under the IAEA. At this point in time, Pyongyang had "repeatedly missed target dates for such talks [formal safeguards negotiations], and the IAEA is concerned that P'yongyang may find new pretexts to postpone any talks" which bothered the American has "Lengthy delays in implementation or incomplete declarations to the IAEA would

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<sup>29</sup> CIA, North Korea: Potential for Nuclear Weapon Development, September 1986. NSA EBB 87 doc 7.

<sup>30</sup> CIA, North Korea's Nuclear Efforts, April 28, 1987. NSA EBB 87 doc 8.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> CIA, *North Korea's Expanding Nuclear Efforts*, May 26, 1988. NSA EBB 87 doc 11.

increase international concern that the North's activities at Yongbyon are not strictly peaceful."<sup>34</sup>

It would be about a year later, on August 9, 1989, that North Korea would officially denied they were in the process of developing a weaponized nuclear program:

North Korea last week issued its first, albeit muted, public denial that it is developing a nuclear weapons capability. Pyongyang's decision to respond at this time may reflect concern that recent charges, if left unchallenged, might undercut its self-styled image as champion of world nuclear disarmament. The denial, contained in a low-level KCNA dispatch on 4 August, was pegged to a 29 July *Washington Post* report on the recent detection of a new facility—located at Yongbyon—which the paper said may be capable of extracting plutonium...KCNA characterized the report as an “utterly groundless lie” and as “shameless false propaganda to mislead the world public.” It reiterated the North's pledge, first made in 1986, six months after it signed the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, not to “produce, test, stockpile, or introduce” nuclear weapons or to “permit” the basing or passage of such arms within its territory.<sup>35</sup>

The foot dragging on the issue of safeguards and the continued uncertainty surrounding the North Korean program may have played a role in the potential inability of the regime to signal its restraint to the United States and South Korea when it came to its security policies.

Opacity around Pyongyang's motive when it came to its seemingly civil nuclear program, and the ongoing stalling methods of Pyongyang when it came to its IAEA and NPT commitments, made it more difficult for Washington to determine Pyongyang's motives. From a department of State memo: “North Korea nuclear program undermines regional stability and raises serious questions about its [Pyongyang's] intentions.”<sup>36</sup> Two additional facts increased Washington's suspicions. First, the Yongbyon reactor was “well suited to the production of plutonium” and second, the U.S. had found “with concern the construction of an indigenous probable reprocessing plant which appears unrelated to civilian needs and poses the threat of contribution to a nuclear

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<sup>34</sup> CIA, *NORTH KOREA: Nuclear Program of Proliferation Concern*, March 22, 1989. NSA EBB 87 doc 13.

<sup>35</sup> FBIS/CIA, *Trends*, August 9, 1989. NSA EBB 87 doc 14.

<sup>36</sup> Department of State Talking Points Paper for Under Secretary of State Bartholomew's China Trip, ca. 30 May 1991. Subject: *North Korean Nuclear Program (For China)*. NSA EBB 87 doc 15.

weapons capability.”<sup>37</sup> The type of reassurances sought by the U.S. was mainly a clear physical commitment by the North to maintain its commitment to the NPT. Washington sought Beijing help in the matter as well.<sup>38</sup>

Importantly, Pyongyang sought to link its compliance to the agreement it had made with regards to the NPT and the IAEA to reciprocal verification of U.S. missile sites in South Korea. It was the central issue in a discussion held between Pyongyang’s ambassador to Moscow, Son Seong-Pil, and Deputy Minister G. Kunadze and First Secretary E. Lu. Tomikhin. While Moscow sought to ensure compliance from the North, the North Korean ambassador kept “linking this agreement [safeguards] with the withdrawal of American nuclear weapons from the south of Korea or with the conduct of DPRK inspections on American nuclear sites in the ROK.”<sup>39</sup> In order to force compliance by Pyongyang, Moscow threatened to stop its civilian assistance to the regime, as well as cutting its military assistance.<sup>40</sup> In response, Son Seong-Pil reiterated the position of his government that most of the safeguards as written were an infringement on the North’s sovereignty, and deplored how “[Washington] ignoring Pyongyang’s appeal about the conduct of inspections at nuclear sites in the South,” and would consider transparency measures through the International Atomic Energy Agency, “if the international pressure cease.”<sup>41</sup>

This response did not appear satisfactory to Moscow who followed suit with Washington and approached the Chinese government seeking help in getting the North to comply to its agreed

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Department of State Talking Points Paper for Under Secretary of State Bartholomew's China Trip, ca. 30 May 1991. Subject: *North Korean Nuclear Program (For China)*. NSA EBB 87 doc 15.

<sup>39</sup> “Record of Conversation between F.G. Kunadze and Son Seong-Pil,” October 02, 1991, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) fond 10026, opis 4, delo 2803, listy 1-3. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119251>

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

upon commitment “without linking this question to the problem of the American nuclear presence in the South of the country” in order to ensure “stability on the Korean Peninsula.”<sup>42</sup> Despite efforts by Moscow, Pyongyang maintained that the requirement for delivering on its commitments:

Washington is trying to apply direct pressure on the DPRK with the aim of forcing North Korea to unconditionally sign the safeguards agreement with the IAEA. However, our position is that this question should be decided in close connection with the withdrawal of American nuclear weapons from the territory of the ROK. Pyongyang will closely watch how the American side will implement the initiatives advanced by US President G[eorge] Bush. Inspection of nuclear sites of the North is only possible on the condition of analogous inspection of the territory of the Republic of Korea. In the final count the DPRK stands for the declaration of the Korean Peninsula a nuclear-free zone. [...]<sup>43</sup>

It seemed at times that Moscow was ready to go much further when it came to nuclear nonproliferation than anticipated. At the forefront of a summit between Moscow and Seoul, Deputy Minister Kunadze which took place in 1991, the Deputy Minister was clear it would be ready to cut all assistance to Pyongyang if they did not “immediately join the IAEA system.”<sup>44</sup>

While these specific discussions may not have reached the American directly, it sheds some light on the negotiation tactics employed by the North Koreans in order to be able to continue their nuclear ambitions while shifting blame for their non-compliance on the U.S. refusal to allow

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<sup>42</sup> “Record of Conversation between G.F. Kunadze and Yu Hongliang,” October 08, 1991, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) fond 10026, opis 1, delo 2290, listy 36-38. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko.  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119252>

<sup>43</sup> “Record of Conversation between Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR A. S. Dzasokhov with the DPRK Ambassador Son Seong-pil,” October 09, 1991, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) fond P9654, opis 10, delo 339, list 225. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko.  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121652>

<sup>44</sup> “Letter from G.F. Kunadze to R.I. Khazbulatov,” November 15, 1991, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) fond 10026, opis 5, delo 157, listy 17-19. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko.  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119253>



similar transparency measures to apply to its arsenal based in South Korea. This point would be relevant in the diplomatic effort which took place during the George Bush presidency.

### **3. Nonproliferation under Bush – Strong Concessions, Little Restraint**

#### *Threat Assessment and Non-Proliferation Efforts*

Declassified documents of the Bush era show the importance placed on the North Korean nuclear threat by the administration. It was classified as “a serious challenge to the peace and stability not only of the Korean peninsula but also of Northeast Asia as a whole.”<sup>45</sup> The onus was placed on findings ways to have Pyongyang finally agree to implement the IAEA safeguards it had agreed to in the 1980s.

The Bush administration held similar threat assessment than its predecessors on the effect on the Korean Peninsula of a nuclear North Korea, “North Korea’s nuclear program and activities are the new and destabilizing factor on the Peninsula.”<sup>46</sup> The administration recognized the importance of using multilateral diplomacy, including, of course, Japan and South Korea, to make sure Pyongyang would make good on its IAEA commitment.<sup>47</sup> Reassurances such as removing sanctions and welcoming Pyongyang back within the international community were put on the table.<sup>48</sup> This meant making sure “North Koreans...fulfill their international obligations without

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<sup>45</sup> Paper, US-ROK Basic Positions, ca. August/September 1991, Secret (two versions: a and b) 1991-09-00. NSA EBB 610 doc 3a. See 3b as well.

<sup>46</sup> Telegram, State Department to Tokyo, etc., August 13, 1991, Subject: U.S.-ROK Hawaii Meeting on North Korea (Secret). 1991-08-13. NSA EBB 610 doc 1.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Paper, US-ROK Basic Positions, ca. August/September 1991, Secret (two versions: a and b) 1991-09-00. NSA EBB 610 3a, see 3b as well.

conditions.”<sup>49</sup> Pyongyang had worked hard to link their own agreement to safeguards with U.S. acceptance of visits to their nuclear sites in Seoul, a condition which was not in the original agreement. Moreover, part of their strategy was to get Seoul to agree not to reprocess uranium itself so Washington could try and get Pyongyang to do the same, “something they are legally able to do,” in order to constrain their nuclear development.<sup>50</sup>

The most striking decision taken by the Bush administration is perhaps the removal all U.S. nuclear weapons from South Korea. While the decision has been construed as overture towards Moscow and an effort at disarmament, it also plays an important role in the negotiations surrounding the North Korea nuclear program.<sup>51</sup> President Bush ordered all bombers to be removed from alert status, naval vessels including submarines were to lose their tactical nuclear weapons, ground-launch as well as short-range missile systems were to be eliminated, among other things.<sup>52</sup> An important point of Pyongyang’s rhetoric to justify its continued refusal to honor its NPT and IAEA commitments rested on the present of U.S. nuclear weapons on the peninsula. In fact, it has been reported that Seoul had “suggested the removal of the US nuclear weapons located there [Korean Peninsula].”<sup>53</sup> By removing them, it reduced the strength of Pyongyang’s argument while exposing whether it had been bluffing all along and had no intentions of stopping their

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<sup>49</sup> Memorandum for Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Subject: The Next Steps in the North Korea Nuclear Issue, ca. September 1991 Secret/Eyes Only  
1991-09-00. NSA EBB 610 doc 2.

<sup>50</sup> Memorandum for Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Subject: The Next Steps in the North Korea Nuclear Issue, ca. September 1991 Secret/Eyes Only  
1991-09-00. NSA EBB 610 doc 2.

<sup>51</sup> White House “Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and George Bush” Secret  
September 27, 1991. NSA EBB 561 doc 1.

<sup>52</sup> Department of Defense, Secretary of Defense, Memorandum for Secretaries of the Military Departments, “Reducing the United States Nuclear Arsenal,” Secret/Formerly Restricted Data, September 28, 1991. NSA EBB 561 doc 3.

<sup>53</sup> Susan J. Koch, *The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991-1992* (Washington, D.C: National Defense University Press, 2012), 6.

enrichment and reprocessing program. Seoul's National Security Advisor, Kim Chong Whi, thought the removal of tactical strategic weapons from the Peninsula would not have the effect the Americans believed it would have. He argued "that the North will hone in on the sovereignty issue and tell the South that the Seoul government should have taken the initiative, not the U.S." and "not to expect reciprocal gestures" in future negotiations between the two.<sup>54</sup> However, this potential outcome did not deter the South from proposing, "a non-aggression pact if the North agrees to a range of CBM's and exchanges."<sup>55</sup> A memo sent on October 29 shows some hope coming from the South Korean national security advisors. Discussing a meeting between the head of states of North and South Korea, he felt "an eagerness on the part of the North Koreans to establish better links with the world" and that with the right strategy Pyongyang "can be made to accept gradual opening of its system."<sup>56</sup> As such, it was time to increase the political and economic pressure on the regime in order to gain the desired concessions on the nuclear program. Part of the pressure meant to link a potential pact of non-aggression to further non-proliferation measures.<sup>57</sup>

The proposal by the South, and its expectation of negotiating behavior by the North, demonstrates well how accustomed to shirking tactics Seoul and the Americans were at that point in time, but it did not yet stop the Americans from seeking a diplomatic resolution to the issue. In fact, the whole strategy was discussed at length in a briefing book prepared by the Deputies Committee meeting on North Korea taking place in December 1991. The document was prepared in advance of the meeting designed to establish the nonproliferation "game plan" on how to handle the North Korean nuclear program. The South Korean and American government both agreed the

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<sup>54</sup> Cable, Embassy Seoul 11234 to SecState, Subject: Further Korean Reaction to the [redacted] Initiative, October 21, 1991 (Secret). 1991-10-21, p.5

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> The National Security Archives. Cable, Embassy Seoul 11536 to SecState, October 29, 1991, Subject: Meeting with Kim Chong Whi (Secret). 1991-10-29. NSA EBB 610 doc 4.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

nonproliferation discussions had to be “front and center” in the bilateral, as well as multilateral, talks regarding North Korea. The document focuses on the interaction between a multilateral diplomatic approach with many nuclear supplier states, including Moscow and China, as well as the concurrent bilateral engagements between Pyongyang and Seoul. Once again, the objective was to get North Korea to agree to its treaty obligation and to join the international regime on nuclear safeguards, but also forego further enrichment and reprocessing of uranium. The signature of a “ROK-DPRK non-nuclear agreement” was seen as key in this respect. Importantly, the Americans were ready to propose, as a “carrot” to get compliance from Pyongyang “one-time high-level U.S.-DPRK meeting to ensure information get to Kim Il Sung.”<sup>58</sup> What Washington sought was: “(1) Sign and implement safeguards; (2) Agree with Roh’s non-nuclear principles and sign up to South’s Joint Declaration; and (3) Initiate trial inspections ASAP, to include Yongbyon.”<sup>59</sup> While Washington recognized the possibility Pyongyang would continue to hedge its bet and demand more concessions in order not to have to commit to anything tangible, the tone of the document indicates some optimism as to the feasibility of a settlement.<sup>60</sup>

Washington was overall realistic when it came to the chances to see North Korea stop its nuclear program. While the State Department talking points referred to nuclear acquisition in the region as “a threat to international security” and something “unacceptable to the rest of the world,” it was nonetheless cautious in its assessment of success in this case. Washington recognized Pyongyang had not been particularly forthcoming in compliance with their international commitments. Moreover, there is a clear link between the hedging on safeguards and the “possible

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<sup>58</sup> Briefing Book, Deputies Committee Meeting, ca. 12/13/1991 (Secret)  
1991-12-13. NSA EBB 610 doc 7.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

Pyongyang had no intention of changing course.”<sup>61</sup> Washington expected the North to “delay, diffuse international pressure, and use any opportunity to seem forthcoming, without making meaningful concessions” and expected foul play “hide its reprocessing facilities.”<sup>62</sup>

### *Restraint and Preventive Attacks*

Importantly, the use of force was not featured in the documents found in the briefing book as a viable option. Dick Cheney, who was Secretary of Defense at the time, rejected a preventive attack on North Korean facilities as it would put at risk the political efforts deployed. The word used were “initial diplomatic strategy.”<sup>63</sup> There is no extrapolation to Cheney’s statement. It’s left as is. As such, it is difficult to assess why he made this recommendation. At the same time, the United States did not have indications at the time that North Korea was getting close to nuclear latency. As such, a preventive strike was a costly option that was not necessary. Other options were on the table. There are, however, some indication of restraint in the document. While it needs to be taken with a grain of salt, the talking point recognizes Pyongyang’s nuclear ambitions were part of a deterrent strategy. Washington gave the same line it had given most regional proliferators before: namely how the development of a nuclear arsenal would make them less secure as others might follow suit, explaining in part why the Americans were so adamant on linking the negotiations over the reprocessing and enrichment of uranium in the South to the diplomatic effort: North Korea’s abandon of its nuclear program would mean the South would not develop one in the future.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Briefing Book, Deputies Committee Meeting, ca. 12/13/1991 (Secret) 1991-12-13. NSA EBB 610 doc 7.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Washington did have a redline, however. If the “DPRK is developing nuclear weapons or producing weapons-usable nuclear material, we would be unable to proceed further in the direction of a dialogue and normalization.” The push for multilateral and bilateral legitimacy, in light of this red line, makes sense as Washington sought consensus and support for future “coercive diplomatic measures.” All measures meant to signal to Pyongyang how costly proliferation would be. An approach to the Security Council was discussed. However, if the Security Council refused the compellent measures, not discussed in the document, proposed by the U.S., it could default to regional allies applying pressure: “key countries to pursue sanctions outside the UN umbrella.” The emphasis, however, remained on reassurances first. Deadline set in the document was February 1992.

The bilateral meeting between the North and the South did bear fruit and led to the production of the “Joint Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression, Cooperation and Exchanges.” While the agreement featured measures designed to help reduce conflict escalation, the question of safeguards and any form of denuclearization was left out. It would come a few months later in the form of the “Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” The text stipulates mutual restraint when it comes to the development of nuclear weapons. The declaration also led to the creation of the Joint Nuclear Control Commission (JNCC) through which monitoring would take place. Washington remained cautious following the agreement, mainly because the North had not made good on its February 19 deadline to sign onto the IAEA Safeguards Agreement and were showing no indications they

would do so.<sup>65</sup> The department of defense, expecting further delays considering previous North Korean tactics, wanted to know “what nooses are available to tighten around North Korea.”<sup>66</sup>

Interestingly, by March 1992 Washington was not yet ready to use more aggressive mode of nonproliferation. They still believed there were good chances North Korea would agree to safeguards, and that any possible delays in this case might be justifiable. At that point, officials from Pyongyang had indicated they would sign unto the IAEA “in a month or two.”<sup>67</sup> However, the North Korea Deputies’ Committee advocated sounding the relevant actors on applying more direct pressure on Pyongyang, including Beijing and Moscow in a bid to “narrow the DPRK’s freedom of action and tighten international pressure.”<sup>68</sup> Despite some optimism, the American position remained the same: “Our basis policy remains that nuclear weapons in North Korean hands are intolerable.” At this juncture, it seems Washington saw indications in Pyongyang’s behavior they would abide by their commitment and their stalling tactics could be explained by factors not having to do with hiding their nuclear program, although the latter remained a possibility.<sup>69</sup> While Pyongyang became less aggressive, and Washington gave indication it saw the development of a nuclear program as a deterrent venture, the shirking behavior exhibited in negotiations gave pause to Washington. Importantly:

At the November 1991 SCM, Secretary Cheney announced the postponement of EASI Phase II troop cutbacks for Korea, citing the uncertain security situation cause by North Korea’s nuclear program. Team Spirit had been canceled for 1992 as part of the North-South agreement on denuclearization, but we and the ROK have left open the option of

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<sup>65</sup> Memorandum for Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Subject: North Korean Nuclear Issue and DC Meeting, February 7, 1992 (Secret)  
1992-02-07. NSA EBB 610 doc 8.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Memorandum: North Korea Deputies’ Committee. March 12, 1992 (Secret)  
1992-03-12. NSA EBB 610 doc 9.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

rescheduling elements of Team Spirit later in the year. There are also other exercises/demonstrations which could be executed in later 1992.<sup>70</sup>

This statement made salient the shift in strategy coming from Washington and that coercive measures were put back on the table.

North Korea would finally ratify the IAEA Safeguards Agreement in May 1992, almost seven years after it had officially agreed to do so. A memo sent to the Undersecretary of Defense for policy in October 1992 suggested Pyongyang was reluctant in its cooperation, and that the inspection regime put together bilaterally was not doing the work it was intended to do. At that point the IAEA suspected the DPRK was hiding some plutonium since their own count did not add up. The agency asked to have access to waste sites to verify whether Pyongyang was complying but were denied access.<sup>71</sup> As such, all players involved were left in the dark as to whether North Korea was enriching or reprocessing fuel, and to which quantity.<sup>72</sup>

#### **4. The Clinton Years: No Signals of Restraint and Plans for Preventive Attack**

The end of the Bush tenure was marked by some careful optimism when it came to the possibility of witnessing denuclearization on the Peninsula. The bilateral talks between Seoul and Pyongyang had yielded some positive results, Pyongyang was officially allowing IAEA inspectors to visit their nuclear installations under their safeguards commitment, and the U.S. had moved

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<sup>70</sup> Memorandum: North Korean Deputies' Committee, March 20, 1992 (Secret) 1992-03-20. NSA EBB 610 doc 10.

<sup>71</sup> Ted Galen Carpenter and Doug Bandow. *The Korean Conundrum: America's Troubled Relations with North and South Korea* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004), 40

<sup>72</sup> Memorandum, William T. Pendley to the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Subject: North Korea Nuclear Issue - Where are We Now?, October 27, 1992 [Secret] 1992-10-27. NSA EBB 610 doc 11.



forward the year before on officially removing all of its nuclear weapons, as well as delivery mechanisms, from the Peninsula. However, some issues remained. North Korea was not particularly forthcoming when it came to cooperate with the IAEA inspectors. Moreover, the North Korean had shown ambivalent behavior throughout this period when it came to their intentions on denuclearization, which had maintained a significant level of skepticism in Washington. Pyongyang had continued its aggressive behavior towards the South, and there were doubts that their nuclear intentions were strictly deterrent in nature: there were indications of possible adventurism which made Washington, Seoul, and the international community wary of a nuclear North Korea. Their lack of candidness on their treaty commitment did not help either. The situation would eventually come to a head in 1994 when the IAEA discovered Pyongyang was removing uranium rods from the Yongbyon reactor, possibly to reprocess them. Pyongyang had not declared they were doing so. The situation would escalate to the point where Clinton almost agreed to carry out a preventive attack on North Korean nuclear facilities.

### *Threat Assessment*

Pyongyang's ambivalent behavior and its continued refusal to comply on its safeguards commitment directly led to the 1994 Yongbyon crisis. Following the incidents of 1992 and the fear that the DPRK was hiding some fuel, the IAEA sought to carry a special inspection which was refused by the North Korean leadership.<sup>73</sup> The North Koreans also decided to leave the Non-Proliferation Treaty at this juncture. This decision led Moscow to cut its civilian nuclear assistance to the regime, stating, "While they agree they need to monitor the situation, the Russian leadership

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<sup>73</sup> "Fact Sheet on DPRK Nuclear Safeguards," IAEA, <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/dprk/fact-sheet-on-dprk-nuclear-safeguards> (assessed October 1, 2018).

has no further plans to deal with Pyongyang.”<sup>74</sup> Pyongyang would eventually decide against leaving the treaty and agreed, in a meeting with the United States that took place in July 1993, to discuss the resumption of inspections by the IAEA.<sup>75</sup>

There were, however, several indications that the North was simply buying time. Central intelligence, in early 1993, believed the North had been able to develop two nuclear weapons. The New York Times cited a member of the administration at the time believing, “What the intelligence community is saying is that the horse is already out of the barn...it’s too late.”<sup>76</sup> It seems this assessment, even if accurate, was not believed by the Clinton administration to be the end of the nonproliferation efforts towards North Korea. Washington decided at this juncture to re-impose sanctions on the regime and to seek additional negative inducement from the United Nations Security Council.<sup>77</sup> The possibility of additional sanctions did not sit well with North Korea, which threatened to unleash a “sea of fire” on Seoul. The compellent threat was mostly discarded as the Security Council, in May 1994, announced they would apply additional sanctions on the regime. At the same time, in an effort to signal its commitment to an aggressive response if the international community moved ahead with sanctions, the North Korean tested, in the sea of Japan, a No-Dong missile. Moreover, Pyongyang, either as normal process or in response to the sanctions, started the

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<sup>74</sup> “Letter from G.F. Kunadze to E.A. Ambartsumov,” May 27, 1993, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) fond 10026, opis 4, delo 2704, listy 51-52. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko.  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119254>

<sup>75</sup> Leon V. Sigal, *Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>76</sup> Stephen Engelberg and Michael R. Gordon, “Intelligence Study Says North Korea Has Nuclear Bomb,” *The New York Times*, 26 December 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/12/26/world/asia/intelligence-study-says-north-korea-has-nuclear-bomb.html> (assessed October 1, 2018).

<sup>77</sup> Sigal. *Disarming Strangers*

process of removing plutonium rods from the Yongbyon reactor, most likely in an effort to build an atomic weapon.<sup>78</sup>

*Preventive Attack Aborted: The 1994 Crisis*

It was confirmed in a 1999 declassified cable detailing William Perry's visit to South Korea that the United States had indeed planned a preventive attack on North Korean facilities, but that the high cost of an assault led the Clinton administration to seek a different course of action. When describing the possibility, he stated: "Of course, with the combined forces of the ROK and and U.S. we can undoubtedly win the war. But war involves casualties in the process."<sup>79</sup> The situation reached crisis point in June 1994. Additional sanctions were put on the table in June 1994 by the UNSC and Washington. According to an IAEA report, "The DPRK repeated an earlier warning that sanctions would mean war. The USA declared that it would not be deterred by threats."<sup>80</sup> At this point North Korea made the choice to leave the IAEA.

Additionally, the President had inquired as to whether a preventive attack could be successful. He was told by General Luck it was feasible, but the economic and human cost would be steep.<sup>81</sup> The plan of attack was confirmed as well by Kim Young-sam: "At the time, the U.S. Navy's 33 destroyers and two aircraft carriers were waiting for an order in the East Sea to bomb the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon."<sup>82</sup> Pyongyang had already told Washington in early 1994 that "this will not be a situation like the Iraq war. We will not give you the time to collect troops around Korea

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Cable, Amembassy Seoul 6928 to SecState, December 8, 1998, Subject: Former Secretary Perry's Meeting with President Kim (Confidential). NSA EBB 612 doc 7.

<sup>80</sup> IAEA, *The DPRK's Violation of its NPT Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA*, 1997. NSA EBB 87 doc 18.

<sup>81</sup> Joel S. Wit, Daniel B. Poneman, and Robert L. Gallucci, *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 181.

<sup>82</sup> Na Jeong-ju, "US Planned Attack on Yongbyon in 1994," *The Korea Times*, April 13, 2009, [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2009/04/116\\_43091.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2009/04/116_43091.html).2009.

to attack us. We will not attack the South first but if it is clear you are going to attack, then we will attack.”<sup>83</sup> Further escalation would be averted with the involvement of former President Jimmy Carter and his negotiation of the Agreed Framework, in which the U.S. had agreed to provide two-light water reactors to the North Korean regime in exchange for their commitment to fully stop their nuclear weapons program. Further bilateral talks between Washington and Pyongyang were worked into the document to “move toward full normalization of political and economic relations.”<sup>84</sup> Additionally, the U.S. provided reassurances to the North they would not use nuclear blackmail against Pyongyang.<sup>85</sup> The North is expected to maintain transparency when it comes to its nuclear facilities and program, as well as to maintain its commitment under the NPT.<sup>86</sup>

Why did the situation almost escalate to full-blown conflict? William Perry, the Secretary of Defense at the time, expressed to the New York Times a year later that part of the escalation in this case was due to the uncertainty surrounding Pyongyang motives when it came to nuclear weapons. On whether Washington could deter Pyongyang he said, “[he had] no reason to believe that our nuclear forces would be capable of deterring the use of their nuclear forces.”<sup>87</sup> The proposition that deterrence would not hold against the North Koreans perhaps comes from the heated rhetoric used by Kim.<sup>88</sup> It’s more likely to come from the continued missile tests and aggressive use of the military during the 1980s and 1990s which would have dictated this thinking

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<sup>83</sup> Wit, Poneman, and. Galluci. *Going Critical* , 160.

<sup>84</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency, *Agreed Framework of 21 October 1994 Between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, November 2, 1994. NSA EBB 87 doc 17.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Steve Coll and David B. Ottaway, “New Threats Create Doubt in U.S. Policy,” *The Washington Post*, 13 April 1995, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1995/04/13/new-threats-create-doubt-in-us-policy/faa4c47d-9377-4cf4-8861-3d2fd559da55/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.02a98b0f5460](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1995/04/13/new-threats-create-doubt-in-us-policy/faa4c47d-9377-4cf4-8861-3d2fd559da55/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.02a98b0f5460) (assessed October 2, 2018).

<sup>88</sup> Scott Stossel, “North Korea: The War Game,” *The Atlantic*, July/August 2005, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/07/north-korea-the-war-game/304029/> (assessed October 2, 2018)

from Perry. It was believed at the time that Pyongyang could use its newfound nuclear arsenal in an aggressive fashion in order to compel Seoul to reunify. However, Perry did not support a preventive attack mostly because U.S. allies in the region, namely Tokyo and Seoul, were not in agreement that the military option was the best.<sup>89</sup>

There are two important aspects to unpack here. First, North Korea up to June 1994 had acted counter to the theory proposed here. It had not shown restraint, had gone back on their words many times when it suited its interests, acted in an aggressive fashion towards Japan and South Korea, and was not believed by the U.S. to understand the rules of deterrence. In fact, the quote above by Perry highlights just how little they trusted the Kim regime to abide by deterrence in the future. As such, the expectation of future deterrence was weak. The only thing that saved the regime from a preventive attack was its conventional deterrence: its artillery and the ability to inflict unacceptable punishment on Seoul, and in addition U.S. civilians and military personnel. Moreover, the uncertainty over the possession of a nuclear device, the CIA believed they were in possession of at least one and the State Department did not believe it was the case as shown above, effectively closed any window of opportunity there might have been for a preventive attack. As such, the North Koreans were eventually able to test a nuclear device in 2006 because of their strong conventional deterrent despite their inability to appear restrained to the Americans.

The 1999 review of U.S. policies in the Korean Peninsula led by William Perry makes salient this conclusion. The review re-emphasized how feasible a preventive attack had been. The problem, however, was never feasibility and readiness, but the theater of engagement: “war in the Korean Peninsula would take place in densely populated area” the report reads, expecting

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<sup>89</sup> Coll and Ottaway, “New Threats.”

casualties in the range of “that hundreds of thousands of persons – U.S., ROK, and DPRK – military and civilian – would perish, and millions of refugees would be created.”<sup>90</sup> The report points to some misunderstanding of deterrence from the North Korean leadership who believed the U.S. was in favor of a full blown conflict in 1994 “there are those in the DPRK who believe the opposite is true. But even they must know that the prospect of such a destructive war is a powerful deterrent to precipitous U.S. or allied action.”<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, it meant:

deterrence of war on the Korean Peninsula is stable on both sides, in military terms. While always subject to miscalculation by the isolated North Korea government, there is no military calculus that would suggest to the North Koreans anything but catastrophe from armed conflict. This relative stability, if it is not disturbed, can provide the time and conditions for all sides to pursue a permanent peace on the Peninsula, ending at last the Korean War and perhaps ultimately leading to the peaceful reunification of the Korean people. This is the lasting goal of U.S. policy.”<sup>92</sup>

While conventional deterrence was not put into question, the report again makes the claim nuclear weapons in the hands of Pyongyang leadership, in essence the apparition of nuclear deterrence, “could undermine this relative stability. Such weapons in the hands of the DPRK military might weaken deterrence as well as increase the damage if deterrence failed.”<sup>93</sup> The inability of the North Korean regime to signal it would act with nuclear weapons in similar fashion that it did conventionally is telling.

Moreover, it seems part of reason why the North Korean regime was never able to signal restraint, and therefore was never able to develop a reputation for restraint in the eyes of the international community and the United States, is their refusal at different steps to allow transparency measures. Deterrence is partly based on certainty and on communication. North

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<sup>90</sup> William J. Perry, *Review of United States Policy Toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations*, October 12, 1999. NSA EBB 87 doc 20.

<sup>91</sup> William J. Perry, *Review of United States Policy Toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations*, October 12, 1999. NSA EBB 87 doc 20.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

Korea, instead, relied on uncertainty when it became clear they were nuclearizing. There is also evidence throughout the years that North Korea sold nuclear and missile technology to third parties who the United States did not deem to be restrained actors, namely Iraq and Iran. Pakistan seems to be in a gray area in this regard.<sup>94</sup> These actions have been seen as destabilizing for U.S. security interests, but also shown as a clear lack of understanding of the appropriate behavior of a nuclear power. The interesting paradox here is that as the North nuclearized and put most of their efforts into the program, the U.S. judged they were significantly less threatening to Seoul: “North Korea is less capable of successfully invading and occupying South Korea today than it was five years ago, due to issues of readiness, sustainability, and modernization. It has, however, built an advantage in long-range artillery, short-range ballistic missiles, and special operations forces. This development, along with its chemical and biological weapons capability and forward-deployed forces, gives North Korea the ability to inflict significant casualties on U.S. and South Korean forces and civilians in the earliest stages of any conflict.”<sup>95</sup> What the report indicates is the conscious choice made by Pyongyang to move to a doctrine of deterrence by punishment towards Seoul in order to protect its own regime from invasion. It moved away from an invading to a deterrent force, and yet were not able to fully signal restraint.

However, there is also evidence that the United States was in fact OK with some aspect of the North Korean program. The following is from a 1997 IAEA document retelling the case:

For US policy the choice was to accept that the DPRK would continue both its reactor construction programme and the separation of more plutonium at the reprocessing plant, or pay the price needed to put a stop to and eventually reverse these programmes. In effect, the USA decided that it could live with the uncertainty about how much plutonium the DPRK had separated – how much more than the amount it had declared – but that it could not accept the

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<sup>94</sup> U.S. House of Representatives, North Korea Advisory Group, Report to the Speaker, November 1999. NSA EBB 87 doc 21.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

continued separation of plutonium, even if it were made legal by being fully declared and placed under safeguards. Thus, in effect, the USA paid the price for the cessation of the plutonium separation programme. But as long as the reprocessing plant remained in place, the DPRK retained some residual leverage.”<sup>96</sup>

It seems the U.S. in this case was ready to wait and see whether North Korea, who was in bad shape economically, would crumble which would make any nonproliferation irrelevant at this point. In sum, Washington seemed determined to play the waiting game.

Importantly, there is some evidence high officials in South Korea did not share Washington’s assessment of North Korea’s future deterrence posture. In a discussion between William Perry and President Kim Dae Jung taking place in December 1998 in Seoul, the ROK president stated, “North Korea is acting tough, not because it’s tough, but because its economic difficulties are expressed as threats when it interacts with the outside.”<sup>97</sup> As such, they were in favor of more engagement with the North moving forward. Perry asked whether any form of help sent to the North would be used for its intended purpose, or if they “will divert it for military purpose?”<sup>98</sup> The South Korean president did not engage with the question directly. Instead, he replied, “We should communicate to North Korea that no provocations will be tolerated, while pursuing a policy of hope through food assistance and other means.”<sup>99</sup> It seems they had little evidence and are hoping they would cooperate. Moreover, they thought that even if they were building secret facilities, it would be a while, “four to five years,” before they could get a bomb. As such, engagement at that point in time made sense.<sup>100</sup> In other words, they believed time was

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<sup>96</sup> IAEA, *The DPRK’s Violation of its NPT Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA*, 1997. NSA EBB 87 doc 18.

<sup>97</sup> The National Security Archives. Cable, Amembassy Seoul 6928 to SecState, December 8, 1998, Subject: Former Secretary Perry’s Meeting with President Kim (Confidential). NSA EBB 612 doc 7.

<sup>98</sup> The National Security Archives. Cable, Amembassy Seoul 6928 to SecState, December 8, 1998, Subject: Former Secretary Perry’s Meeting with President Kim (Confidential). NSA EBB 612 doc 7.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*



on their side. Moreover, Seoul officials believed, “If we pursue the policy of hopes and warning wisely, North Korea, I believe, will be cooperative, because they know that they are doomed if they wage a war. If we deal with them well, we can succeed.”<sup>101</sup> What the ROK is arguing here is that North Korea actually gets deterrence, and that because they do they will follow through during the negotiations. As mentioned early, Seoul was not in favor of a military intervention in 1994. This discussion here helps explain why. Perry did not answer this proposition directly, but the remainder of the document indicates tacit understanding. As such, the preventive attack was not strictly stopped because of material factors, but because of a transfer of reputation: South Korea thought the North could be restrained in the future and because of this understanding refused an attack from its ally.

#### *The 1998 Missile Crisis Onwards*

Following the decision not to attack in 1994 and to seek to handle the issue diplomatically, the Four-Party Talks were put on the table by Washington and Seoul. Although it should not upstage the bilateral discussions between the North and the South, it was meant to be part of a larger multifaceted efforts to reduce tension in the region.<sup>102</sup> The diplomatic project was meant to “promote stability on the Korean peninsula” in part due to “uncertainties of the North’s decline” and was agreed to take place on August 5, 1996.<sup>103</sup> Of particular interest here is some evidence that asymmetrical deterrence means were at play, although not directly threatened by the North Koreans. From the Four Party Talks briefing book comes this allusion to potential domestic

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<sup>101</sup>The National Security Archives. Cable, Amembassy Seoul 6928 to SecState, December 8, 1998, Subject: Former Secretary Perry's Meeting with President Kim (Confidential). NSA EBB 612 doc 7.

<sup>102</sup> Cable, Amembassy Seoul 2078 to SecState, April 13, 1998, Subject: U/S Pickering's Meeting with Vice Foreign Minister Sun Joun-Yung (Confidential). 1998-04-13. NSA EBB 612 doc 2.

<sup>103</sup> Memorandum, The Four Party Talks on Korea: Background Paper, ca. July 1997 (Secret). 1997-07-00. NSA EBB 612 doc 1.

instability within North Korea: “the ascendance of the South raise the possibility for the first time that the DPRK might collapse, with either a dangerous military spasm or a flood of starving refugees, or move towards peaceful unification.” The document is clear that these are real possibilities and should be taken into consideration and planned for as diplomatic efforts moved forward.<sup>104</sup> The available declassified evidence we have of this period all suggests Seoul and Washington thought the collapse of the regime was a strong possibility.<sup>105</sup> While the latter is desirable, the former is not. While the North was able to prevent a preventive strike on its nuclear facilities by threatening significant casualties in South Korea and towards U.S. military personnel and civilians, the following highlights how the risk of a humanitarian crisis in Pyongyang might have worked to strengthen deterrence in this case.

Another important aspect of the report is that it reads as if the U.S. were potentially resigned to accept a nuclear North Korea following the 1994 crisis. The documents are rife with reference to the role of Washington as a stabilizing force in the region, but not necessarily the main actor in the negotiations, and if Pyongyang does not collapse then perhaps help with reunification. This was to be done bilaterally between Seoul and Pyongyang. Statements such as this sounds of resignation: “Regardless of the DPRK’s ultimate aims, negotiations will be difficult and slow at best. The experiences of [redacted] our negotiators demonstrate that any talks that may get underway will be tedious and subject to constant tensions.”<sup>106</sup> Perhaps the strong push by Pyongyang for bilateral discussions on a potential peaceful resolution of tensions with its

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<sup>104</sup> Memorandum, The Four Party Talks on Korea: Background Paper, ca. July 1997 (Secret). 1997-07-00. NSA EBB 612 doc 1.

<sup>105</sup> State Department Background Paper: North Korea, drafted by John Meakem, East Asia and Pacific Affairs, ca. April 14, 1998 (Secret). 1998-04-14. NSA EBB 612 doc 3.

<sup>106</sup> Memorandum, The Four Party Talks on Korea: Background Paper, ca. July 1997 (Secret). 1997-07-00. NSA EBB 612 doc 1.

neighbors helped this perception of potential restraint. It was also recognized by the negotiators that “DPRK priorities will be to maximize economic assistance and investment from the South while minimizing its military concessions. Their past proposals for CBMs have leaned heavily on sweeping promises that later can be ignored.”<sup>107</sup> The military concessions here refer to their nuclear ambitions, and their ability to capitalize on it. The same document also highlights the distrust between all parties involved. Pyongyang had expressed some misgiving when it came to the delays in construction or delivery of light water reactors. It prompted the following from the American: “...reflected paranoia, they were deleterious to our interests, if not threatening. If Pyongyang senses we will betray our commitments to them, they will look for a reason to betray their commitments to us. This issue could also affect the bilateral ROK-DPRK dialogue.”<sup>108</sup>

A November 1998 briefing to the Secretary of State provides further evidence that the Clinton administration, despite its constant nonproliferation efforts towards Pyongyang, were buying the argument made by South Korea regarding future restraint by the North. Pyongyang had tested in August 1991 the Taepodong-1 device over Japan, an act that had angered the Japanese. A meeting with the North Korea leadership was planned in November 1998 to discuss several issues making diplomacy difficult. Among others, Ambassador Kartman’s meeting was to discuss, “incursions into South Korea, suspected underground construction, and the August 31 launch over Japan – have severely undermined support for the Agreed Framework both in Japan and in our Congress. Although maintaining the Agreed Framework is highly desirable, its continued viability now explicitly hinges on progress in curbing DPRK missile activities and in satisfying our

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<sup>107</sup> Memorandum, The Four Party Talks on Korea: Background Paper, ca. July 1997 (Secret). 1997-07-00. NSA EBB 612 doc 1.

<sup>108</sup> Cable, Amembassy Seoul 2078 to SecState, April 13, 1998, Subject: U/S Pickering’s Meeting with Vice Foreign Minister Sun Joun-Yung (Confidential). 1998-04-13. NSA EBB 612 doc 2.

concerns about suspect underground construction.”<sup>109</sup> Also: “Were the DPRK to launch another long-range missile, [redacted] political support for the Agreed framework in the Japanese Diet and the U.S. Congress likely would collapse.”<sup>110</sup> Kartman was told to approach the subject while in North Korea and to request discussions over the issue, and that “During this critical phase for U.S. policy toward the DPRK, close consultation among the U.S., the ROK and Japan will be vital.”<sup>111</sup> Pyongyang did agree to the establishment of working groups to address tension reduction and Armistice replacement”<sup>112</sup>

Most of the diplomatic interaction with Pyongyang from this point reflects a similar language used by Washington during the nuclearization of Pakistan. While Washington continuously reaffirmed its reservations towards Pyongyang’s missile program and its act of brinkmanship, at the same time promised significant improvement in the relationship, both political and economic, between the two countries. For example, Washington had offered, “limited U.S. sanctions-easing in return for DPRK restraint in both indigenous missile development and deployment and missile exports.” The North had not been cooperative on the issue but still put into focus the tactic used by Washington.<sup>113</sup> The United States was ready for a more positive relationship, but any negative impact would be strictly the fault of Pyongyang.

William Perry’s visit to Korea exemplifies this new stance from Washington. The objective of the visit was to “establish meaningful relationship with senior officials in as many DPRK

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<sup>109</sup> Briefing Memorandum, Stanley O. Roth to Secretary of State, Subject: Meeting with South Korean Foreign Minister Hong Soon-young, APEC, Kuala Lumpur, TBD, ca. November 2, 1998 (Secret). 1998-11-02. NSA EBB 612 doc 6.

<sup>110</sup> Briefing Memorandum, Stanley O. Roth to Secretary of State, Subject: Meeting with South Korean Foreign Minister Hong Soon-young, APEC, Kuala Lumpur, TBD, ca. November 2, 1998 (Secret). 1998-11-02. NSA EBB 612 doc 6.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Memorandum, North Korea Missile Proliferation, ca. January 6, 1999. 1999-01-06. NSA EBB 612 doc 8.

official organs as possible,” “reaffirm existing dialogues and agreements with the DPRK, including the Agreed Framework and the 1993 U.S.-DPRK Joint Statement,” and to “convey to senior levels of the DPRK leadership U.S. interests in fundamentally changing our bilateral relationship.”<sup>114</sup> Washington “was willing to put the past behind us.” The second objective was to convince the North that the U.S. did have security interests in the region, but that those did not have to be at odds with the security interests of Pyongyang, and that “North Korea to play an active and positive role in preserving peace and stability in North East Asia.”<sup>115</sup> Moreover, “Perry had underscored U.S. willingness to respect the sovereignty and national dignity of the DPRK and had no intention of interfering in the national system North Korea had chosen to adopt.”<sup>116</sup> This new relationship was based on denuclearization and a stop to the missile threat. U.S. wanted a more cooperative approach, and the cable indicates Pyongyang’s officials were either receptive or at least understood U.S. objectives. The threat to the U.S. of the missile and nuclear program was reaffirmed, with a proposal to “engage in negotiations with the DPRK to verify the non-pursuit of nuclear and missile programs and to ensure North Korea would adhere to MTCR standards [redacted]. The United States was prepared to take steps to create a positive environment in order for North Korea to agree to negotiations.”<sup>117</sup> On the intentions and motivations of Pyongyang, there was a strong sense of optimism following the visit. “Revere responded that the U.S. believed the North Koreans were sincere in their desire to improve relations. The question was whether they were willing to pay the price necessary to do so; i.e., by addressing nuclear and missile

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<sup>114</sup> Cable, Amembassy Beijing 4958 to SecState, June 3, 1999, Subject: EAP/K Director Revere's May 31 Briefing for Chinese MFA Officials on Perry's Trip to DPRK (Confidential). 1999-06-03. NSA EBB 612 doc 9.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Cable, Amembassy Beijing 4958 to SecState, June 3, 1999, Subject: EAP/K Director Revere's May 31 Briefing for Chinese MFA Officials on Perry's Trip to DPRK (Confidential). 1999-06-03. NSA EBB 612 doc 9.

concerns.”<sup>118</sup> There was some optimism in the cable that the visit from Perry and the letter from Clinton might help change things around and “put some of the DPRK’s concerns to rest.”<sup>119</sup> The letter contained “the President’s belief that it was possible to improve bilateral relations and his hope that Kim Jong-Il would join him and take steps together to bring about better relations.”<sup>120</sup>

Overall, the favored approach to the North Korean question following 1994 became multilateral diplomacy with strong bilateral negotiations between the North and the South. Multilaterally, China, Japan, the U.S., and South Korea would put pressure on the North while being willing to provide food relief and other incentives. Moreover, Washington had authorized ambassador Kartman to discuss and propose an easing of sanctions in exchange for suspension of the missile tests.<sup>121</sup> The U.S. engagement did bear some fruits in September 1999 when North Korea agreed to a moratorium on its missile test while they sat at the table. However, Washington was cognizant that due to the “nature of the North Korean regime, it will not be easy to improve even our bilateral relations, let alone DPRK relations with its neighbors.”<sup>122</sup> This bi- and multilateral engagement eventually led to the June 2000 North-South Summit. Seen as “historic” and “confidence-building measures,” the meeting was meant to bolster security for all involved in the region “The ROKG’s primary concern was to eliminate the climate of fear which had permeated the Peninsula for 50 years by ending the mistrust and lack of confidence between the

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Cable, Amembassy Beijing 4958 to SecState, June 3, 1999, Subject: EAP/K Director Revere's May 31 Briefing for Chinese MFA Officials on Perry's Trip to DPRK (Confidential). 1999-06-03. NSA EBB 612 doc 9.

<sup>121</sup> National Security Council, Summary of Conclusions for Meeting of the NSC Principals Committee, July 21, 1999, Subject: Summary of Conclusions of PC Meeting on North Korea (Secret). 1999-07-21

<sup>122</sup> The National Security Archives. State Department Paper, Implication of Berlin Talks and Perry Report, ca. October 1999 (Confidential). 1999-10-00 NSA EBB 612 doc 11; Cable, Amembassy Beijing 010155 to Ruech/Secstate, October 29, 1999, Subject: U/S Pickering's October 28 Lunch with Chinese VFM Yang Jiechi: International Issues and More on Taiwan, (Confidential). 1999-10-29. NSA EBB 612 doc 13.

two sides.”<sup>123</sup> While no one had illusions about the scope of what could be accomplished during the Summit, and especially how fast a resolution to such a long-standing conflict could be, Washington believed, “the North-South summit opened up great new possibilities.”<sup>124</sup>

The Summit was placed within a larger strategy of engagement and confidence building between all parties involved with the goal of achieving denuclearization and the end of the missile program. Importantly: ““Improving the North-South Korean atmosphere for future in-depth dialogue – including on reducing North Korea’s conventional and weapons of mass destruction threat – as confidence is built.”<sup>125</sup> The Summit was seen as “a major success in establishing an unprecedented direct personal relationship between the top leaders of the two countries and in personally committing both of them to seek intra-Korean reconciliation” although caution was advocated by all sides.<sup>126</sup> Overall, there was a wave of optimism that diplomacy could be a possibility to stop the North’s nuclear ambitions.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Cable, Amembassy Seoul 2053 to SecState, April 17, 2000, Subject: NSA Hwang Lays Out Broad Summit Goals for Charge (Confidential). 2000-04-17. NSA EBB 612 doc 14.

<sup>124</sup> Cable, Amembassy Seoul 2382 to SecState, May 3, 2000, Subject: President Kim Discusses N-S Summit with Ambassador (Confidential). 2000-05-03. NSA EBB 612 doc 15.

<sup>125</sup> Cable, Amembassy Seoul 3037 to SecState, June 9, 2000, Subject: On the Eve of the Inter-Korean Summit (Secret). 2000-06-09. NSA EBB 612 doc 16.

<sup>126</sup> Cable, Amembassy Seoul 3150 to SecState, June 15, 2000, Subject: Initial Thoughts on North-South Summit Outcome (Confidential). 2000-06-15. NSA EBB 612 doc 17.

<sup>127</sup> Cable, Amembassy Seoul 3152 to SecState, June 15, 2000, Subject: North-South Summit: MOFAT Official Ebullient Over Summit Results So Far (Confidential). 2000-06-15 NSA EBB 612 doc 18.; Cable, State 121925 to Amembassy Seoul, June 26, 2000, Subject: Secretary's Meeting with ROK Foreign Minister Lee Joung Binn on June 23, 2000, in Seoul, Korea (Confidential). 2000-06-26. NSA EBB 612 doc 19.

## **5. The Bush Administration 2002-2006: Second Nuclear Crisis and Detonation**

### *Threat Assessment*

The Bush administration handling of North Korea saw strong debates within its key members as to the proper way to handle its nuclearization. Some within the administration, including Colin Powell, wanted to maintain the diplomatic framework established by the Clinton government, whereas more aggressive decision-makers wanted to move out of any agreements which would provide benefits to North Korea.<sup>128</sup> As such, the George W. Bush administration sought to continue a policy of engagement with North Korea, albeit one in which “any negotiation would require complete verification of the terms of a potential agreement.”<sup>129</sup> However, in part due to the process, and to the North Koreans shirking behavior, the Bush administration handling of North Korea was, at least publicly, a clear departure from the Bush Sr. and Clinton administration. While previous administrations recognized a nuclear Pyongyang was a threat to stability in Asia, George W. Bush went a step ahead and labeled North Korea as such in his State of the Union Address in January 2002. In the speech, President Bush states Pyongyang “is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its people,” and “States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.” As such “We will develop and deploy effective missile defenses to protect America

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<sup>128</sup> Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, “Engaging North Korea,” in Solingen, *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation*, 247.

<sup>129</sup> “Arms Control and Proliferation Profile: North Korea,” *Arms Control Association*, updated June 2018, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/northkoreaprofile> (assessed October 2, 2018).



and our allies from sudden attack.”<sup>130</sup> There are some indications that Pyongyang took advantage of the American campaign in Afghanistan and its focus on al-Qaeda to speed up its enrichment program.<sup>131</sup> While the threat is different, the issue is no longer potential use of nuclear weapons as compellent, the potential provision of nuclear weapons to terrorists goes counter to the war prevention logic of deterrence, and as such is seen as lacking restraint. North Korea cannot be accepted as possessing nuclear weapons because of this lack of restraint.

North Korea had been involved in terror attacks in the past. In November 1987, for example, North Korean operatives placed a bomb in Korean Air Flight 858, leading to the explosion of the plane and a death toll of 125, prompting Washington to add Pyongyang to its list of state providing assistance to terrorists. In the 1970s North Korea also provided sanctuary to the Japanese Red Army, abducted 12 Japanese citizens since then, and bombed South Korean officials in Rangoon in October 1983, killing 21. While the North did not engage in direct territorial aggression towards the South, the North used alternative means to conduct aggression against its neighbor. The speech given by President Bush in 2002 made clear some within Washington feared Pyongyang might provide nuclear technology to terrorist groups to deliver a possible, “nuclear attack by proxy.”<sup>132</sup>

During this period, Pyongyang did export sensitive nuclear technology to states with foreign policies opposed to the U.S. Between 2002 and 2004, Pyongyang would ship missiles to Yemen,

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<sup>130</sup> “Text of President Bush’s 2002 State of the Union Address,” *The Washington Post*, 29 January 2002, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/sou012902.htm>

<sup>131</sup> Edward A. Olsen, “The Bush Administration and North Korea’s Nuclear Policy,” in Tae-Hwan Kwak and Seung-Ho Joo eds., *North Korea’s Second Nuclear Crisis and Northeast Asian Security* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2007), 48.

<sup>132</sup> This how Lieber and Press labels the strategy of providing nuclear technology to terror groups. They do not believe a state would ever do so because the risks of being discovered are too great, nullifying the anonymity such an attack is designed to have. See Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, “Why States Won’t Give Nuclear Weapons to Terrorists,” *International Security* 38, no. 1 (July 2013): 80–104.

provide sensitive technology to the Khan network, and provide a nuclear reactor to Syria.<sup>133</sup> There is also some evidence Pyongyang provided uranium to Libya.<sup>134</sup>

### *Preventive Attacks and low Restraint Signaling*

Washington would discover in October 2002 that the North Koreans had begun to enrich uranium. The IAEA would be asked to leave by Pyongyang, prompting the agency in early 2003 to demand the North Korean regime resume compliance with its safeguards commitments. As a response, North Korea would eventually announce its withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2003, citing its aborted 1993 attempt as enough advanced notice to be able to withdraw immediately.<sup>135</sup> This would lead to the dissolution of the Agreed Framework.

From 2002 to the eventual detonation of a nuclear device in 2006, Washington did engage the North diplomatically, but supported its denuclearization demands with sanctions. There is evidence the Bush administration believed, similar to the Clinton administration, that the North Korean regime was close to collapse and that sanctions could speed up the process.<sup>136</sup> Following the dissolution of the Agreed Framework the Bush administration supported the Six-Party talk, a diplomatic effort made to promote the denuclearization of Pyongyang, and sought to reassure the North Korean it would not attack if they kept their words on their moratorium on missile testing, but also on the development of a nuclear weapon, despite evidence that Pyongyang was going for

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<sup>133</sup> The reactor would eventually be attacked by Israel in 2007. See Stephen Farrell, "Israel Admits Bombing Suspected Syrian Nuclear Reactor in 2007, Warns Iran," *Reuters*, 20 March 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-syria-nuclear/israel-admits-bombing-suspected-syrian-nuclear-reactor-in-2007-warns-iran-idUSKBN1GX09K> (assessed October 2, 2018).

<sup>134</sup> David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, "Evidence is Cited Linking Koreans to Libya Uranium," *The New York Times*, 23 May 2004, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/world/evidence-is-cited-linking-koreans-to-libya-uranium.html>

<sup>135</sup> "Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy," *Arms Control Association*, Updated September 2018, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron> (assessed October 2, 2018).

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

highly enriched uranium.<sup>137</sup> The U.S. had known of this objective since 2001, but Washington, as Morton Halperin argued, “did not want to pay attention to North Korea because they knew there was no military option, knew they would have to negotiate as Clinton did, and so, they were in a box.”<sup>138</sup> The North Korean had sought a pledge of non-aggression from Washington for some times prior to the six-party talks.<sup>139</sup>

By 2003, Pyongyang began to claim it had acquired a nuclear device. At the time, the CIA and the State Department disagreed on whether North Korea was telling the truth. On the one hand, the CIA believed it had enough evidence to claim the North Korean regime was in possession of a nuclear device that it had not detonated yet.<sup>140</sup> On the other hand, the State Department was not convinced and instead believed Pyongyang was a few years out of a workable nuclear device.<sup>141</sup> Nonetheless, the uncertainty regarding nuclear acquisition from Pyongyang would have an important role on whether to use military force.

The culmination of the diplomatic effort between the two is the 2005 “Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks.” The document, signed in September 2005, state that “The D.P.R.K. committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning, at an early date, to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to IAEA safeguards.” On its end, Washington pledges it, “has no intention to attack or invade the D.P.R.K. with nuclear or conventional weapons.”<sup>142</sup> A few months later, Pyongyang would, contra their

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Walter Pincus, “N. Korea’s Nuclear Plans Were no Secret,” *The Washington Post*, 1 February 2003, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2003/02/01/n-koreas-nuclear-plans-were-no-secret/cdc1f774-a857-4732-a1cb-86fc78637d82/?utm\\_term=.90bc49c6204a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2003/02/01/n-koreas-nuclear-plans-were-no-secret/cdc1f774-a857-4732-a1cb-86fc78637d82/?utm_term=.90bc49c6204a)

<sup>139</sup> Sigal. *Disarming Strangers*.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid

<sup>142</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks,” 19 September 2005, <https://www.state.gov/p/eap/regional/c15455.htm>.

engagement, test a series of missiles. On October 9, 2006, Pyongyang would test an underground device for the first time, confirming its nuclear status.

*Explaining the Lack of Preventive Attack Under George W. Bush*

There are some indications that the Bush administration did consider an attack on North Korean facilities. The Washington Post had reported on CONPLAN 8022, or the “Interim Global Strike Alert Order.”<sup>143</sup> According to Hans M. Kristensen, this new doctrine was meant to “strike high-value and mobile weapons of mass destruction (WMD) targets quickly with conventional or nuclear weapons before they could be used against the United States and its allies.”<sup>144</sup> This was part of the larger Global Strike doctrine of the Bush administration designed to provide flexibility to the U.S. military in handling new threats from smaller regimes where there is an asymmetry of force.<sup>145</sup> The plan was canceled, however, in 2004. A STRATCOM member, when prompted on the subject, stated, “there is no such plan anymore...[it] was underway, but didn’t go anywhere.”<sup>146</sup> There are also some indications that plans for a naval blockade had been made. It’s unclear how much thought was put into either, and how much weight they carried within the Bush Administration.

However, the period between 2002 and 2006 was mainly marked by the Bush administration trying to seek a diplomatic solution to the North Korean problem. It can likely be explained by 1) the deterrent power of the North Korean and the uncertainty surrounding their acquisition of the bomb, 2) a belief the regime was about to collapse, and 3) the U.S. missile

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<sup>143</sup> William Arkin, “Not Just a Last Resort?” *The Washington Post*, 15 May 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/14/AR2005051400071.html> (assessed October 2, 2018).

<sup>144</sup> Hans M. Kristensen, “STRATCOM Cancels Controversial Preemption Strike Plan,” *Federation of American Scientists*, 25 July 2008, <https://fas.org/blogs/security/2008/07/globalstrike/> (assessed October 2, 2018).

<sup>145</sup> Hans M. Kristensen, “Global Strike: A Chronology of the Pentagon’s New Offensive Strike Plan,” *Federation of American Scientists*, 15 March 2006, <http://www.nukestrat.com/pubs/GlobalStrikeReport.pdf>.

<sup>146</sup> Kristensen, “STRATCOM Cancels Controversial Preemption Strike Plan.”

defense capability. The first had the same effect as during the Clinton administration, where the artillery of North Korea could deliver significant damage to South Korea, which made war plans costly. As Morton Halperin stated, the Bush administration: “did not want to pay attention to North Korea because they knew there was no military option, knew they would have to negotiate as Clinton did, and so, they were in a box.”<sup>147</sup> Moreover, the uncertainty around the possible possession of a nuclear weapon probably had a role to play. Starting in 1999, the United States had conflicting reports as to whether Pyongyang had been able to develop a nuclear weapon. The same was true in 2003, either from the claims made by the North Korean regime itself, or various U.S. agencies. As such, the uncertainty around nuclear possession most likely deterred aggression.

Second, there are indications the Bush administration had similar views regarding the eventual demise of the North Korean regime due to its economic situation. If Pyongyang could be sanctioned enough, it would most likely fall under the pressure.<sup>148</sup> Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld wanted to include Beijing in this strategy.<sup>149</sup> The available declassified material does not discuss what would have come after the collapse of North Korea. Options range from China installing a leader sympathetic to its foreign policy to reunification under South Korea. Either way, some in Washington saw the possibility that the problem could solve itself.

Third, and more plausible, the development of ballistic missile defense (BMD) helps explain why the U.S. did not preventively attack North Korea, aside from the uncertainty within Washington as to whether Pyongyang had been able to acquire the bomb or not. George W. Bush’s

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<sup>147</sup> Walter Pincus, “N. Korea’s Nuclear Plans Were no Secret,” *The Washington Post*, 1 February 2003, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2003/02/01/n-koreas-nuclear-plans-were-no-secret/cdc1f774-a857-4732-a1cb-86fc78637d82/?utm\\_term=.90bc49c6204a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2003/02/01/n-koreas-nuclear-plans-were-no-secret/cdc1f774-a857-4732-a1cb-86fc78637d82/?utm_term=.90bc49c6204a)

<sup>148</sup> Jim Lobe, “Council on Foreign Relations Urges Bush Administration to Commit Seriously to Diplomacy with North Korea,” *Institute for Policy Studies*, 20 May 2003, [https://ips-dc.org/council\\_on\\_foreign\\_relations\\_urges\\_bush\\_administration\\_to\\_commit\\_seriously\\_to\\_diplomacy\\_with\\_north\\_korea/](https://ips-dc.org/council_on_foreign_relations_urges_bush_administration_to_commit_seriously_to_diplomacy_with_north_korea/) (assessed October 2, 2018).

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

stance on BMD can be traced back to the 1994 *Contract with America*. Among other things, the document focuses on “rogue states,” including North Korea, as the main national security to the U.S., and proposed, “renewing America’s commitment to an effective national missile defense by requiring the Defence Department to deploy antiballistic missile systems capable of defending the United States against ballistic missile attacks.”<sup>150</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, in 1999, hosted a commission in which one of the main recommendations was to develop missile defense, recommendation which was agreed upon by Congress in the form of the National Missile Defense act.<sup>151</sup> While Clinton had not been in favor of leaving the ABM treaty to make this happen,<sup>152</sup> the Bush administration had no such quarrel. Once elected, he made clear that BMD was going to be a priority of his administration, even if he had to leave the ABM treaty,<sup>153</sup> which his administration did on June 13, 2002. The program to defend the American homeland, the Ground-based Midcourse Defense, was approved by Congress for a 2004-2005 deployment.

The logic behind the deployment of BMD by the Bush administration was to increase the cost of proliferation for the countries seeking nuclear weapons, while providing some form of defenses in case nonproliferation efforts failed. Moreover, it acted as a security guarantee for allies who might consider nuclearization themselves, such as Japan and South Korea.<sup>154</sup> This works because of the type of delivery systems BMD is designed to intercept. While such systems have received their share of critiques when it comes to their abilities to intercept sophisticated missile

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<sup>150</sup> Ed Gillespie and Bob Schellhas. *Contract with America: The Bold Plan by Rep. Newt Gingrich, Rep. Dick Armey and the House of Republicans to Change the Nation* p.93

<sup>151</sup> Michael O’Hanlon “Alternative Architecture and U.S. Politics” in James J. Wirtz, and Jeffrey A. Larsen, *Rockets’ Red Glare: Missile Defenses and the Future of World Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 117

<sup>152</sup> Stephen I. Schwartz, *Atomic Audit: The Costs and Consequences of US Nuclear Weapons since 1940* (Brookings Institution Press, 2011), 293-294.

<sup>153</sup> Steven A. Hildreth, *The Current Debate on Missile Defense* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2004), 5.

<sup>154</sup> Jean-François Bélanger, “Strategic Stability in the Second Nuclear Age: Towards a BMB Paradigm,” MA Thesis, Dalhousie University, August 2012.

systems including decoys as part of a multi-independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV, multiple nuclear warheads on one delivery vehicle), it had been shown to be efficient against cruder nuclear systems in a variety of tests.<sup>155</sup> George W. Bush, and most of his administration, have demonstrated confidence in the system numerous times.<sup>156</sup> As such, while a direct attack was no longer feasible due to its cost, BMD systems would increase the price of proliferation for North Korea and increase the odds of success of diplomatic engagement. While there are no indications Pyongyang considered abandoning its nuclear program because of BMD, the Bush administration did believe in the system, which help explain the emphasis on a diplomatic solution despite North Korea going counter to the restrained behavior necessary for nuclear acceptance as posited in this dissertation.

## 6. Conclusions

While the detonation of a nuclear device in 2006 was not the end of U.S., and the international community, efforts to denuclearize North Korea, by this point the military option was no longer viable. Aside from rumored discussions within the Trump administration of a possible limited strike in case of North Korea provocations in 2018, Washington has long shelved military plans to

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<sup>155</sup> On the fallibility of missile defense see, Bruno Tertrais, "In Defense of Deterrence: The Relevance, Morality and Cost-Effectiveness of Nuclear Weapons," *Proliferation Papers* 39 (2011): 32-33; Fred Kaplan. *The Wizards of Armageddon* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Lewis, Gronlund, and Wright. "National Missile Defense: An Indefensible System,,"; David Wright, "UCS Backgrounder – Missile Defense Test FTG-05," *Union of Concerned Scientists* (2008); Theodore A. Postol, "Why Missile Defense Won't Work," *Frontline*, 2002, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/missile/etc/postol.html>. For the relative effectiveness of missile defense see Ronald O'Rourke, "Navy Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) Program: Background and Issues for Congress," *Congressional Research Service* (2012): 34; Harvey. *Smoke and Mirrors*; David Vaughan, Jeffrey A. Isaacson, Joel Kvitky, "Airborne Intercept: Boost- and Scent-Phase Options and Issues," *Rand Corporation* (1996); Fact Sheet, "Ballistic Missile Defense Intercept Flight Test Record," *Missile Defense Agency* (2012): <http://www.mda.mil/global/documents/pdf/testrecord.pdf>

<sup>156</sup> Phil H. Gordon, "Bush, Missile Defense, and the Atlantic Alliance," *Brookings*, 1 February 2001, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/bush-missile-defense-and-the-atlantic-alliance/> (assessed October 2, 2018).

denuclearize North Korea.<sup>157</sup> The United States wanted to use force a multiple juncture of the North Korean nuclear program, but were deterred by the asymmetric means available to the regime. Namely, they were deterred by the casualties Seoul would endure, the potential for a war on the Peninsula, as well as the potential migration crisis which would have ensued.<sup>158</sup> In this case, the United States let North Korea nuclearize because they believed the cost of doing otherwise was too high. This explains, in part, why some decision-makers believed it was too late to do anything.

Without these means, there are no doubts Washington would have attacked as North Korea had been labeled as reckless. This case appears as an anomaly to the argument presented in this dissertation. North Korea was not attacked despite its behavior. It is only an anomaly in as much as Pyongyang was able to resist U.S. military pressure and make threats of its own. North Korea remain an important threat for the United States. To this day, Washington continues to seek the denuclearization of Pyongyang through coercive means because of the latter's inability to signal restraint.

Pyongyang has yet to be able to be accepted as a nuclear power by the international community, and more importantly, by Washington. In essence, even today, despite their claim to desiring nuclear weapons strictly for regime survival, they are unable to signal restraint. Even after the 1994 nuclear crisis in which they demonstrated they knew how deterrence works and that they can

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<sup>157</sup> David C. Kang, "Trump's Team is Floating an Attack on North Korea. Americans Would Die," *The Washington Post*, 27 February 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-team-is-floating-an-attack-on-north-korea-americans-would-die/2018/02/27/8e6cdf66-1826-11e8-92c9-376b4fe57ff7\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.06bd0d732e9c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-team-is-floating-an-attack-on-north-korea-americans-would-die/2018/02/27/8e6cdf66-1826-11e8-92c9-376b4fe57ff7_story.html?utm_term=.06bd0d732e9c) (assessed October 15, 2018).

<sup>158</sup> For the mechanisms of asymmetrical deterrence see T.V. Paul and Jean-Francois Belanger, "Asymmetric Deterrence: How the Weak Deters the Strong," McGill University, Working Paper, 2018.



apply the rules of the game, their previous behavior made it difficult for Washington to buy it would be a restrained power. It was never about the balance of power in the region, but its stability.

The North Korean case demonstrates how difficult it is to modify an existing negative reputation. Because of its conventional forces aimed at Seoul, North Korea was able to stave off an attack in 1994 and deter the Americans. Washington had the means to attack at the time, they had aircraft carriers in the region ready to move. Despite this success, a positive reputation did not accrue. It continued to be seen as a reckless power. From Reagan to Bush, North Korea failed to demonstrate it was a war averse power, namely because of its belligerent policies and actions towards South Korea and Japan. Since restraint was not argued successfully, and because the U.S. had the means to attack, Pyongyang should have been preventively attacked.

The case, however, highlights important aspects for nonproliferation and the practice of deterrence. First, the link between terrorism and proliferation is made to argue the recklessness of the regime and justify heavy counterproliferation. While North Korea did carry terror acts in the past, it is not particularly credible it would transfer a nuclear weapon to a terrorist group to attack Seoul or Japan. They would be targeted right away as the main culprits, with heavy consequences. Moreover, the North has been known to transfer nuclear technology to adversaries of the United States including Libya and Syria. By providing sensitive material to states who did not share the same security interests as Washington, their behavior was labeled as unrestrained, as it puts U.S. security at risk.

Second, the unique context of the Korean Peninsula made proliferation problematic for the United States and its allies. Since the end of the Korean War, there has been talk of reunification between North and South Korea. However, unification under whom, and under which type of regime, has been an important question. As such, North Korean nuclearization has been portrayed

as revisionist almost immediately as it was feared they would use their new capability to compel reunification with the South under their own terms. This argument within Washington was supported by the past belligerence of the regime against its neighbor.

Third, the case demonstrates how difficult nuclear proliferation has become in the post-Cold War period. As the practice of nuclear deterrence changed to become strictly about deterring the use of nuclear weapons, acquisition became an issue. As we got through the case, we could see that almost no individuals within the U.S. government argued North Korea was a restrained actor. While it is indicative of their behavior, the absolute lack of it is puzzling. The argument against preventive attacks were mostly done on the basis of the cost of the war. The only player arguing for some restraint from Pyongyang was Seoul's government. There is some evidence that the South Korean believed Pyongyang would be restrained. It is most evident in the mid-1990s in the discussions following the Agreed Framework and its implementation. This belief in the potential restraint coming from Pyongyang made them reach out to the United States to stop a potential attack. Moreover, the changes in the practice of deterrence is highlighted by the role the Soviets, and then Russia, played in the early 1990s. They worked very hard to get North Korea to ratify the NPT. While Russia provided assistance later on, at the onset it much preferred a non-nuclear North Korea.

Washington did not decide against an attack due to normative concerns either. The decision not to attack Pyongyang was not made out of a normative aversion to preventive attacks, but because it could raise the cost of war. Moreover, the preventive plans were drafted in large part because the North was never able to signal restraint.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusions: Restraint, Normalization, and the Future of Deterrence

This dissertation has elaborated an argument to explain U.S. nonproliferation choices and strategies. Specifically, I sought to explain why some states are preventively attacked as they nuclearize while others are not. The explanation I proposed in chapter 2 was threefold: first, states who are close friends with the United States are not targets of preventive attacks. Strategic partners, short-term allies, and friends of convenience are generally not targeted as well. This is because they do not represent the same level of threat as an adversary. The security dilemma is not as acute, and nuclearization is not seen as *de facto* bad for the security of the United States. This does not mean, however, that allies are not the target of nonproliferation efforts.

Second, preventive attacks are reserved for adversaries. In those cases, whether the proliferating state has developed a reputation for restraint has an impact on the decision to attack or not. I have shown how deterrence has become more than a strategy: it has become the unwritten rules of security between great powers and has developed normative undertones as it became the appropriate way to ensure stability in the international system. As such, the reputation for restraint is a heuristic based on the competent practice of general and immediate deterrence, which are meant as war prevention mechanisms, designed to anticipate future behavior when the actual information is non-existent. This reputation acts as proxy for status quo inclination. Status quo is here understood as seeking the bomb to deter aggression, and not for compellent means aimed at threatening the security of the United States.

The way the reputation for restraint works is similar to what Alexander Wendt has called “self-restraint.” It is meant to move from one culture of anarchy to another; it is how proliferators

can signal their understanding of deterrence and what it means to be a nuclear power.<sup>1</sup> The effect of the reputation for restraint is to signal that the proliferating state understands deterrence and will be cautious in the future, reducing how threatening proliferation could be.

Of course, this is not the only element at play when a state determines whether to attack, but if it is present it significantly reduces the likelihood of an attack taking place. In general, hawks prefer more aggressive options as response to adversarial proliferation. They are the ones who will highlight balance of power issues with a nascent nuclear power, or the future adventuristic policies the proliferator could engage in, and the problems with regional and international geopolitics it may entail. On the other hand, doves will refer to the reputation for restraint of the nuclearizing state to argue against a preventive attack. If doves are persuasive, preventive attack plans are generally shelved.

Finally, since the reputation for restraint is based on how deterrence is practiced and understood at any given time, it means its efficacy and meaning will vary with the permutation to the practice. With the end of the Cold War, nuclear weapons became understood as simply meant to deter the use of nuclear weapons. As such, it became difficult for nuclearizing state to signal restraint because they are going directly against the newfound status quo. Proliferating is therefore revisionist and signaling otherwise will prove difficult. Alternatively, during the Cold War it was expected to be easier to signal restraint as nuclear deterrence was the centerpiece of security between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 359–60, and chapter 6.

In all three of the in-depth empirical chapters, as well as the probability probes. I have engaged with these premises. Table 7.1 recapitulates the findings of the case. The reputation for restraint is rated from 0 to 10 where 0 means it was non-existent, and 10 meant it was assumed.

**Table 7.1: Recapitulation of the Cases**

| <b>In-Depth Cases</b>   | <b>Ally</b> | <b>Strategic Partner</b> | <b>Adversary</b> | <b>Reputation for Restraint</b> | <b>Cold War</b> | <b>Post-Cold War</b> | <b>Preventive Attack</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| China                   |             |                          | ✓                | 8                               | ✓               |                      | No                       |
| Pakistan 1972-1979      |             |                          | ✓                | 3                               | ✓               |                      | Debated                  |
| Pakistan 1979-1990      |             | ✓                        |                  | 10                              | ✓               |                      | No                       |
| North Korea             |             |                          | ✓                | 2                               |                 | ✓                    | No*                      |
| <b>Probe</b>            |             |                          |                  |                                 |                 |                      |                          |
| Soviet Union            |             |                          | ✓                | 5                               | ✓               |                      | No                       |
| UK                      | ✓           |                          |                  | 10                              | ✓               |                      | No                       |
| Israel                  |             | ✓                        |                  | 10                              | ✓               |                      | No                       |
| Iran (Shah)             |             | ✓                        |                  | 5                               | ✓               |                      | No                       |
| Iran (Islamic Republic) |             |                          | ✓                | 0                               |                 | ✓                    | No**                     |
| Iraq 1962-1980.         |             | ✓                        |                  | 3                               | ✓               |                      | No                       |
| Iraq 1990-2003          |             |                          | ✓                | 0                               |                 | ✓                    | Yes                      |

Notes: \*North Korea would have been attacked if it was not for their asymmetric deterrent capability. \*\*U.S. attacked Iranian centrifuges with a computer virus.

The mini-case of the Soviet Union in chapter 3 showcases the onset of nuclear deterrence between the two powers, and the importance of the expectation of future restraint for the United States when it came to new nuclear powers. While the U.S. misjudged the timetable of a USSR nuclear test and were caught off guard, some indications of future restraint from the Soviet Union,

but especially the fact that they did not change their military doctrine once they adopted the bomb, led the U.S. to shelve preventive attack plans. While the discussion on restraint came after the fact, it provided some insights as to the importance of the practice of deterrence as war prevention mechanism in the U.S. decision-making process.

The nuclearization of China and the discussions surrounding a possible U.S. preventive strike against its installations engaged with previous restraint to explain the decision not to attack. John F. Kennedy in the early 1960s was ready to preventively attack the Chinese as they nuclearized, with or without the help of the Soviet Union. He did not expect this endeavor to be particularly difficult, and as such was confident that the United States could carry out this kind of plan. President Lyndon Johnson had asked preventive plans to be drafted in order to keep all possible options open. The issue was mainly how significantly the Chinese could alter the balance of power in Asia once nuclear, and what they could do to U.S. interests in the region. On the other hand, the Soviet Union and several individuals within the Kennedy and Johnson administration, and in particular Robert Johnson and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who disagreed with using a preventive strike against Chinese facilities, argued the Chinese had historically been non-expansionist in their foreign policies, and would not be likely to seek the reunification of Taiwan by force if it became nuclear. It would push against U.S. influence in the region but would not resort to conflict. In particular, the behavior of the Chinese during the Taiwan Strait Crisis was referred to as a firm example of how restrained in conflict they had been. Moreover, there was the belief within Washington that China understood deterrence and would be a responsible nuclear power. As such, they could be counted on to abide by the practice of deterrence to ensure the security of the two blocks.

The importance of relationship was probed through the proliferation of the UK and Israel. In the case of the UK, the U.S. easily welcomed them in the community of deterrence it was building, and eventually changed some of its domestic laws to help London's nuclear program. Restraint was assumed. In the case of Israel, many within the U.S. questioned whether it was a good idea for it to develop a nuclear capability, despite its allied status. However, even those in favor of more coercive means to stop Israel from proliferating did not mention the prospect of a preventive strike. Eventually, President Nixon was satisfied with a compromise whereas Israel would not broadcast to the world it had developed a nuclear capability by not testing its device, and Washington would stop any further counterproliferation efforts. In both cases, the United States was comfortable with the nuclearization of both states, even if in the case of Israel, it was not desired at first. At no time did the U.S. believe they could be compelled, and their security threatened, by the nuclear acquisition of its allies.

Pakistan demonstrates a similar logic. It is a harder case because of the up and down of its relationship with the United States, and because Pakistan was never as close with the U.S. as Israel or the UK. In the early 1970, the Carter administration sought to constrain Pakistan as much as it could and canceled several promised aid packages. It even discussed the possibility of a preventive strike against the Pakistanis. However, once the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan began, the Reagan administration became lenient toward Islamabad. Pakistan had become a strategic partner to the U.S. President Reagan even lied to Congress on the state of the Pakistani nuclear program to be able to continue providing aid. As such, despite discordant signals and clear obfuscation on the part of the Pakistanis, the United States did not think of attacking them preventively once they became allies of convenience. The positive relationship made it no longer a threat to U.S. interests. However, historical documents demonstrate that the U.S. believed Pakistan had changed its

military doctrine in recent years for a more defensive posture. As such, at least during the 1970s and '80s, Washington did not expect Pakistan to use its nuclear capability for anything else than deterrence.

Adversaries of the United States who have shown recklessness in the past, expansionist policies, and direct opposition to U.S. security goals are more likely to be attacked. Iraq is the most salient example. Israel had previously attacked its nuclear facilities in 1981. Importantly, Baghdad has used chemical weapons in the 1980s in its war against Iran, and it had invaded Kuwait despite U.S. warnings. Following the 1991 Gulf War, the UN Security Council resolution 687 had threatened reprisal if Saddam Hussein continued to seek nuclear and chemical weapons. Due to the inability of Hussein to signal restraint, its nuclear facilities were attacked by the U.S. in 1998. This inability, in part, was due to Hussein's posturing against its regional rival, Iran. Especially in the period leading up to the 2003 invasion by the U.S., Hussein kept sending mixed signals regarding Iraq's WMD apparatus not to appear weaker in the eyes of Tehran.<sup>2</sup> The U.S. invaded in 2003 under suspicion of WMD proliferation, which turned out to be false. North Korea would have suffered a similar faith if it did not have significant deterrent power against Seoul. In 1994, the Clinton administration was ready to attack the Yongbyon reactor because it did not believe Pyongyang would be restrained in the future. These suspicions were mostly born out of previous reckless actions by Pyongyang toward Seoul. Moreover, the United States did not believe North Korea could be deterred in the future since they had not accrued any reputation for restraint. As such, they sought to attack and were only dissuaded due to the cost of the attack and the likely war

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<sup>2</sup> Frank P. Harvey, *Explaining the Iraq War: Counterfactual Theory, Logic and Evidence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), esp. chapter 8.



that would have ensued. The same conclusion was subsequently reached by the Bush and Obama administration.

The delegitimization of nuclear weapons in the post-Cold War also had a role to play in preventive attack plans. North Korea successfully demonstrated it understood deterrence in a few instances yet did not accrue positive reputation for doing so. Additionally, Iran was not particularly reckless as it nuclearized. While it did obfuscate its nuclear aims, as most states seeking nuclear weapons do, it did not engage in particularly reckless behavior. It has no history of expansionism under the Islamic Republic and had given no indication it would use nuclear weapons in a compellent fashion. While it did support terrorist groups including Hezbollah, the prospect of nuclear transfer to those groups is not credible. As such, the time period help explains U.S. behavior. Iran's, and North Korea's, desire for nuclear weapons run counter to the current practice of deterrence for the United States. As such, the action of Tehran and Pyongyang are automatically interpreted as being a threat to U.S. security interests, therefore revisionist, and demonstrating restraint becomes difficult.

An important implication for the study of nonproliferation is the constant debate within the U.S. national security apparatus as to the proper response to nuclearization. Most arguments in the field are derived from a realist logic, and as such propose arguments which discount domestic interaction to the benefit of systemic incentives for proliferation, and disincentives for nonproliferation. However, all case studies show a wide range of policy opinion, even if proliferation is judged to be problematic. No counterproliferation decision is ever homogenous. Hawks were generally in favor of more stringent nonproliferation policies, even against allies. In the early days of Iran's nuclear programs, individuals such as Kissinger sought a veto to counter Tehran's enrichment capability. Even though the Shah was an ally of the United States they sought

to put significant constraints on him. The same was apparent in the case of Pakistan. Kenneth Adelman, the ACDA director at the time, was adamant that Washington should cut the flow of aid to its ally to force it to reconsider its nuclear trajectory. Others like the director of the CIA John McMahon and President Reagan himself disagreed and instead favored positive inducements. This was also done in order to maintain good relations with Pakistan at a time where it was necessary for U.S. security interests.

Additionally, an important implication of this dissertation is for the study of reputation and its impact on the optimist versus pessimist debate. The cases presented here provide an important qualification to the ongoing optimist versus pessimist debates in security studies: It is not solely an academic debate. Decision-makers constantly ponder whether a nascent nuclear state will be cautious in the future, and they seek heuristics to make the best decision given the constraint under which they operate, and at times the limited information they possess. When it comes to adversaries developing nuclear weapons, the competent use of general deterrence and emphasis on war preventive mechanisms provide a good proxy to assess future restraint. By demonstrating an interest in restraining oneself, the nuclearizing state can show the community it seeks to join, the nuclear states, that it will behave as responsible powers do. At least on the nuclear question, the adversary can show the United States they have something in common: the desire to protect their security interests. Moreover, this dissertation shows the debate between the two is not either or.<sup>3</sup> There are risks to nuclear proliferation, and all else being equal, the nuclear weapons state

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<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey W. Knopf, "Recasting the Proliferation Optimism-Pessimism Debate," *Security Studies* 12, no. 1 (2002): 41–96.

would prefer no new addition to the club. As such, especially the United States, engages in large scale nonproliferation efforts.<sup>4</sup>

Importantly, what most of the case studies have demonstrated is that nuclearization may not be the existential threat it is argued to be due to the practice of deterrence. If it was, North Korea would have been attacked, for example. However, the cost of a preventive attack was deemed too high; higher than the cost of proliferation by Pyongyang. We can also assume that if Saddam Hussein had been able to credibly threaten an important U.S. ally of retaliation Kim Jong-Il did, his nuclear installations would not have been attacked. During the Cold War, Washington would have attacked the Soviet Union and China because their nuclearization significantly strengthened their side. However, in both cases the U.S. eventually decided to default to deterrence as the proper security measure. If proliferation was such a threat, rational leaders would attack most of the time. It's not rational to leave such a threat out in the wild, especially one which can be used against you in the future. Yet, the case studies show otherwise. Deterrence is so ingrained in the national security apparatus of the United States that they default to it in cases where their counterproliferation efforts failed.

Additionally, another implication is that relationships matter for the practice of deterrence. States with a good relationship with the U.S. were not attacked. But more importantly, states who had channels of communications with the United States were generally not attacked. Washington had little or no channels of communication with Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, all of whom had preventive strike planned against them. The lack of communication had been highlighted by

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<sup>4</sup> Francis J. Gavin, "Strategies of Inhibition: U.S. Grand Strategy, the Nuclear Revolution, and Nonproliferation," *International Security* 40, no. 1 (July 2015): 9–46; Francis J. Gavin, "Politics, History and the Ivory Tower-Policy Gap in the Nuclear Proliferation Debate," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 35, no. 4 (August 2012): 573–600.

George W. Bush as a significant problem.<sup>5</sup> Alternatively, China, the Soviet Union, and Pakistan prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan all had channels of communications open with Washington. Communication made it possible for all sides to at least understand the other. The ability to signal restraint in such a climate is increased. Face-to-face interaction helps to create some bonds between decision-makers;<sup>6</sup> bonds that can help advocate for previous restraint. Capabilities and credibility are generally toothed as the important aspect of deterrence, but without direct communication the previous two can easily be ignored, misrepresented, or downplayed.

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to delving deeper into two important ideas of this dissertation. First, the reputation for restraint elaborated here has been used to explain decision-making when a proliferating state is an adversary. I want to explore next whether maintaining a good reputation can help in the normalization process which takes place once a state has become nuclear. Second, I want to discuss the current U.S. strategy of superiority and how it affects the practice of deterrence and its impact on nuclear proliferation. I conclude with areas for future research.

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<sup>5</sup> *National Policy on Ballistic Missile Defense Fact Sheet*, Washington, D.C.: The White House, May 20, 2003, [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003), (assessed December 11, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> On the importance of face to face diplomacy see Vincent Pouliot, *International Security in Practice: The Politics of NATO-Russia Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Marcus Holmes, "The Force of Face-to-Face Diplomacy: Mirror Neurons and the Problem of Intentions," *International Organization* 67, no. 4 (2013): 829–61; Ole Jacob Sending, Vincent Pouliot, and Iver B Neumann, *Diplomacy and the Making of World Politics*, vol. 136 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Vincent Pouliot and Jérémie Cornut, "Practice Theory and the Study of Diplomacy: A Research Agenda," *Cooperation and Conflict* 50, no. 3 (2015): 297–315; James H Lebovic and Elizabeth N Saunders, "The Diplomatic Core: The Determinants of High-Level Us Diplomatic Visits, 1946–2010," *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2016): 107–23; Seanon S Wong, "Emotions and the Communication of Intentions in Face-to-Face Diplomacy," *European Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 1 (2016): 144–67.

## 1. The Reputation for Restraint and Nuclear Normalization

The argument presented in this dissertation is that nuclearization by an adversary of the United States can be seen as less of a security threat if the proliferator has developed a reputation for restraint, and is recognized as such by U.S. actors. The theory presented in this thesis was designed to show the relevance of restraint pre-nuclearization, and how nuclear weapons themselves are not necessarily guarantors of restraint in the future, as argued by Kenneth Waltz.<sup>7</sup> In this section, I'm interested in discussing whether developing a reputation for restraint is relevant to the normalization process following nuclearization. Of interest is whether a nuclear state can lose this reputation, or if the proliferating state was an ally, develop a negative relationship and a negative reputation. I'll discuss in turn the cases of China, North Korea, Pakistan, and finally Iran.

### *The Chinese Normalization Process*

In the concluding section of chapter 4 I mentioned that China declared, on the day it became nuclear, that it would adopt a doctrine of no-first use of nuclear weapons; China would “not be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstances.”<sup>8</sup> The Chinese wanted to be clear they developed nuclear weapons strictly for deterrent purposes, and not to compel nuclear and non-nuclear state alike.<sup>9</sup> China maintained a minimal deterrence posture throughout the Cold War and never engaged fully into the arms race, and continued to advocate for arms control measures.<sup>10</sup> They would eventually support the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in the mid-1990s.

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<sup>7</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> Statement by the People's Republic of China on 16 October 1964,” *People's Daily*, 17 October 1964.

<sup>9</sup> Zhenqiang Pan, “A Study of China's No-First-Use Policy on Nuclear Weapons,” *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 1, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 115–19.

<sup>10</sup> Fiona S. Cunningham and M. Taylor Fravel, “Assuring Assured Retaliation: China's Nuclear Posture and U.S.-China Strategic Stability,” *International Security* 40, no. 2 (October 2015): 11–14.

The Chinese did not engage in nuclear adventurism following the acquisition of their nuclear capability, nor did they accumulate massive amounts of nuclear weapons. At its peak, China possessed roughly 300 warheads,<sup>11</sup> which is significantly less than what the United States and the Soviet Union possessed at the crux of the arms race, with a peak of 30,000 by Washington and 40,000 for Moscow.

The level of restraint demonstrated by China throughout the Cold War was also anticipated by U.S. decision-makers in the mid-1960s. As China continued to build its delivery system to strengthen its nuclear deterrence, the United States began discussing the creation of an anti-missile defense system (BMD) that would be aimed principally at the Chinese, but also at the Soviet Union. While this might, at face value, undermine the argument that Washington did not believe China would be an irresponsible nuclear power, the rationale given behind closed doors for the system does not. The argument in favor of BMD was built on a bid to stop further nuclear proliferation, and to reassure U.S. allies. Furthermore, it is also mentioned several times that the system is made to protect against Moscow's arsenal as well. The language used in this case is similar for both China and the Soviet Union, which is further indication Washington had accepted China as a nuclear power.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not believe an ICBM-capable China would be particularly adventurous. It certainly would use its increased coercive diplomatic power in the future to reduce Washington's influence in the region, but would do so "without, however, subjecting its growing potential to serious risk."<sup>12</sup> Additional documents discussing the future Chinese threat centered on

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<sup>11</sup> "China: Nuclear," *The Nuclear Threat Initiative*, April 2015, <https://www.nti.org/learn/countries/china/nuclear/> (assessed September 24, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume X, National Security Policy, eds. David S. Patterson (United States Government Printing Office, 2002), document 18.

how they would be able to deter the Americans, not how aggressive they would be: “The Panel believes that the Chinese Communists could deploy in five years a small number of missile-carrying submarines which would pose a threat to West Coast cities and act as a deterrent against our use of nuclear weapons. While such a threat is not decisive, it does provide China with a negotiating tool.”<sup>13</sup> Further indications of Washington’s acknowledgment of Chinese understanding of deterrence and nuclear weapons can be found in a December 1966 report on “Recent Developments in Strategic Forces” in which U.S. force accumulation “do not reflect any change in our intentions vis-a-vis the Soviet Union or Communist China, but represent prudent measures to maintain deterrence...We have no intentions of increasing tensions; we are determined to maintain a strong strategic posture in the face of continuing Soviet and ChiCom efforts.”<sup>14</sup>

In sum, Washington expected Beijing to act responsibly and with restraint unless its vital interests, including its national security and its territorial claims, would come to be under threat because “we do not consider China to be an irrational adversary.” After all, as Walt Rostow, the former Deputy National Security Advisor to President Kennedy, had written to President Johnson in May 1967: “Chinese military strategy places primary emphasis on defense. [...] With the possible exception of their nuclear/missile activities, we do not see in train the general programs, the development or deployment of forces, or the doctrinal discussions which would suggest a more forward strategy. At least for the short term, the high priority nuclear program is probably viewed by the Chinese as primarily for deterrence, though Peking’s successes in this field bring substantial

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, document 124.

<sup>14</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume X, National Security Policy, eds. David S. Patterson (United States Government Printing Office, 2002), document 163.

prestige and political influence, particularly in Asia.” By 1968 the United States had recognized that mutually assured destruction would work with China has “she [Beijing] will not pose a threat to the U.S. second strike capability.”<sup>15</sup> Marshal Nie Rongzhen had stated that China’s aim in developing a second-strike capability was strictly meant “to own the minimal means to stage a counterattack in case our country suffered a surprise nuclear attack by the imperialists.”<sup>16</sup>

The submarine capability mentioned here was finally built at the end of the 1970s and became operational in 1981. Instead of being targeted at the U.S., it was focused on the Soviet Union.<sup>17</sup> In fact, the self-restraint shown by the Chinese possibly helped their rapprochement with the United States in the 1970s. By 1969 the Nixon administration sought to mend fences with China.<sup>18</sup> Both Washington and Beijing understood they could be of help to each other to deter the Soviet Union.<sup>19</sup> Perusing memos sent between the various American agencies at the time, we can see that the U.S. believed that constraining the Soviet Union was at the heart of Chinese interests.<sup>20</sup> This rapprochement between the U.S. and China was understood as “a long-term deterrent to the Soviet threat.”<sup>21</sup> Nixon would finally visit China in 1972, which would help normalize relations. A liaison office would be put together in 1973 and established soon after, providing better communication between the two.<sup>22</sup> The U.S. would soon cut their assistance to the Republic of

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, document 200

<sup>16</sup> John Wilson Lewis and Xue Litai, “Strategic Weapons and Chinese Power: The Formative Years,” *The China Quarterly* 112 (December 1987): 553–54

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Ibid, 554.

<sup>18</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-72, Volume XVII China, 1969-1972 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2018) document 5.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, document 26

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, document 40

<sup>21</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-76, Volume XVIII China, 1973-1976 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2018) document 89

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, document 1-34



China and cast its lot with mainland China. The understanding of the rules of the game, namely deterrence, likely played a role in the decision to seek better relations.

Moving forward, the question becomes whether China will maintain its no-first use policy. Beijing has rapidly gained in relative power and has become in the eyes of many potentially the next hegemon. The question has become whether this situation would end in conflict as previous processes of this kind have led to,<sup>23</sup> or whether China and the U.S. can find ground for accommodation.<sup>24</sup> The Trump administration seems to be leaning toward the former, and has such has enacted policies to reduce the economic power of China. Washington's modernization of its nuclear arsenal has also had an impact on the minimal force posture of the Chinese.<sup>25</sup> Some analysts have argued that China will not tolerate this state of affairs much longer and is bound to proliferate, seeking a more assertive posture.<sup>26</sup> Others believe Beijing feels secure in its crisis deterrence capabilities and sees no need to change its nuclear posture.<sup>27</sup> If the past is indicative of the future, the latter should prove a more accurate prediction.

#### *North Korea and the Reputation for Restraint: No Normalization in Sight*

North Korea became officially nuclear in 2006. Following their nuclearization, they have tested ballistic missiles in 2009, 2013, 2014, 2016, and 2017. The regime increased its testing in 2016 and 2017 where they proceeded to 5 and 16 tests respectively. During this period, they tested

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<sup>23</sup> John J Mearsheimer, "The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3, no. 4 (2010): 381–96.

<sup>24</sup> T.V. Paul, *Accommodating Rising Powers: Past, Present, and Future* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Cunningham and Fravel, "Assuring Assured Retaliation."

<sup>26</sup> Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, "The End of MAD? The Nuclear Dimension of U.S. Primacy," *International Security* 30, no. 4 (April 2006): 7–44; Austin Long and Brendan Rittenhouse Green, "Stalking the Secure Second Strike: Intelligence, Counterforce, and Nuclear Strategy," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 1–2 (January 2, 2015): 38–73.

<sup>27</sup> Cunningham and Fravel, "Assuring Assured Retaliation," 9–10.

nuclear devices in 2009, 2013, two in 2016, and a thermonuclear bomb in 2017. Pyongyang has also worked on SLBM capabilities, hardening of missile silos, and mobile launchers in order to strengthen their second-strike capability.

From the point of view of deterrence as a strategy, in this case an asymmetric deterrence strategy,<sup>28</sup> Pyongyang has followed the precept particularly well. By testing missiles and nuclear devices the way they did, they have signaled to their adversaries, namely South Korea, Japan, and the United States, that they had the means and capabilities to deliver unto them a significant amount of damage. The test of an ICBM in 2017, although demonstrating that their ballistic missile technology is not on par with other nuclear states, still showed the continental United States was now vulnerable. The regime communicated they had the capabilities to follow through on their threats, and that their arsenal was secure enough. In sum, they have achieved some form of asymmetrical strategic stability with the United States.

Yet, Washington and most of the international community continues to treat North Korea as a non-nuclear state. What I mean is the regime is still under heavy sanctions from the international community. Moreover, China, who helped the regime nuclearize, has enacted sanctions as well on Pyongyang because it thought it had become too belligerent. In 2016, China imposed sanctions on coal imports, which represents about a third of Pyongyang's exports. It has also recently been reported that the Obama administration had demanded to see military options to deal with Pyongyang. While, once again, an attack was deemed too costly and discarded, it is a testament to the continued perceived recklessness of the North Koreans and their inability to project restraint.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> T.V. Paul and Jean-Francois Belanger, "Asymmetric Deterrence: How the Weak Deter the Strong," McGill University, Working Paper, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Bob Woodward, *Fear: Trump in the White House* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 99-105.

In February 2018, leaks from the Trump administration revealed how it considered a limited strike on counterforce targets if Pyongyang tested another ICBM; ICBMs having long been the point of no return for Washington.<sup>30</sup> Not too long after, a few days before the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, Kim Jong-Un approached his South Korean counterpart President Moon Jae-in to discuss ways to reduce tensions on the Peninsula. Pyongyang would eventually join the South during the Olympic games, and the two would host an Inter-Korea Summit in April 2018, something that had not been seen since 2007. Moreover, in June 2018 President Trump and Kim Jong-Un met in Singapore to discuss denuclearization. The result of the meeting was a joint declaration in which “the DPRK commits to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.”<sup>31</sup> The language was reminiscent of all joint statement which came before.

The meeting between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-Un legitimized the regime yet there are no talks, and I predict there will be no talk in the near to medium term, of accepting North Korea as a nuclear state. Doing so would settle some important issues. Namely, it would now be possible to have a clearer view of the actual size of the North Korean arsenal, find ways to incorporate it within nuclear arms control treaties, and overall reduce its brinkmanship and destabilizing behavior. This will not happen because it has not developed a reputation for restraint.

Restraint is first and foremost about war prevention. Prior to the creation of the NPT, testing nuclear weapons was not seen as particularly problematic: it was part of what nuclear states did.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Zachary Cohen, Nicole Gaouette, Barbara Starr, and Kevin Liptak, “Trump Advisors Clash Over ‘Bloody Nose’ Strike on North Korea,” *CNN*, 1 February 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/01/politics/north-korea-trump-bloody-nose-dispute/index.html> (assessed October 12, 2018); Julian Borger, “CIA chief draws new ‘redline’ on North Korea nuclear buildup,” *The Guardian*, 23 January 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jan/23/cia-chief-says-north-korea-is-a-handful-of-months-from-endangering-us> (assessed October 12, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> “Read the Joint Statement from President Trump and Kim Jong-Un,” *NPR*, 12 June 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/06/12/619168996/read-the-joint-statement-from-president-donald-trump-and-kim-jong-un>

<sup>32</sup> Sagan, “Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb,” 1997.

Following the ratification of the Limited Test Ban Treaty and of the NPT, overt nuclearization became seen as problematic, and as such a destabilizing behavior.<sup>33</sup> This is something Israel and Pakistan understood well, although Pakistan went counter to this norm in 1998 and has suffered the consequences. North Korea, in its constant desire to signal their capabilities, has gone against the norm many times. This in part explains why they are unable to project themselves as responsible nuclear powers. They went counter to the current practice of deterrence.

They also continued to engage in compellent behavior against South Korea and Japan. In 2010, for example, to compel Seoul to stop their military exercises involving artillery strikes, the Kim Jong-Il regime authorized a limited artillery attack on the island of Yeonpyeong. The attack resulted in 23 casualties, including 4 deaths. Moreover, the continued threats of war levied against the United States have done nothing to reassure the international community. While this behavior is clearly aimed at Pyongyang's domestic audience, it remains destabilizing. Paradoxically, North Korea's strengthening of its nuclear deterrent as part of its security strategy has made it unable to competently engage in general deterrence writ large. By doing so they have been unable to develop a reputation for restraint which would have made normalization possible.

### *The Normalization Process of Pakistan*

The normalization of the Pakistani program has been tumultuous, to say the least. By 1989, the Soviet Union had removed all of its troops from Afghanistan. This marked the end of the U.S. and Pakistan strategic partnership as well. Soon, the United States would cut a significant portion of the aid package to Pakistan over its strategic nuclear program, which would mark a period of

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<sup>33</sup> Maria Rost Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms: Why States Choose Nuclear Restraint* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009); Or Rabinowitz, *Bargaining on Nuclear Tests: Washington and Its Cold War Deals* (UK: Oxford University Press, 2014); Or Rabinowitz and Nicholas L. Miller, "Keeping the Bombs in the Basement: U.S. Nonproliferation Policy toward Israel, South Africa, and Pakistan," *International Security* 40, no. 1 (July 2015): 47–86.

tumultuous relationship with the United States. Pakistan tested a nuclear device in May of 1998, which led the Clinton administration to impose sanctions. Importantly, a year later Pakistan would initiate hostilities in what would be known as the Kargil War. There is evidence suggesting the war was an effort at compelling India into settling the Kashmir dispute in a way which was contrary to its interest.<sup>34</sup> By acting in a *fait accompli* manner, Pakistan hoped its nuclear capability would deter India from intervening, which it did not.<sup>35</sup> To date, this is one of the rare instances of war between nuclear countries. This is enough to raise concerns about the future behavior of Pakistan.

An additional issue was the A.Q. Khan network. Khan, who was in charge of uranium enrichment in the Pakistani nuclear program, would go on to sell sensitive nuclear material, including blueprints of nuclear bombs, and centrifuges to proliferating countries with adversarial foreign policy to the U.S., including Libya and Iran. This has been perhaps the most extensive third-party distribution of nuclear weapons material.<sup>36</sup> Khan, in the end, was the embodiment of what some in Washington had feared: the dissemination of the Muslim bomb, as Khan is argued to have been “motivated by pan-Islamism and hostility to Western controls on nuclear technology.”<sup>37</sup> Khan is also believed to have provided assistance to al-Qaeda in its search of the bomb.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Peter R. Lavoy, ed., *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia: The Causes and Consequences of the Kargil Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> Dan Altman, “By *Fait Accompli*, Not Coercion: How States Wrest Territory from Their Adversaries,” *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (December 1, 2017): 881–91; On the use of *fait accompli* to leapfrog deterrence see George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, 521–22.

<sup>36</sup> Farhad Rezaei, “The American Response To Pakistani And Iranian Nuclear Proliferation: A Study In Paradox,” *Asian Affairs* 48, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 30–31

<sup>37</sup> David Albright and Corey Hinderstein, “Unraveling the A. Q. Khan and Future Proliferation Networks,” *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (March 2005): 112.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 113.

As such, the discovery of the A.Q. Khan network led many in the U.S. to worry about the safety of the Pakistani deterrent. It has been reported that Pakistan had to keep bombs outside of its borders in order to keep them away from rival factions within the state.<sup>39</sup> With the internal divisions within Pakistan between the Army, the ISI, and the government, it is difficult to know if all factions would be restrained in conflict. Feroz Khan, who discards the possibility, argues that the main object of fear was the Taliban presence in Pakistan. The fear was that the Taliban could find sympathizers in the ISI and the Army and use the bomb against the U.S. or its allies.<sup>40</sup>

However, the relationship between Pakistan and the United States is prone to rapid changes. As such, with the al-Qaeda attack against the United States, Pakistan once again became a strategic partner. George W. Bush requisitioned aid for Islamabad because they once again were in a strategic position to help.<sup>41</sup> Punitive measures against Pakistan were dropped and engagement was favored now that Islamabad was again important to U.S. security goals.<sup>42</sup> The situation would change again in 2011 when the U.S. received indications that Osama bin Laden, held responsible by Washington for the September 2001 attack, was hiding in Pakistan. The Obama administration mounted a covert operation and raided his hideout in Abbottabad, located north of Islamabad. Bin Laden was found and killed, but the event would sour the relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan once again.

The nuclear situation of Pakistan is peculiar. On the one hand, Islamabad demonstrated clearly it was ready to use its nuclear arsenal in a compellent fashion during the Kargil conflict, and the

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<sup>39</sup> Sagan, Waltz, and Betts, "A Nuclear Iran."

<sup>40</sup> Feroz Hassan Khan, "Nuclear Security in Pakistan: Separating Myth From Reality," *Arms Control Today* 39, no. 6 (2009): 12–14.

<sup>41</sup> The continued strategic relevance to the United States of Pakistan, and its effect on the country, has been labeled the "geostrategic curse" by T.V. Paul. For an in-depth analysis see T. V. Paul, *The Warrior State: Pakistan in the Contemporary World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), esp. Chapter 2.

<sup>42</sup> Rezaei, "The American Response," 31–32.

U.S. reacted to this behavior with harsh sanctions and isolation. However, because of Pakistan's location, and relevance to U.S. security objectives, it has been deemed on and off as a strategic partner. Once this occurs, most prior issues with its recklessness is forgotten. As such, geopolitical needs and alliances have a role to play in explaining away discordant restraint signals.

*Iran and the Reputation for Restraint: Does it Explain Abrogation?*

Iran is an interesting case. Once an ally during the Cold War, and now an adversary since the creation of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Since the restart of its nuclear program in 2002, the Americans have engaged in strong counterproliferation against Islamabad, and considered at a few junctures a preventive strike. In 2012, David Sanger revealed the Americans had engaged in a cyberattack against the Natanz underground facilities.<sup>43</sup> Iranian scientists were reportedly killed during the process, and their deaths were said to have come at the hands of American and Israeli agents.<sup>44</sup> While the literature on preventive strikes is focused on direct military intervention, the cyberattack by Washington and Jerusalem comes close to what a preventive strike is about. It delayed the regime's ability to reach nuclear latency and showed how resolved the U.S. was to a non-nuclear Iran.

In any case, Iran agreed to a negotiated settlement. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, also known as the Iran nuclear deal, was signed on October 18, 2015, by Iran, the U.S., Germany, the European Union, France, Russia, the U.K. and China. The deal effectively stopped Iranian proliferation, increased the transparency measures of the IAEA, including round-the-clock video surveillance in certain nuclear sites. Tehran agreed to restrict itself to using nuclear energy strictly

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<sup>43</sup> David E. Sanger, "Obama Order Sped Up Wave of Cyberattacks Against Iran," *The New York Times*, 1 June 2012, [https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/01/world/middleeast/obama-ordered-wave-of-cyberattacks-against-iran.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/01/world/middleeast/obama-ordered-wave-of-cyberattacks-against-iran.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

<sup>44</sup> Medhi Hasan, "Iran's Nuclear Scientists are not being Assassinated. They are being Murdered," *The Guardian*, 16 January 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/16/iran-scientists-state-sponsored-murder>;

for civilian purposes with an enrichment cap at 3.67%, gave away their highly enriched uranium, and stopped enrichment at the Fordow facility (the underground facility). From the start, however, critics in the United States, either academics or government officials, argued the deal was too lenient toward Tehran, and with the sunset closes would bring the regime right back to nuclear latency once reached.<sup>45</sup> The most important clauses were: in 2025 Iran would no longer be restricted to use first-generation centrifuges and could begin the research and development for more efficient technology, and by 2030 their enrichment cap would be raised. As such, critics argued the deal provided them with means to nuclearize once they reached these landmarks.<sup>46</sup>

In fact, during the 2016 Presidential campaign, most Republicans presidential candidates were in favor of pulling out of the deal. Marco Rubio wrote that the deal was “an unfolding disaster”<sup>47</sup> and elsewhere that he was willing to take the U.S. out of it.<sup>48</sup> Ted Cruz had vowed to “rip up and rescind this catastrophic Iranian nuclear deal.”<sup>49</sup> Others, like Jeb Bush, John Kasich, and Donald Trump all argued the deal was seriously flawed, but all suggested to renegotiate it to close what

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<sup>45</sup> CNN provided an interesting overview of the critiques. See Tom Cohen, “5 reasons diverse critics oppose Iran nuclear deal,” *CNN*, 25 November 2013, <https://www.cnn.com/2013/11/25/politics/iran-deal-opponents-5-things/index.html> (assessed October 12, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> While there is no indication whether Iran would or would not have developed a nuclear bomb by then, Matthew Fuhrmann has demonstrated that states who have received nuclear assistance are 350 times more likely to develop a bomb, and 750 times more likely to do so if they face an immediate security threat. See Fuhrmann, “Spreading Temptation.”

<sup>47</sup> Marco Rubio, “Iran nuclear deal an unfolding disaster,” *CNN*, 18 October 2016, <https://www.cnn.com/2016/10/17/opinions/iran-nuclear-deal-disaster-rubio/index.html> (assessed October 12, 2018).

<sup>48</sup> Ron Kampeas, “Marco Rubio Cites Intentions to Kill Iran Nuclear Deal in Decision to Run for Senate Re-Election,” *Haaretz*, 23 June 2016, <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/marco-rubio-announces-senate-bid-1.5400270> (Assessed October 12, 2018).

<sup>49</sup> Patrick Goodenough, “As President, Cruz Would ‘Rip Up’ Iran Deal, Instruct US Embassy to Move to Jerusalem,” *CNSNEWS*, 10 August 2015, <https://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/patrick-goodenough/president-cruz-would-rip-iran-deal-instruct-us-embassy-move> (assessed October 12, 2018).



they saw as important security gaps.<sup>50</sup> All candidates, however, agreed that Iran should not become nuclear because it was a direct threat to the security of the United States.

Moreover, Iran continued to test ballistic missiles in this period. While its missile program was not part of the deal, opponents to the deal in the United States have argued this meant they were going counter to the spirit of the agreement. On May 8, 2018, citing the sunset closes, the previous undisclosed depth of Tehran's nuclear program, their support of terrorist groups, and the refusal to have inspectors access military sites, President Trump exited the agreement. While some of the justification to leave the agreement were patently false, Iran had not categorically refused to have military sites inspected, and even if they did, it's an accepted provision within the IAEA safeguards agreement, Iran was never able to develop a reputation for restraint, particularly when it came to opponents of the deal. Hawks were successful in getting their desired policy outcome as advocates of the Iran nuclear deal were not able to persuasively argue in favor of restraint from Tehran.

There are important ramifications in this case. At the moment, conservative factions in Tehran who were opposed to the deal in the first place are lobbying for the nuclear program to restart. If Iran does, the likelihood of a preventive attack becomes high, especially with Washington and Jerusalem seemingly in agreement on the subject. The chances of Iran becoming a nuclear power are slim, but the risks of instability are high.

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<sup>50</sup> Kailani Koenig, "Kasich on Iran Deal: 'You're Going to Rip it Up, and Then What?'" *NBC NEWS*, 8 September 2015, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/kasich-iran-deal-you-re-going-rip-it-then-what-n423721> (assessed October 12, 2018); Deena Zaru, "Two Republican 2016 Candidates who won't tear up the Iran deal," *CNN*, 4 September 2015, <https://www.cnn.com/2015/09/04/politics/iran-deal-jeb-bush-donald-trump/index.html> (assessed October 12, 2018).

## 2. The Evolution of the Practice of Deterrence: Rules and Norms Change

The end of the Cold War has seen important changes to the practice of deterrence, and patterns of nuclear proliferation. During the Cold War it was the primary feature of the security arrangement between the United States and the Soviet Union. They had divided into two clear blocks where nuclear and conventional deterrence was an integral part of their relationship and identity.<sup>51</sup> But with the end of the Cold War, nuclear deterrence lost some of its relevance. Nuclear weapons became an instrument solely designed to deter each other. We can see this trend in the wave of denuclearization we witnessed in the 1990s. Brazil, Yugoslavia, Taiwan, Libya, Algeria, Romania, and Argentina all abandoned their nuclear programs, in part due to U.S. nonproliferation policies,<sup>52</sup> but also in part a change in the security environment and the meaning of nuclear deterrence.<sup>53</sup>

Since the early 1990s, however, the United States has had a discordant approach to the practice of deterrence. On the one hand, it has sought to reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons, and to reduce the stockpiles of nuclear weapons across existing nuclear powers. George H. W. Bush unilaterally reduced the size of the U.S. arsenal in a bid to get similar concessions from Russia, which Gorbachev reciprocated.<sup>54</sup> This period saw the ratification of numerous arms control and disarmament agreements, including the 1988 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) of 1991, and the 1993 START II, which implementation would be delayed until the early 2000 and would become the New START. All

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<sup>51</sup> Patrick Morgan, "The Practice of Deterrence," in Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, *International Practices* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>52</sup> Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*.

<sup>53</sup> T. V. Paul, *Power Versus Prudence: Why Nations Forgo Nuclear Weapons* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); Kurt M. Campbell and Robert J. Einhorn, *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices*, ed. Mitchell Reiss (New Delhi: Manas Publications, 2005).

<sup>54</sup> The National Security Archives, "Unilateral U.S. Nuclear Pullback in 1991 matched by rapid Soviet Cuts," Briefing book #531, 30 September 2016, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault-russia-programs/2016-09-30/unilateral-us-nuclear-pullback-1991-matched>

three treaties codified the reduced relevance of nuclear deterrence to the larger security context between the two adversaries.

The changing nature of nuclear deterrence was at its apex in 2009 when President Barack Obama delivered a speech in Prague in which he argued for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. While the President argued he was a realist and did not expect to see this goal achieved in his lifetime, he still declared he would work towards the objective. The first major step in this direction was the elaboration and ratification of the New Start Treaty. President Obama also put a lot of effort in making the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty work. This prompted academics and policy-makers alike to wonder whether a world without the presence of nuclear weapons was possible.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, ICAN, the activist group responsible for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and recipient of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, have argued the potential danger of nuclear use, but especially the danger of nuclear accident and of nuclear energy in general, were sufficiently harmful to seek their elimination.

On the other hand, accelerating with the Bush administration, it has also engaged in a strategy of superiority. It seems to have completely rejected the principles of mutual vulnerability and sought to mitigate its own security flaws by adding active defenses to its nuclear triad, which in turn has led Russia to actively increase its nuclear deterrent capability to offset this practice. As such, 15 years after the end of the Cold War we began an interesting period for nuclear nonproliferation. The United States continues to curb nuclear acquisition, while strengthening its

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<sup>55</sup> George Perkovich, James Acton, and Carnegie Endowment, "Abolishing Nuclear Weapons: A Debate," *Arms Control Today* 39, no. 3 (2009): 5-344; George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn, "A World Free of Nuclear Weapons," *Wall Street Journal*, 4 January 2007. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB116787515251566636>

own arsenal. This section speculates on this change and its impact on future nuclear proliferation, and future U.S. nonproliferation policies.

### *Asymmetry in Deterrent Relationships*

The post-Cold War period has been marked by the desire by the United States to reach strategic superiority: the ability to mitigate its own vulnerability, control nuclear escalation, and possibly win a nuclear exchange because of its capacity to deny its adversaries the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>56</sup> It did so through two distinct strategies. First, it enlarged NATO to further increase the influence of the nuclear alliance, and it developed active defenses, ballistic missile defense (BMD), to counter the effect of nuclear weapons in the hands of nascent nuclear powers, but also possibly Moscow and Beijing.

While the U.S. discussed disarmament and argued nuclear deterrence was no longer as important as during the Cold War, it went ahead and expanded NATO, its nuclear alliance, to states within Russia's sphere of influence. With the end of the Cold War the existence of NATO was put into question. John Mearsheimer famously argued NATO would disband because the nuclear alliance was no longer necessary now that the Cold War was over, and that the Warsaw Pact had already dissolved.<sup>57</sup> NATO instead expanded during the 1990s and 2000s, knocking on Russia's door. In fact, Mikhail Gorbachev, the former president of the Soviet Union, has often claimed that "the Americans promised that Nato wouldn't move beyond the boundaries of Germany after the

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<sup>56</sup> Lieber and Press, "The End of MAD?"

<sup>57</sup> Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future."

Cold War.”<sup>58</sup> Robert Gates, director of the CIA at the time, had advocated against the move because “Gorbachev and others were led to believe that wouldn’t happen.”<sup>59</sup>

Instead, in the 1990s Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic became members. In 2004 Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania joined the alliance. Croatia and Albania joined in 2009. The final round of extension was done in 2017 with the adhesion of Montenegro. Moreover, NATO has released a list of invited members in 2018 which included, among others, Georgia and Ukraine, two countries sharing a border with Russia. This is concerning for Russia as NATO is, first and foremost, a nuclear alliance. It has never adopted a doctrine of no-first use and has always sought to keep as much flexibility as possible. It never removed from its tool kit the ability to strike first with nuclear weapons.

At the same time, Washington has kept on a steady modernization of its nuclear forces. While it has reduced them in size, it had made sure it would have usable weapons if need be.<sup>60</sup> It has continued to publicly state the relevance of nuclear weapons for its security objectives. A rapid look at the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review requested by the Trump administration supports this assertion. In his preface, Secretary of Defense Mattis wrote that a robust nuclear deterrent “[ensures] that our diplomats continue to speak from a position of strength on matters of war and peace.”<sup>61</sup> Moreover, “Nuclear forces, along with our conventional forces and other instruments of national power, are therefore first and foremost directed towards deterring aggression and

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<sup>58</sup> Adrian Blomfield and Mike Smith, “Gorbachev: US could Start a New Cold War,” *The Telegraph*, 6 May 2008, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/1933223/Gorbachev-US-could-start-new-Cold-War.html> (assessed October 3, 2018).

<sup>59</sup> The National Security Archives. “NATO expansion: What Gorbachev Heard,” Briefing Book #613, 12 December 2017, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early> (assessed October 5, 2018).

<sup>60</sup> David S. McDonough, *Nuclear Superiority: The “New Triad” and the Evolution of American Nuclear Strategy* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>61</sup> Department of Defense, “Nuclear Posture Review,” February 2018, 1.

preserving peace.”<sup>62</sup> On the one hand, the United States has signaled a desire to reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons. On the other, it continues to feature it as a staple of its security policy. This is sending mixed signals that are problematic.

Washington seems to be muddying its own set of rules. It sought to reduce its own vulnerability without regards to the vulnerability of its rival, Russia. It might be counterintuitive, but an important aspect of the practice and rules of deterrence is to understand that the security of the other is in your hand. This was the compromise made by mutually assured destruction. However, since the end of the Cold War the Americans have sought measures to reduce their own vulnerability while maintaining the vulnerability of others. Both Washington and Moscow were worried about their vulnerability to a first strike throughout the Cold War. The Soviet Union believed it was the main strategy of the United States.<sup>63</sup> Washington had the same fear and planned accordingly.<sup>64</sup> Due to this state of affairs, both sides found ways to speak to each other to provide reassurances. With the end of the Cold War and the emergence of America as the unipole, it did not seek to reduce the vulnerability of others. It sought to make itself invulnerable. This shift in how the U.S. practices nuclear deterrence has had an important impact on international politics.

The third way in which the U.S. sought to mitigate its vulnerability was the development of BMD. President Bush did abrogate the ABM treaty to be able to develop BMD. The administration developed a national system to protect the U.S. homeland, the Patriot system to protect soldiers against missiles in theater, the Aegis system, a mobile system built on ships, to protect allies and

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, II.

<sup>63</sup> Brendan R. Green and Austin Long, “The MAD Who Wasn’t There: Soviet Reactions to the Late Cold War Nuclear Balance,” *Security Studies* 26, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 606–41.

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, The National Security Archives, “Reagan’s Nuclear War Briefing Declassified,” Briefing Book #575, 22 December 2016, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault/2016-12-22/reagans-nuclear-war-briefing-declassified>

the homeland, helped develop the Iron Dome system in Israel, and is responsible for the THAAD system to protect South Korea from its nuclear neighbor. The Bush administration reduced its nuclear arsenal because nuclear deterrence returned to the idea of minimal deterrence. On the other hand, it sought alternative means to defend against, and constrain, nascent nuclear powers it deemed illegitimate and revisionist.

In an interesting paradox, the development of active defense has made the nuclear relationship between the United States and Russia less stable. The expansion of NATO has made the United States less secure. In response to those two important events, Russia has developed new nuclear weapons designed to bypass American missile defense, and they have done so by breaching their commitment to the INF. In fact, Russia was skeptical of U.S. withdrawal of the ABM treaty because they believed they could do the same with their other arms control commitments, including the INF.<sup>65</sup> Among the new system developed by Russia is a nuclear cruise missile which can travel 1600 kilometers on its own because it is powered by an unshielded nuclear reactor. Moscow also developed an underwater bomb, which it argues is undetectable by U.S. anti-missile systems. Technically, this bomb could be moved to any U.S. port and detonated. At the unveiling of the new missile system Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, stated, "Nobody listened to us. Listen now" in references to its repeated statements U.S. missile defense was problematic for its deterrent force.<sup>66</sup> As such, Russia is trying to rectify what it sees as problematic: its vulnerability.

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<sup>65</sup> "Moscow's Response to US Plans for Missile Defense," *CIA*, 10 September 2009, declassified document, [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0006122438.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0006122438.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Olga Tanas and Andrey Biryukov, "Nobody Listened to us. Listen now.": Putin warns the U.S. with nuclear weapons display," *The National Post*, 1 March 2018, <https://nationalpost.com/news/world/nobody-listened-to-us-listen-now-putin-warns-the-u-s-with-nuclear-weapons-display> (assessed October 3, 2018).

President Trump seemed avid to respond in kind. He has resurfaced the possibility of developing tactical nuclear weapons. The objective is to develop more “usable” weapons; weapons which could be used in theater if need be.<sup>67</sup> High yield nuclear weapons are generally thought of as unusable. The sheer destruction they can deliver is strictly meant for deterrence. Tactical weapons, on the other hand, because of their low yield, could realistically be used in a combat zone. Their effects could be localized and contained. This is directly out of the American Cold War playbook, however, and the extensive discussion surrounding the nuclear taboo and the tradition of non-use within the U.S. security apparatus.<sup>68</sup> It is a clear departure from the Obama Administration’s desire to reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons. The direct result could be another arms race between the two great powers. For our purposes, it could also mean a return to the ways in which deterrence was practiced during the Cold War.

### *Deterrence and Nuclear Proliferation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

This dual movement, seeking nuclear disarmament while achieving nuclear superiority, has led to renewed vigor when it came to nonproliferation policies. On the one hand, it's an effort to delegitimize nuclear proliferation from adversarial states. In a speech he gave at the 2002 graduation ceremony at West Point, President Bush stated: “Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies.” Deterrence, in this situation, could not work.<sup>69</sup> The issue had to do with identity and understanding between the U.S. and those nascent nuclear power. In a

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<sup>67</sup> Julian Borger, “US to loosen nuclear weapons constraints and develop more ‘usable’ warheads,” *The Guardian*, 9 January 2018, <https://nationalpost.com/news/world/nobody-listened-to-us-listen-now-putin-warns-the-u-s-with-nuclear-weapons-display> (assessed October 3, 2018),

<sup>68</sup> See The National Security Archives, “U.S. Presidents and the Nuclear Taboo,” Briefing Book #611, 30 November 2017, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault/2017-11-30/us-presidents-nuclear-taboo>

<sup>69</sup> “President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point,” *The White House*, 1 June 2002, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html> (assessed October 3, 2018).



fact sheet justifying the deployment of missile defense, the Bush White House argued the following:

Deterring these threats will be difficult. There are no mutual understandings or reliable lines of communication with these states. Our new adversaries seek to keep us out of their region, leaving them free to support terrorism and to pursue aggression against their neighbors. By their own calculations, these leaders may believe they can do this by holding a few of our cities hostage. Our adversaries seek enough destructive capability to blackmail us from coming to the assistance of our friends who would then become the victims of aggression.<sup>70</sup>

This statement makes two important links. First, it rightly argues that communication is important for deterrence to work, and that the U.S. has little communication with North Korea and Iran. Second, nuclearization by smaller powers after the Cold War is a direct assault on U.S. security, and the security of its allies. As such, it had to be fought.

Importantly, the argument about communication and mutual focal points has to do with the difficulty for these states to be rational. As Derek D. Smith argued, the issue with those states labeled as rogue, Iran, Iraq, and North Korea is that they are authoritarian regimes. As such, they are more likely to be the victims of groupthink, a pathology where dissenting opinions are going to be pushed aside and the development of an illusion of invulnerability can increase. As such, they are not able to perform the appropriate cost-benefit analysis required by a deterrent threat, and may overestimate their chances of success, which would lead to catastrophic failures.<sup>71</sup> Smith is not the only one making this case, it has been a staple of the Bush years.

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<sup>70</sup> *National Policy on Ballistic Missile Defense Fact Sheet*, Washington, D.C.: The White House, May 20, 2003, [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003), (assessed December 11, 2017).

<sup>71</sup> Derek D. Smith, "Deterrence and Counterproliferation in an Age of Weapons of Mass Destruction," *Security Studies* 12, no. 4 (January 2003): 163–64.

Moreover, it made salient the link between nuclear weapons and terrorism. During the Cold war, the issue was mainly preventing the diffusion of nuclear technology to adversaries of the United States who might use it to threaten its security. In the post-Cold War, a similar logic applied to proliferation, but this time the fear was that it would be provided to non-state actors, namely terrorist groups. This line of argument was mostly used against Iran and Iraq once they proliferated. This case was made on the back of irrationality: nascent nuclear powers are irrational and revisionist, as such they are more likely to provide nuclear weapons to terrorist, and de facto causing deterrence failure.

But this type of argument goes against the empirical records. While deterrence has been different with smaller states, what we call asymmetric deterrence, it remained deterrence. North Korea understood it well in 1994 when it threatened punishment on Seoul to deter the U.S. While deterrence failed with Iraq in 1991, it is not a unique event. States with equal levels of capability have misread threats and resolve in the past. *Fait accompli* strategies have been known to lead to deterrent failure: the aggressor believing that deploying forces after the fact may be more difficult. Using a surprise attack can go around a deterrent threat, which was the thinking of Hussein.<sup>72</sup> Germany had similar thinking in 1940 when it moved to attack Western Europe, creating a deterrence failure.<sup>73</sup> This has occurred between nuclear powers as well, with the Kargil war and the land grab done by Pakistan toward India.<sup>74</sup> Deterrence failures are not exclusive to "rogue states," yet they are deemed more important.

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<sup>72</sup> James J. Wirtz, "Deterring the Weak: Problems and Prospects," *Proliferation Papers* 43 (2012): 9-11

<sup>73</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, Reprint edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), chapter 4.

<sup>74</sup> Altman, "By Fait Accompli, Not Coercion," 888.

Moreover, the fear of nuclear terrorism is a bit absurd. There is no denying that it is at the heart of national security planning in the United States. Every president since 1991 has quoted nuclear terrorism as a risk.<sup>75</sup> Mostly because many believe it is impossible to deter terrorists because they do not share the same cost-benefit analysis as states, are difficult to find, and have no assets that can be threatened.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, there is a growing literature arguing that it is possible to deter terrorists the same way we deter states. They have objectives that can be denied, they do engage in cost-benefit analyses, and they do hold assets they do not wish taken away.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the plausible deniability assumption of a nuclear attack made by terrorist groups is dubious at best.<sup>78</sup>

As such, the difficulty for smaller nuclear powers to signal restraint is largely due to two interlocking factors. First, the U.S. is seeking to reduce the global stockpiles of nuclear weapons. As such, acquiring nuclear weapons is seen as directly against U.S. security interest. Second, with its desire to acquire superiority, it deems as irrational any nascent nuclear states seeking deterrent of their own: they would not be able to last in a confrontation anyway. The posited inability of the new nuclear powers to be deterred is then re-enforced by the delegitimization of nuclear acquisition after the Cold War. The plausibility probe into the case of Iran and Iraq, as well as the case study of North Korea, made salient an important feature of the post-Cold War: the delegitimization of

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<sup>75</sup> Graham Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2005).

<sup>76</sup> Paul K. Davis and Brian Michael Jenkins, *Deterrence and Influence in Counterterrorism: A Component in the War on al-Qaeda* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2002).

<sup>77</sup> Alex S. Wilner, "Deterring the Undeterrable: Coercion, Denial, and Delegitimization in Counterterrorism," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 34, no. 1 (February 2011): 3–37; Alex Wilner, "Fencing in Warfare: Threats, Punishment, and Intra-War Deterrence in Counterterrorism," *Security Studies* 22, no. 4 (October 2013): 740–72; Alex S. Wilner, *Deterring Rational Fanatics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Robert F. Trager and Dessislava P. Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done," *International Security* 30, no. 3 (Winter /2006 2005): 87–123; Andreas Wenger, ed., *Deterring Terrorism: Theory and Practice* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012).

<sup>78</sup> Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, "Why States Won't Give Nuclear Weapons to Terrorists," *International Security* 38, no. 1 (July 2013): 80–104.

nuclear acquisition due to the changes in the practice of deterrence. While North Korea and Iraq were reckless in their use of force and their actions toward allies of the United States, Iran did not move outside the line too much. It did obfuscate its nuclear program, but every state who nuclearized after China did so as well. Yet, they had a hard time signaling they would be restrained based on their past actions. While their support of Hezbollah is problematic, they did not engage in as open aggression toward their neighbors as North Korea and Iraq. Yet, they received a similar treatment. As such, all acts of proliferation at the moment are deemed as going against the U.S. status quo, but this might be bound to change.

If Russia and Washington continue their proliferation efforts, and if the two return to a deterrent posture similar to the Cold War, how will allied and adversarial proliferation be perceived? Will we see a return to two blocks of deterrence where allies can potentially be welcomed to it? Or will Washington and Moscow seek to keep proliferation to their own relationship and deny access to others? We can easily picture Russia as supportive of new nuclear powers, as they have helped Iran through their own nuclear process.<sup>79</sup> But what about the United States? It has been particularly adamant it did not want further nuclear proliferation from the 1980s onwards. It was harsh with allies and harsh with adversaries, with the caveat that allies did not suffer preventive attacks.<sup>80</sup>

In fact, the argument that the United States has been harsh against allies when it comes to counterproliferation has to be qualified here. None of its allies proliferated following the end of the Cold War, only adversaries. U.S. hegemony and its ability to enforce sanctions on states dependent on it has a role to play here.<sup>81</sup> As such, it is difficult to ascertain how they would react

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<sup>79</sup> Lionel Beehner, "Russia's Nuclear Deal with Iran," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 28 February 2006, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/russias-nuclear-deal-iran> (assessed October 4, 2018).

<sup>80</sup> Gavin, "Strategies of Inhibition"; Miller, *Stopping the Bomb*.

<sup>81</sup> Miller, "The Secret Success of Nonproliferation Sanctions."

to allied proliferation, especially in the current context of renewed interest in nuclear weapons. Would the U.S. welcome Japan, or South Korea, to the nuclear club right now? Or will it remain committed to its NPT commitment?

In sum, there is a duality going on that is difficult to get away from. On the one hand, all nuclear weapons states signatory to the treaty have agreed to seek nuclear disarmament under Article VI of the treaty. However, they do so while continuing to base their national security policies on nuclear deterrence. This state of affairs has been labeled as organized hypocrisy elsewhere: a situation in which the behavior of nuclear states does not match their public statement on the subject.<sup>82</sup> In large part, this hypocrisy is likely the reason why the nuclear weapon states have maintained the treaty for so long.<sup>83</sup> However, the non-nuclear states are now signaling an aversion to this status quo. In the summer of 2016 they ratified at an overwhelming majority the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The treaty calls for a more sustained effort for the abolishment of nuclear weapons. No nuclear weapons states ratified the treaty. Due to this, it is unlikely it will have a significant impact on disarmament. However, it remains an impressive message to the nuclear states to make good on their NPT commitments. Will this change soon?

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<sup>82</sup> Michael Lipson, "Organized Hypocrisy and the NPT," Draft Paper for Presentation at the American Political Science Association Meeting, September 2005. Cited with permission from the author.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. IPE has a large literature on the importance of exit clauses as mechanisms design to ensure 1) compliance, but also 2) ratification. The current situation with the NPT is reminiscent of this. See Krzysztof J. Pelc, "Seeking Escape: The Use of Escape Clauses in International Trade Agreements," *International Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (2009): 349–68; George W. Downs and David M. Rocke, *Optimal Imperfection?: Domestic Uncertainty and Institutions in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); B. Peter Rosendorff and Helen V. Milner, "The Optimal Design of International Trade Institutions: Uncertainty and Escape," *International Organization* 55, no. 4 (2001): 829–57.

### *The Continued Relevance of Deterrence*

Despite the current ambiguity, proliferation by Russia and modernization by the United States, and despite arguments made in the field that deterrence was a thing of the past, a vestige of the Cold War,<sup>84</sup> the fact is: the practice of nuclear deterrence has become an integral part of the identity of states possessing them. This identity is showcased in the Non-Proliferation Treaty in which they are explicitly recognized as nuclear weapons state. Despite convincing arguments to the contrary,<sup>85</sup> nuclear deterrence has become an integral part of international stability. It is next to impossible for nuclear state to discuss stability, peace, and war prevention without including within the equation nuclear weapons. While arms control and disarmament has taken a back seat with the Trump administration, as it did during the George W. Bush presidency, it will more than likely make a return to form in the next administration. We may return to questions of nuclear reductions, but the objective of denuclearization as it has been articulated has little hope of success as long as deterrence defines the rules of the game.

As such, there has been a fluctuation since the end of the Cold War as to how deterrence should operate, against whom it should operate, and in what way it should operate. But while the rules have been debated, fought over, and reinterpreted, it remains that deterrence is an important part of the security policies of the United States. What remains to be seen is whether the current understanding of deterrence will allow new nuclear powers, or not.

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<sup>84</sup> Frank C. Zagare, "Deterrence Is Dead. Long Live Deterrence," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 23, no. 2 (April 2006): 115–20.

<sup>85</sup> John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); Ward Wilson, *Five Myths about Nuclear Weapons* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).

### 3. Areas of Future Research

This dissertation has briefly touched on the process of normalization following the acquisition of a nuclear weapon. While India became nuclear in 1998, it was not recognized as such by the United States until 2005, and they remained under heavy sanctions until then. By 2005, however, it had been recognized as a restrained and responsible member of the international community. It's past as a proliferator outside of the NPT dismissed and barely referenced anymore. Was this the result of New Delhi's consistent restraint before? It would be an area deserving of further research, and would strengthen the claims made in this dissertation.

With the argument made in this dissertation that general deterrence has become more normative and ruled based, it would be interesting to have another look at the nuclear taboo and the tradition of non-use of nuclear weapons. The argument made by Nina Tannenwald was that deterrence theory could not explain most cases of non-use of nuclear weapons, especially cases that involved non-nuclear states. As such, she posited a normative mechanism in which the bomb has become, overtime, delegitimized.<sup>86</sup> The argument presented here, on the other hand, argues that general deterrence has always been about war prevention and the maintenance of stability. As such, nuclear powered states would not have attacked non-nuclear states with nuclear weapons in the first place. It is simply outside of the rules. Revisiting cases where the nuclear taboo was cited as stopping nuclear use would provide interesting insights as to the relevance of the practice of deterrence when it comes to nuclear non-use.

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<sup>86</sup> Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007),

Moreover, the argument presented here support the argument made by T.V. Paul for the tradition of non-use.<sup>87</sup> While the tradition does rely on a normative aspect which prohibits the use of the bomb, reputation is at the heart of the theory. It is, in part, the fear of accruing a negative reputation that constrain states in their nuclear use. The reputation for restraint offers an important precision to T.V. Paul's argument: it's not only the fear of opening the door to more use which explains why we have not seen nuclear attacks, but also how the game is played and the identity it creates in nuclear state. Revisiting the question would be worthwhile.

Additionally, there is some tension in the argument presented here on whether norms of nonproliferation, or the practice of deterrence, is responsible for the counterproliferation strategies of the United States in the post-Cold War. The question is whether the norm of nonproliferation has changed the practice of deterrence, or whether the practice of deterrence has led to more stringent nonproliferation norms. Alternatively, there is a potential interaction between the two. As such, exploring in more depth this issue would provide interesting qualification to the argument presented in this dissertation.

Moreover, the concept of competency could be elaborated upon. The argument I presented has mainly focused on the competent use of general deterrence: actions which supports war prevention, such as non-expansionist policies and engagement in arms control. However, the issue of competency in immediate deterrence has not been fully unpacked. We often hear of the three Cs of deterrence: communication, capability, and credibility. But is there a fourth C, competency? Are there ways for threats to be made more efficient due to the timing with which they are delivered? The targets they propose to hit? The means of communication, or the oratorical skills of

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<sup>87</sup> Paul, *The Tradition of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons*.



the actor delivering the deterrent threat? An inductive study into cases of deterrence failure and success would strengthen the concept of competency and highlight exactly what it is for immediate deterrence.

Finally, this dissertation had argued that there is a loose hierarchy of reputation when it comes to restraint and nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons states who recognize nascent nuclear powers has restrained provide them with some credibility. This was observed in the case of China for example when the Soviet Union lobbied extensively in favor of its ally. Future research could elaborate on this premise and show the multilaterality of the concept. Was the United States harsher on Iran because two of its allies, Saudi Arabia and Israel, argued Iran has not been, and would not be, restrained in the future? Would we see different U.S. nonproliferation policies in this case if both Riyadh and Jerusalem had been less in disfavor of a nuclear Tehran? In another case, China did lobby in favor of Pakistan as it nuclearized. This aspect was not too present in the case as U.S. decision makers did not discuss it much in the available document. However, did it have an impact?

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