

Uses of nuclear ambiguity

to assemble a nuclear force of ten plus; third, engaging in open advocacy of nuclear weapons by the government concerned; fourth, demonstrating nuclear weapons capability and the future potential by nuclear testing; and fifth, publicly establishing a nuclear force.

For a near-nuclear state the movement along the steps is not necessarily phasal or unidirectional. In fact, the near-nuclear states on the short list have all crossed the first, but it is debatable whether all have crossed the second threshold. None has crossed the third, although at least one (Israel) has publicized hints to that effect. Only one near-nuclear weapon state has crossed the fourth step (India), but it failed to test continually and extensively and its posture is presently located in the first and second steps. None of the near nuclear states on the short list has crossed the fifth step.

Misinformation, misunderstanding and NPT strategy

There is a view that anti-proliferation advocacy and the use of multilateral diplomacy to shape American (and Soviet) anti-proliferation posture existed in the 1960s not because a near-nuclear Third World state was about to acquire nuclear arms, but because the near-nuclear state had no immediate intention and no strategic necessity to do so. Government experts knew that there was, and is, no definitive evidence of movement towards arms in any of our short list of near-nuclear states. They knew that nuclear arms acquisitions could be costly to the new nuclear weapon state, and that the benefits of nuclear ambiguity to a near-nuclear state could be lost. And in any case, if some of the near-nuclear states acquired nuclear arms the impact on the security of the superpowers would be marginal.

In fact, the initial anti-proliferation advocacy — as expressed in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) — was intended to shape a superpower consensus that centred on denial of national nuclear arms to the Federal Republic of Germany. The rest of the treaty was meant to get something for nothing, hence its universalist cast. At best in its initial condition the NPT was intended to “scare the hell out of the audience” (hence scenarios of unstable, irresponsible nuclear states), and it was against the development of potentially powerful states in the secondary zones of international conflict. The intention was to freeze the nuclear power development of the secondary powers, and to institute international controls that would provide valuable intelligence about the nuclear planning of select secondary powers in conflict zones. (It is noteworthy that all near-nuclear states on the short list see themselves as upwardly mobile in the international system and hence are potential threats to the international position of the superpowers and their allies.)

In fact, the NPT strategy backfired. It scared the Western audiences — its own people — into thinking of proliferation as imminent, inevitable and de-stabilizing. The consequences of a radicalized international environment are noteworthy. Consider the policy position and the decision structure of a near-nuclear state before 1968, and after the NPT regime was established. Before 1968, generally speaking, the nuclear option of the near-nuclear (India, Israel, South Africa and Argentina) was active but hidden. There was strong elite and public support for nuclear disarmament, and a belief in the possibility and desirability of nuclear disarmament and arms reduction. By contrast the NPT regime radicalized the external policy and the deci-

sion-structure of a near-nuclear state. Not only did the short list of near-nuclears increase in size, but the policy of the hard-core near-nuclears underwent radical change.

Pro-explosion and pro-nuclear arms lobbies emerged publicly in opposition to the existing anti-bomb lobby that earlier enjoyed popular support. The impact on the house debates was irreversible. In-house disarmers were compromised or neutralized by the cynical use of Article IV of the NPT by the USA and USSR and their cohorts. (The NPT Article promised “good faith” disarmament negotiations.) Government bureaus that lobbied for disarmament before 1968 were converted into lobbies of autonomous nuclear options. In effect they sought disarmament-control for themselves, and disarmament for their enemies. The earlier belief in the possibility and desirability of disarmament became a victim of the new societal and government orientation.

The NPT was a mistake because, if the intention was to institute effective international controls against undesirable military development of nuclear power in the secondary zones of international conflict, if the intention was to achieve intelligence on the cheap under the guise of international safeguards, it failed. The anti-proliferators ended up seeing the extension of the practice of nuclear ambiguity and the development of nuclear options in several secondary powers.

Active, imminent and latent proliferation

A historical perspective about proliferation helps us make distinctions among three different types of proliferation. *Active* (vertical) proliferation is relevant in East-West relations and for the disarmers. *Imminent* (imagined) proliferation is a problem in Western thinking. It requires rethinking about the real nature of proliferation decision-making by secondary powers in secondary zones of conflict. *Latent* (horizontal) proliferation, however, is a real and a novel development. It is not essentially a copy of active proliferation because the strategic perceptions and the strategic setting in the world beyond alliances is substantially different from that of Northern alliance members. In latent proliferation there are several creative uses of nuclear ambiguity. Active proliferation has been taking place since 1945 to the present. Imminent proliferation does not materialize but it has been the basis of anti-proliferation efforts. Latent proliferation has occurred since the 1940s but its future evolution is not predictable. As such the question of stability or instability of nuclear arms in the hard-core near-nuclear cases (Israel, South Africa, India and Argentina) is presently academic and irrelevant. Table 1 outlines the three types of proliferation.

Future of proliferation

To forecast proliferation in the 1980s, a distinction should be made between near-nuclear states that have an incentive to maintain a nuclear policy of “deep back ground” or “deep latency,” and near-nuclear states whose nuclear policy seeks to utilize nuclear power to correct the regional balance of power. Accordingly, the nuclear program of South Africa should be placed in the category of “deep latency.” (Qualifications are in order about Iraq. Its motivation to “go nuclear” may be high but its capability to do so is questionable after the neutralization of the Baghdad facility by Israel.) At present South Africa possesses the military, economic, political and sub rosa means