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Thru: General Manager

PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Enclosed for your information are the main conclusions reached in the final version of the Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE). The full text of the SNIE, carrying higher classifications and controls, is available in ISA.

James G. Poor, Director
Division of International
Security Affairs

Enclosure:
DCI NIO 1945-74, dtd 9/4/74
(S/NFD)

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James G. Poor

[redacted]

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CIA

Memorandum

Prospects for Further Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

[redacted]

DCI NIO 1945/74
4 September 1974
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Prospects for Further Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

1. In the 1980s, the production of nuclear weapons will be within the technological and economic capabilities of many countries. The once formidable barriers to development of nuclear weapons by nations of middling size and resources have steadily diminished over time. They will continue to shrink in the years ahead as plutonium, enriched uranium, and technology become more widely spread. Some countries will consider nuclear weapons largely in terms of military utility. The principal determinant of the extent of nuclear weapons proliferation in coming years will, however, be political considerations—including the policies of the superpowers with regard to proliferation, the policies of suppliers of nuclear materials and technology, and regional ambitions and tensions.

[redacted]

3. We believe that Israel already has produced nuclear weapons. Our judgment is based on Israeli acquisition of large quantities of uranium, partly by clandestine means; the ambiguous nature of Israeli efforts in the field of uranium enrichment; and Israel's large investment in a costly missile system designed to accommodate nuclear warheads. We do not expect the Israelis to provide confirmation of widespread suspicions of their capability, either by nuclear testing or by threats of use, short of a grave threat to the nation's existence. Future emphasis is likely to be on improving weapon designs, manufacturing missiles more capable in terms of distance and accuracy than the existing 260-mile Jericho, and acquiring or perfecting weapons for aircraft delivery.

4. Several other countries—including West Germany, Sweden, Canada and Italy—could have fabricated nuclear devices more easily, from a technological and financial point of view, than India and Israel.

They have refrained, and they are unlikely to be much influenced by weapons acquisition in countries like India. The inhibitions facing each of them are strong. In all, popular opinion is strongly opposed to the acquisition of nuclear weapons, both on emotional grounds and because such weapons would entail substantial risks—of provoking attack, of offending vital allies and of destroying existing mutual security arrangements. It would require very fundamental changes, such as the breakup of major defense alliances accompanied by a substantial increase in strife and tension throughout the world, to induce countries like West Germany, Sweden, Canada and Italy to exercise their near-term capability.

5. The Director of Central Intelligence, the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence representing the Central Intelligence Agency, the Director of Intelligence and Research representing the Department of State, the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army believe that Japan's situation is very similar to that of the other advanced Western nations just mentioned. They believe Japan would not embark on a program of nuclear weapons development in the absence of a major adverse shift in great power relationships which presented Japan with a clearcut threat to its security. The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force and the Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy, however, see a strong chance that Japan's leaders will conclude that they must have nuclear weapons if they are to achieve their national objectives in the developing Asian power balance. Such a decision could come in the early 1980s. It would likely be made even sooner if there is any further proliferation of nuclear weapons, or global permissiveness regarding such activity. These developments would hasten erosion of traditional Japanese opposition to a nuclear weapons course and permit Tokyo to cross that threshold earlier in the interests of national security. Any concurrent deterioration of Japanese relations with the Communist powers or a further decline in the credibility of US defense guarantees would, in their view, further accelerate the pace of nuclear weapons development by Japan.

6. Less sweeping changes could induce one or another of the less advanced nations to mount the sort of nuclear effort India and Israel have made. Some states, such as the Republic of China, Argentina and South Africa, will be much influenced in their decisions not only by the

general course of proliferation but by such factors as growing feelings of isolation and helplessness, perceptions of major military threat and desires for regional prestige. In each of these cases, any weapons capability probably would be small and delivery probably would depend on aircraft, though there is some possibility that one or another might be able to purchase a nuclear-capable missile system from a foreign supplier.

7. Taipei conducts its small nuclear program with a weapon option clearly in mind, and it will be in a position to fabricate a nuclear device after five years or so. Taipei's role in the world is changing radically, and concern over the possibility of complete isolation is mounting. Its decisions will be much influenced by US policies in two key areas—support for the island's security and attitudes about the possibility of a nuclear-armed Taiwan. Taipei's present course probably is leading it toward development of nuclear weapons.

8. Argentina's small nuclear program is being pursued vigorously with an eye toward independence of foreign suppliers. It probably will provide the basis for a nuclear weapons capability in the early 1980s. Argentina has no apparent military need for nuclear weapons, but there is strong desire for them in some quarters as a way to augment Argentina's power vis-a-vis Brazil. Over time, in the absence of strong international pressures that stop nuclear weapons acquisition elsewhere, there is an even chance that Argentina will choose to join the nuclear club in a small way.

[redacted]

deposits, and it apparently has developed a technology for enriching uranium that could be used for producing weapons-grade material. South Africa probably would go forward with a nuclear weapons program if it saw a serious threat from African neighbors beginning to emerge. So serious a threat is highly unlikely in the 1970s.

10. Other candidate countries—Spain, Iran, Egypt, Pakistan, Brazil and South Korea—would need at least a decade to carry out a nuclear weapons development program. One or another might detonate a demonstrative device earlier—perhaps considerably earlier by using purchased materials or by obtaining extensive foreign assistance. Each of

these countries is subject to a different set of motivations and pressures. Some have enemies already making efforts in the nuclear weapons field; all will be concerned with such efforts on the part of neighbors or potential antagonists. Some will be interested in nuclear weapons for their presumed prestige value. Unless countries opposed to proliferation—particularly the US and the USSR—find ways to stop the spread of nuclear weapons programs before these candidate countries are in a position to go forward, at least some of them will be motivated to join the nuclear race. The strongest impulses will probably be felt by Pakistan and Iran; Egypt and Brazil now appear to fall into a second category of likelihood.

11. France, India and Israel, while unlikely to foster proliferation as a matter of national policy, probably will prove susceptible to the lure of the economic and political advantages to be gained from exporting materials, technology and equipment relevant to nuclear weapons programs. And most potential proliferators are on good terms with one or all of them.

12. It is theoretically possible for a country capable of developing a nuclear weapon to do so covertly, up to the test of a first device. And a test is not absolutely necessary. In practice, indications of such a program are virtually certain to reach the outside world. But most countries will seek to maintain the tightest possible security with regard to any military nuclear activities, and information is likely to be intermittent and inconclusive. Indigenous ballistic missile delivery systems, on the other hand, would be readily identifiable early in the development cycle, and missile systems obtained abroad would not remain undetected for any significant period.

13. Governments backward in the nuclear field and anxious to acquire a token capability quickly are more likely to try to steal weapons than fissionable materials, despite the fact that the latter are less well protected. A country capable of developing and producing its own nuclear device is highly unlikely to try to steal weapons, but one might seek fissionable materials by theft or diversion. Competently done, diversion might go undetected.

14. Terrorists might attempt theft of either weapons or fissionable materials. They could see the latter as useful for terror or blackmail purposes even if they had no intention of going on to fabricate weapons.