



**HARVARD Kennedy School**  
JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

# **Beyond Optimism and Pessimism: The Differential Effects of Nuclear Proliferation**

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# Beyond Optimism and Pessimism

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT -----	iii
INTRODUCTION -----	1
THE DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTS OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION -----	5
DEFINING POWER PROJECTION -----	5
WHY MORE IS EVEN WORSE FOR POWER-PROJECTING STATES -----	7
WHY MORE CAN BE BETTER FOR NON-POWER-PROJECTING STATES -----	22
COUNTERARGUMENTS -----	28
CONSIDERING COUNTEREXAMPLES -----	28
FORCE OR FRIENDSHIP? -----	29
POWER OR POSSESSION? -----	31
CONCLUSION -----	32
ABOUT THE AUTHOR -----	36
ABOUT THE MANAGING THE ATOM PROJECT -----	37

**ABSTRACT**

What is the effect of the spread of nuclear weapons on international politics? The scholarly debate pits proliferation optimists, who claim that “more may be better,” against proliferation pessimists, who argue that “more will be worse.” These scholars focus on the aggregate effects of nuclear proliferation, but never explicitly consider the differential effects of the spread of nuclear weapons. In other words, they do not examine whether nuclear proliferation may threaten some states more than others. I propose a theory of nuclear proliferation that examines the differential effects of nuclear proliferation. I argue that the threat nuclear proliferation poses to a particular state depends on that state’s ability to project military power. The spread of nuclear weapons is worse for states that have the ability to project conventional military power over a potential nuclear weapon state primarily because nuclear proliferation constrains their conventional military freedom of action. On the other hand, nuclear proliferation is less threatening to, and can sometimes even improve the strategic environment of, states that lack the ability to project power over a potential nuclear weapon state, because the spread of nuclear weapons disproportionately constrains other, more powerful states. This article contributes to our understanding of the consequences of nuclear proliferation and contains important implications for nuclear nonproliferation policy.

# Beyond Optimism and Pessimism: The Differential Effects of Nuclear Proliferation

## INTRODUCTION

What is the effect of the spread of nuclear weapons on international politics? The scholarly debate pits proliferation optimists, who claim that “more may be better,” against proliferation pessimists, who argue that “more will be worse.”<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Waltz, and other “proliferation optimists” argue that “more may be better” because nuclear weapons increase the cost of conflict, deterring leaders from engaging in war against nuclear-armed states.<sup>2</sup> The spread of nuclear weapons, in the optimists’ conception, has a pacifying effect on international politics, leading to international stability. On the other hand, Scott Sagan, and other “proliferation pessimists” argue that “more will be worse” because more nuclear weapons in the hands of more states increases the chance of preventive wars, crisis instability, and accidental nuclear detonation.<sup>3</sup> According to the pessimists, nuclear proliferation contributes to greater levels of international instability.

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<sup>1</sup> Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> See e.g., Kenneth N. Waltz, “More May Be Better,” in Sagan and Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill Inc., 1979); John J. Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 5-56; John J. Mearsheimer, “The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 50-66; Steven Van Evera, “Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Winter 1990/91), pp. 7-57; John Lewis Gaddis, “The Long Peace,” *International Security*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Spring 1986), pp. 99-142; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and William. H. Riker, “An Assessment of the Merits of Selective Nuclear Proliferation,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (June 1982), pp. 283-306; David J. Karl, “Proliferation Pessimism and Emerging Nuclear Powers,” *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3. (Winter 1996-1997), pp. 87-119; Jordan Seng, “Less is More: Command and Control Advantages of Minor Nuclear States,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Summer 1997), pp. 50-92; Devin T. Hagerty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation: Lessons from South Asia* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> See e.g., Scott D. Sagan, “More Will Be Worse,” in Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*; Scott D. Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Bruce G. Blair, *The Logic of Accidental Nuclear War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings University Press, 1993); Bruce G. Blair, “Nuclear Inadvertence: Theory and Evidence,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Spring 1994), pp. 494–500; Peter Douglas Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians: Civilian Control of Nuclear Weapons in the United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); Peter Douglas Feaver, “The Politics of Inadvertence,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Spring 1994), pp. 501–508; Steven E. Miller, “The Case against a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 67-80; Peter R. Lavoy, “The Strategic Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 4, No.4 (Summer 1995), pp. 695–753; Peter Douglas Feaver, “Neoptimists and the Enduring Problem of Nuclear Proliferation,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Summer 1997), pp. 126-136; Lyle J. Goldstein, *Preventive Attack and Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (Stanford University Press, 2006); Jeffrey W. Knopf, “Recasting the Optimism/Pessimism Debate,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Autumn

The optimism/pessimism debate has done much to illuminate our understanding of the consequences of the spread of nuclear weapons. The existing scholarship, however, has been preoccupied with the study of the aggregate effects of nuclear proliferation. In particular, these scholars have examined whether nuclear proliferation increases or decreases the stability of international and regional systems. For this reason, the existing scholarship has devoted less attention to the differential effects of nuclear proliferation. In other words, optimists and pessimists do not explicitly examine whether nuclear proliferation may differentially affect different types of states. Waltz and Sagan tangle over whether the spread of nuclear weapons is good or bad for international and regional systems as a whole, but never seriously consider whether nuclear proliferation may be good for some states and bad for others.

To contribute to our understanding of the consequences of the spread of nuclear weapons, this article proposes a theory of nuclear proliferation that examines the differential effects of nuclear proliferation. I argue that nuclear proliferation threatens some states more than others and that the threat posed by nuclear proliferation depends on a state's ability to project military power. States that have the ability to project military power over a particular target state, states that I call "power-projecting states," incur many costs and accrue few benefits when that target state acquires nuclear weapons.<sup>4</sup> Power-projecting states include global-power-projecting states, states that can use conventional military force against every other state in the international system, and local-power-projecting states, states that can project power against neighboring, and perhaps other regional, states. I claim that states are threatened by nuclear proliferation to states over which they can project power largely because the spread of nuclear weapons constrains their conventional military freedom of action. Of course, there are other potential negative consequences of nuclear proliferation, including the low-probability, high-consequence threat of nuclear war. I argue, however, that leaders in power-projecting states are primarily concerned that nuclear proliferation will: deter them from using military force to secure their interests, reduce the effectiveness of their coercive diplomacy, trigger regional instability that could require costly intervention, weaken the integrity of their alliance structures, and set off further nuclear proliferation within their spheres of influence.

On the other hand, states that lack the ability to project military power over a particular target state, states that I call "non-power-projecting states," incur fewer strategic costs and even have the potential to accrue strategic benefits when that target state acquires nuclear weapons. Because they lack the advantages afforded by a viable military option, the spread of nuclear weapons does not further undermine their strategic position. Their relative weakness precludes them from: using military force to secure their interests, using military coercion as a tool of diplomacy, intervening in regional crises, extending security guarantees as a means to cement their alliance structures, or needing to worry about further nuclear proliferation beyond their own limited spheres of influence. For these reasons, non-power-projecting states are, on average, less threatened by nuclear proliferation.

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2002), pp. 41-96; Dinshaw Mistry, "Tempering Optimism about Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia," *Security Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (January 2009), p. 148-182.

<sup>4</sup> A detailed definition of power-projecting states and non-power-projecting states will be provided in the next section.

Moreover, the spread of nuclear weapons can sometimes even improve the strategic environment of non-power-projecting states, even if they lack nuclear weapons themselves, because the spread of nuclear weapons disproportionately constrains other, more powerful states. I will show that non-power-projecting states have even promoted nuclear proliferation to states over which they lacked the ability to project power with the intent of constraining other states that had the ability to project power over those target states.

This is not to say that non-power-projecting states are never threatened by nuclear proliferation, nor is to argue that they always benefit as nuclear weapons spread. The risk of catastrophic nuclear war is a threat to the entire planet, which gives all states good reason to be wary of the spread of nuclear weapons. Indeed, many small powers, including Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand, have historically opposed the global spread of nuclear weapons. Rather, the argument presented here is more nuanced. Non-power-projecting states are not likely to benefit as nuclear weapons spread, but they are more likely to benefit than are power-projecting states. The structural position of power-projecting states dictates that they will be threatened as nuclear weapons spread, but the structural position of non-power-projecting states is less determinate. Non-power-projecting states will be less threatened by nuclear proliferation and will be more likely to benefit from it.

This power-based theory provides a better account of the differential effects of nuclear proliferation than alternative explanations based on political relationships or nuclear possession. Whether nuclear weapons spread to friends or foes clearly shapes the nature and the degree of the proliferation threat. But, I will also show that a state's political relationship with the new nuclear weapon state is less important than a state's power-projection capability in determining whether nuclear proliferation will advantage or disadvantage a state's security. While it is true that the United States is more threatened by nuclear weapons in North Korea than it would be by a Japanese nuclear arsenal, it is also the case that the United States, a global-power-projecting state, is threatened by, and opposes, nuclear proliferation in both states. Indeed, one of the principal reasons that U.S. officials oppose nuclear proliferation in North Korea is because they fear that Japan might acquire nuclear weapons in response.

Furthermore, I demonstrate that the threat that a state faces as nuclear weapons spread does not depend primarily on whether the state itself possesses nuclear weapons. Some countries that have nuclear weapons are threatened by nuclear proliferation to additional countries, and others are advantaged by it. In order to understand the degree to which a nuclear weapon state will be threatened by further nuclear proliferation, it is necessary to examine its ability to project power over the potential nuclear proliferators.

This is not an article about why some countries, but not others, build nuclear weapons, although, the argument of this article contains implications for this related issue.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> On the causes of nuclear proliferation, see e.g., Scott D. Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Winter 1996/97), pp. 54-86; Etel Solingen, "The Political Economy of Nuclear Restraint," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall 1994), pp. 126-169; Jacques E.C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Sonali Singh and Christopher R. Way, "The Correlates of Nuclear Proliferation: A Quantitative Test," *Journal of Conflict*

If nuclear proliferation constrains powerful states, we should expect weak states to seek nuclear weapons as a means of deterring powerful rivals. Indeed, there is much evidence to support the idea that states in threatening security environments are more likely to build nuclear weapons than their neighbors in more pacific regions.<sup>6</sup> There are, of course, many weak states that have not pursued nuclear weapons programs. Some of these countries have not developed nuclear weapons because they lacked the technical capability, or were unable to identify a willing foreign supplier.<sup>7</sup> Others have had their security concerns partially assuaged by promises of military protection from more powerful states.<sup>8</sup> More importantly, however, while scholars have extensively analyzed why countries build nuclear weapons, there has been very little research on the question addressed in this article: what determines whether, and the degree to which, different types of states are threatened as nuclear weapons spread?

By moving beyond the optimism and pessimism debate, this article makes a number of contributions to our theoretical understanding of nuclear proliferation. First, this article demonstrates that nuclear proliferation has differential effects. Sagan argues that the spread of nuclear weapons is bad, Waltz argues that it is good, and this article sets out the argument that it depends: the spread of nuclear weapons is bad for power-projecting states and can be good for non-power-projecting states. This novel approach promises to reinvigorate the scholarly study of the consequences of nuclear proliferation by establishing a research agenda on the differential effects of nuclear proliferation. Future studies can examine the factors, other than power projection, that shape the degree to which states will be threatened by the spread of nuclear weapons.

Second, explaining the differential effects of nuclear proliferation is the first step in developing a theory to explain variation in state responses to nuclear proliferation in other states.<sup>9</sup> Empirically, we see that states respond very differently to the prospect of nuclear proliferation in other states. At one extreme, states are willing to use military force to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. At the other extreme, states provide sensitive nuclear assistance to help additional states acquire the bomb. Without a better understanding of the conditions under which nuclear proliferation will positively or negatively influence the security environments of different types of states, we cannot begin to explain why states

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*Resolution*, Vol. 48, No. 6 (December 2004), pp. 859-885; Dong-Joon Jo and Erik Gartzke, "Determinants of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation: A Quantitative Model," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (February 2007), pp. 167-194; Matthew Kroenig, "Importing the Bomb: Sensitive Nuclear Assistance and Nuclear Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (April 2009), pp. 161-180.

<sup>6</sup> See e.g., Sonali Singh and Christopher R. Way, "The Correlates of Nuclear Proliferation," and Dong-Joon Jo and Erik Gartzke, "Determinants of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation: A Quantitative Model."

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Kroenig, "Importing the Bomb."

<sup>8</sup> Sonali Singh and Christopher R. Way, "The Correlates of Nuclear Proliferation."

<sup>9</sup> For examinations of how countries respond *after* another country has acquired nuclear weapons, see Steve E. Miller, "Assistance to Newly Proliferating Nations," in Robert D. Blackwill and Albert Carnesale, eds., *New Nuclear Nations: Consequences for U.S. Policy* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994), pp. 97-131; Peter Douglas Feaver and Emerson M.S. Niou, "Managing Nuclear Proliferation: Condemn, Strike, or Assist", *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer, 1996), pp. 209-233.



support or oppose the spread of nuclear weapons in particular cases. If the argument of this article is correct, a state's ability to project power over a particular state should be an important factor determining whether, and the degree to which, a state will oppose nuclear proliferation to that state.

Finally, the focus of this research is well-suited to meet the demands of nuclear nonproliferation policymakers. Government officials do not make policy with the primary aim of contributing to the stability of the international system; rather, they pursue policies that will promote the interests of their own state.<sup>10</sup> This article explains the nature of the threat that nuclear proliferation poses to different types of states, helping intelligence analysts and policymakers to better understand the effects of nuclear proliferation on their own security environment, and to grasp how other key states may respond to important nuclear proliferation issues.

The remainder of the article is organized into three main sections. The first section presents the argument and supporting evidence. It demonstrates that the costs of the spread of nuclear weapons are concentrated on power-projecting states. The section will then proceed to show that non-power-projecting states are less threatened by nuclear proliferation and, in certain circumstances, can benefit from it. The second section addresses potential counterarguments. The third section concludes with a consideration of the implications of this argument for the scholarly nuclear proliferation literature and provides recommendations for nuclear nonproliferation policy.

## **THE DIFFERENTIAL EFFECTS OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION**

This section presents a theory of the differential effects of nuclear proliferation. I begin by providing definitions for key terms. Next, I present a theoretical argument and empirical evidence that demonstrates the effects of nuclear proliferation on the strategic environment of power-projecting states. Finally, I examine the strategic effects of nuclear proliferation on non-power-projecting states.

### ***DEFINING POWER PROJECTION***

Power-projecting states are states that have the ability to fight a full-scale, conventional, military, ground war on the territory of a potential target state. Non-power-projecting states are states that lack this capability. It is important to emphasize that the state must have the ability to fight a full-scale war on the target state's soil. To project power, a state does not necessarily require the ability to decisively win a military conflict, but it must at least be able to put up a serious fight. The ability to move a token contingent of forces into another country does not constitute a force-projection capability. Similarly, the ability to bomb a state alone, without a corresponding ability to put boots on the ground in that state's territory, is not a sufficient power-projection capability.<sup>11</sup> This conceptualization of power

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<sup>10</sup> Of course, states may sometimes have an interest in promoting international stability, but policymakers do not generally view international stability as a good in and of itself that trumps the national interest.

<sup>11</sup> I follow other theorists of international relations in emphasizing the importance of ground forces. For instance, according to John Mearsheimer, "armies are the central ingredient of military power, because they are the principal instrument for conquering and controlling territory—the paramount

cannot be calculated by simply aggregating and comparing standard measures of power such as GDP, military spending, or population size. These measures provide a useful starting point, but power projection can only be assessed through careful military analysis. What matters is whether the state in question possesses the military capabilities, force posture, and geographical position that would allow it to invade a particular state at a particular time in the face of a hostile defense.

It is also very important to emphasize that this is a relative definition of power. Because power-projection capability depends on a state's ability to project power over a particular target state, power-projection capability can only be assessed in the context of a dyadic relationship. Some states may be able to project power over every other state in the entire international system, but most states will have the ability to project power over some states, but not others.

For this reason, I distinguish between two different types of power-projecting states. Global-power-projecting states are states that have the ability to project power over every other state in the international system. The United States since 1945 and the Soviet Union during the Cold War are global power-projecting states. These countries enjoy the ability to use large-scale military force against every state in the international system and are, thus, threatened by nuclear proliferation anywhere on the globe.

Local-power-projecting states are states that have the ability to project power against neighboring states, and, perhaps, other states in their geographical region.<sup>12</sup> Many states have the ability to project power against neighboring states. Examples of local-power-projecting states include: India in relation to Pakistan, Egypt vis-à-vis Israel, Turkey and Iran, and South Korea and North Korea, and all of these dyads in reverse. Local-power-projecting states fear nuclear proliferation to their neighbors for the very same reasons that global-power-projecting states are threatened by nuclear proliferation anywhere.

Non-power-projecting states are states that lack the ability to project power against a potential target state for one of two reasons. First, a state may be a non-power-projecting state simply because it too weak to fight a full-scale conventional military war, even against nearby states. Somalia, Jamaica, and other weak states fit this category. Second, and more importantly, local-power-projecting states are non-power-projecting states in relation to states outside of their own geographical regions. For example, while Pakistan is a power-projecting state in relation to India, it is a non-power-projecting state against Libya. Similarly, South Korea can project power against North Korea, but it could not plausibly invade Argentina.

Even countries often considered to be great powers are non-power projecting states in relation to most states in the international system. For example, India can project power

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political objective in a world of territorial states." *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: WW Norton & Co., 2001) pp. 43.

<sup>12</sup> In common parlance, the term power-projection capability often implies that a state has the ability to move military forces great distances. I do not use power projection in this way. Rather, as defined here, a state has the ability to project power against another state if it can invade and fight a full-scale conventional war against that state, even if the target state is a neighboring state.

against Pakistan, but could not plausibly invade Taiwan. China is a power-projecting state in relation to many states on its border, including Vietnam, but is a non-power-projecting state in relation to most countries outside of East Asia. Non-power-projecting states lack the ability to use military force against particular target states and are less threatened when those target states acquire nuclear weapons.

### ***WHY MORE IS EVEN WORSE FOR POWER-PROJECTING STATES***

The spread of nuclear weapons threatens power-projecting states primarily because it constrains their conventional military power. The spread of nuclear weapons to states against which states once had the option to use conventional military force erodes a source of strategic advantage. These strategic costs are not as catastrophic as nuclear war, but they are costs that power-projecting states can count on incurring with near certainty as nuclear weapons spread. Power-projecting states also consider other high-impact, low-probability consequences of nuclear proliferation, such as nuclear war, accidental nuclear detonation, or, in recent years, nuclear terrorism, but power-projecting states are threatened by nuclear proliferation in large part because it constrains their conventional military freedom of action.

To make this case, I will draw primarily on evidence from the U.S. experience with nuclear proliferation for two reasons. First, the United States is a global-power-projecting state and can use force against every other state in the international system.<sup>13</sup> Second, abundant access to declassified and other archival materials provides excellent insight into how U.S. officials assess the threat posed by nuclear proliferation. To demonstrate that the constraining effects of nuclear proliferation extend beyond the United States, this section will also present available evidence from other power-projecting states. The Soviet Union, during the Cold War, was also a global-power-projecting state. I will also provide evidence from local-power-projecting states. Dyads of power-projecting states and potential target states considered here include: Egypt and Israel, India and Pakistan, Turkey and Iran, and South Korea and North Korea.

I will present three types of evidence to illustrate the effects of nuclear proliferation. First, I will provide direct evidence of nuclear proliferation's effects. For example, to demonstrate that nuclear proliferation deters power-projecting states from using military force to their advantage, I will provide evidence of instances in which power-projecting states refrained from using force because they feared possible nuclear retaliation. This type of evidence, when available, provides direct support for my argument about nuclear proliferation's effects. This type of evidence is necessarily limited, however, given the nature of the study. For example, if nuclear proliferation deters power-projecting states from using military force to their advantage, this deterrent effect will often show up in the historical record as a nonevent. To supplement my analysis, therefore, I will also provide evidence of how leaders assessed the threat of nuclear proliferation. Furthermore, I will also present evidence of whether states opposed or supported the spread of nuclear weapons in particular cases. Threat assessments and state responses to proliferation in other states are important observable implications of the theoretical argument. If, for example, nuclear proliferation deters power-projecting states from using military force to their advantage, we should find

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<sup>13</sup> On U.S. force-projection capabilities, see e.g., Barry R. Posen, "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony," *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Summer 2003), pp. 5-46.

evidence in the historical record that leaders in power-projecting states assessed that nuclear proliferation would have a deterrent effect and that they opposed the spread of nuclear weapons for this reason.

### **Deters Military Intervention**

Nuclear weapons in other states deter power-projecting states from using conventional military force to pursue their interests. Power-projecting states can use force in an attempt to reduce the military capabilities, change the policies, or even overthrow the governments, of threatening nonnuclear weapons states. When facing a nuclear power, however, direct military intervention becomes a much less attractive option. Power-projecting states are deterred from using their conventional military power against threatening, nuclear weapon states, constraining their military freedom of action.<sup>14</sup>

Of course, nuclear deterrence may not always work. Nuclear-armed states, like Israel, have been attacked and theories of the stability/instability paradox claim that strategic nuclear deterrence could make the world safe for low-level conflicts.<sup>15</sup> Still, nuclear weapons are widely regarded as having powerful deterrent effects. Even theorists of the stability/instability paradox admit that nuclear weapons impose constraints on the use of conventional military power because, while nuclear weapons may encourage low-level conflict, states could still be deterred from engaging in high-level conventional conflict that could escalate to the nuclear level.<sup>16</sup>

There is direct evidence that power-projecting states have been deterred from using military force by the fear of nuclear retaliation. The Soviet Union's nuclear missiles in Cuba deterred the United States from using military force during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

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<sup>14</sup> On nuclear deterrence theory, see e.g., Bernard Brodie, *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (Manchester, NH: Ayer Co. Pub., 1946); Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959); Morton Halperin, *Limited War in the Nuclear Age* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1963); Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960); Herman Kahn, *On Escalation* (New York: Praeger, 1965); Klaus Knorr and Thornton Read, eds. *Limited Strategic War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962); Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960); Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*; Thomas Schelling and Morton Halperin. *Strategy and Arms Control* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1961); Charles L. Glaser, *Analyzing Strategic Nuclear Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Glenn H. Snyder, "The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror," in Paul Seabury ed., *The Balance of Power* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1965); and Robert Powell, *Nuclear Deterrence Theory: The Search for Credibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> For the original formulation of the stability-instability paradox, see Glenn H. Snyder, "The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror." For empirical examinations of the stability-instability paradox, see S. Paul Kapur, "India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace: Why Nuclear South Asia Is Not like Cold War Europe," *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Fall 2005), pp. 127-152; S. Paul Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); Sumit Ganguly, "Nuclear Stability in South Asia," *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Fall 2008), pp. 45-70; S. Paul Kapur, "Ten Years of Instability in a Nuclear South Asia," *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Fall 2008), pp. 71-94; Robert Rauchhaus, "Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis: A Quantitative Approach," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 53, No. 2, (April 2009), pp. 258-277.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

President Kennedy later explained that just a few missiles in Cuba “had a deterrent effect on us.”<sup>17</sup> Nuclear weapons appear to have induced caution in both the Soviet Union and China during the Sino-Soviet Border War of 1969.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, it appears that nuclear weapons in Pakistan may have deterred India from using large-scale military force against its neighbor in a series of militarized disputes in South Asia.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the fledgling nuclear arsenal in North Korea deters U.S. leaders from seriously considering the use of force against Pyongyang. While it is true that North Korean conventional military forces could also inflict severe costs on the United States and its regional allies, it would be difficult to argue that North Korea’s fledgling nuclear capability does not provide an additional deterrent effect. Indeed, analysts suspect that one reason that the George W. Bush administration did not seriously consider the use of force against North Korea, a state designated by President Bush as a member of the “axis of evil,” was because the United States was deterred by North Korea’s nuclear arsenal.<sup>20</sup> Finally, even in the case that is often cited as a failure of nuclear deterrence, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the Arab states did not attack the Israeli homeland, and had no real intention of doing so, in part because they may have feared retaliation from Israel’s nuclear arsenal.<sup>21</sup> These are a few of the many cases in which nuclear weapons have deterred power-projecting states from using, or seriously contemplating the use of, military force.

The deterrent effects of nuclear weapons are recognized and feared by the leaders of power-projecting states. For example, a 1961 U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff report concluded, “a nuclear China would only weaken Washington’s influence in the region and its capabilities to intervene on behalf of its allies there.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly, a 1963 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) assessed that if China acquired nuclear weapons, “the U.S. would be more reluctant to intervene on the Asian mainland.”<sup>23</sup> This view was shared by President John F. Kennedy, who “feared that even a minimal Chinese nuclear force could prevent U.S. military intervention” in China. Partly for this reason, Kennedy thought that China’s imminent ascendance to the nuclear club was “likely to be historically the most significant and worst event of the 1960s.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 320.

<sup>18</sup> Rajesh M. Basrur, Michael D. Cohen, and Ward Wilson, “Correspondence: Do Small Arsenals Deter?” *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 3, (Winter 2007/2008), pp. 202-214.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> See e.g., Fred Kaplan, “The Unspeakable Truth: What Bush Dares Not Say about North Korea,” *Slate*, January 7, 2003.

<sup>21</sup> On the Yom Kippur War, see e.g., Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter That Transformed the Middle East* (New York: Schocken, 2004).

<sup>22</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*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Winter 2000), pp. 61.

<sup>23</sup> Director of Central Intelligence, Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) 13-2-63, “Communist China’s Advanced Weapons Program,” July 24, 1963, as cited in William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, “Whether to Strangle the Baby in the Cradle,” pp. 66.

<sup>24</sup> James Fetzer, “Clinging to Containment: China Policy,” in Thomas G. Paterson, ed., *Kennedy’s Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-63* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 182, quoted in William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, “Whether to Strangle the Baby in the Cradle,” pp. 61.

U.S.-based analysts have continued to fear the effect of nuclear deterrence on the U.S.'s conventional military might since Kennedy's time. A 1986 Top Secret CIA assessment, *North Korea: Potential for Nuclear Weapons Development*, stated that a nuclear North Korea "would have the effect of deterring a U.S. response to a North Korean attack."<sup>25</sup> As the United States considers the very real possibility that Iran may soon acquire nuclear weapons, U.S. military planners are undoubtedly concluding that one of the primary strategic consequences of an Iranian bomb is that United States will be deterred from using military force against a nuclear-armed Iran.

The recognition that nuclear weapons deter the use of military force is common among other power-projecting states. Egyptian officials were adamantly opposed to nuclear proliferation in neighboring Israel in the 1960s because they believed it would constrain Egypt's conventional military freedom of action. Avner Cohen explains that the Egyptian military assessed, "A soon-to-be-built Israeli nuclear weapon would put the Egyptian military in an inferior position, negating Egypt's conventional superiority."<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, Indian officials opposed nuclear proliferation in Pakistan because they feared that a Pakistani nuclear arsenal would deter an Indian conventional military invasion of Pakistan, undermining Indian security.<sup>27</sup> Indian security strategy in relation to Pakistan had long rested on a conventional military superiority that allowed India the ability to threaten the territorial integrity of Pakistan without the fear of a credible retaliatory threat. But, in the 1980s, Indian officials, including General K. Sundarji, chief of staff of the Indian Army, feared Pakistan's nuclear program primarily because they believed that a nuclear arsenal in Pakistan would deter an Indian conventional attack, undermining India's military advantage.<sup>28</sup>

### **Reduces Effectiveness Of Coercive Diplomacy**

For power-projecting states, nuclear proliferation reduces the effectiveness of coercive diplomacy. Nuclear proliferation not only deters power-projecting states from using military force against adversaries, it undermines the credibility of their threats to use military force. Students of coercive diplomacy maintain that the effectiveness of deterrence and compellence policies hinges on the credibility of their associated threats.<sup>29</sup> Adversaries are unlikely to be influenced by a threat that they believe will never be carried out. As the

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<sup>25</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *North Korea: Potential for Nuclear Weapons Development*, September 1986, p. vi, as quoted in Jeffrey T. Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb*, pp. 347.

<sup>26</sup> Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 265.

<sup>27</sup> See Lieutenant General K. Sundarji, ed., "Effects of Nuclear Asymmetry on Conventional Deterrence," *Combat Papers* (Mhow), no. 1 (April 1981); "Nuclear Weapons in the Third World Context," *Combat Papers* (Mhow), no. 2 (August 1981); George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: the Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 230; Ashley J. Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> On credibility and coercion, see e.g., Robert Powell, *Nuclear Deterrence Theory*; Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*; Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*; Bruce W. Jentleson and Christopher A. Whytock. "Who Won Libya? The Force-Diplomacy Debate and its Implications for Theory and Policy," *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Winter 2006), pp. 47-86; Todd S. Sechser, *Winning without a Fight: Power, Reputation, and Compellent Threats in International Crises*, Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 2007.

spread of nuclear weapons makes it difficult for power-projecting states to use military force, it also reduces their adversaries' estimations of the probability that they will follow through on threats to use force. The presence of nuclear weapons places a limit on how hard leaders in power-projecting states believe they can push in a crisis and, accordingly, power-projecting states limit their aims and means in conflicts with nuclear-armed adversaries. Power-projecting states may be forced to consider the redeployment of military forces and bases beyond the range of the new nuclear weapon state's delivery vehicles to minimize military vulnerability in a crisis. Power-projecting states may also be more likely to capitulate in political conflicts of interest against nuclear-armed powers. As a power-projecting state backs down in confrontations with a new nuclear-armed state, the influence of the new nuclear weapon state is enhanced at the expense of the power-projecting state. Nuclear weapons shift the bargaining space in favor, and increase the strategic influence, of their possessor. At the extreme, the new nuclear weapon state could even become the dominant state in its geographic region.

There is direct evidence that nuclear weapons enhance the bargaining position of their possessors and reduce the coercive advantages otherwise enjoyed by powerful states. In a comprehensive quantitative analysis, Erik Gartzke and Dong Joon-Jo show that nuclear weapons enhance the diplomatic bargaining power of their possessors.<sup>30</sup> In a separate study, Kyle Beardsley and Victor Asal demonstrate that states are less likely to prevail in international disputes when facing nuclear-armed adversaries.<sup>31</sup>

A similar picture emerges when one examines important cases of coercive diplomacy. Scholars have noted, for example, that the United States was much less willing to challenge China's core security interests after Beijing acquired the bomb.<sup>32</sup> In the 1950s, the United States threatened the use of military force against the Chinese mainland in the Korean War and in two Taiwan Straits crises, but direct military challenges became much less frequent against a nuclear-armed China.<sup>33</sup> It is also likely that the U.S. ability to coerce Saddam Hussein in the first Gulf War would have been greatly reduced had Iraq possessed nuclear weapons. In a counterfactual analysis, Barry Posen has argued that the United States could have still gone to war against a nuclear Iraq, but that the United States would have been forced to place greater limits on its war aims and means.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, nuclear proliferation in South Asia has shifted the balance of power and undermined India's strategic influence against its rival Pakistan. As Ashley Tellis writes, the primary effect of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal has been to "significantly circumscribe India's political and military freedom of action...In effect, Pakistan—the traditionally weaker adversary—has now neutralized

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<sup>30</sup> For an analysis of the relationship between nuclear weapons possession and diplomatic influence, see Erik Gartzke and Dong-Joon Jo, "Bargaining, Nuclear Proliferation, and Interstate Disputes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 45, No. 5, (April 2009), pp. 633-652

<sup>31</sup> Kyle Beardsley and Victor Asal, "Winning with the Bomb," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 45, No. 5, (April 2009), pp. 278-301.

<sup>32</sup> Ta Jen Liu, *U.S.-China Relations, 1784-1992* (New York: University Press of America, 2002); Appu K. Soman, *Double-Edged Sword: Nuclear Diplomacy in Unequal Conflicts, the United States and China, 1950-1958* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 2000).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Barry Posen, "U.S. Security Policy in a Nuclear-Armed World (Or: What if Iraq Had Had Nuclear Weapons?)," *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1997), pp. 1-31.

India's conventional and strategic advantages."<sup>35</sup> In addition, nuclear weapons helped to transform Israel from a state that was constantly under the threat of foreign invasion from its more powerful neighbors into a regional superpower, thus undermining some of the coercive advantages previously enjoyed by the conventionally superior Arab states.<sup>36</sup>

Statesmen in power-projecting states recognize that nuclear proliferation could lead to a reduction in their coercive leverage, bargaining power, and regional influence. A 1963 U.S. NIE assessed that a nuclear-armed China "would feel very much stronger and this mood would doubtless be reflected in their approach to conflicts...the tone of Chinese policy would probably become more assertive."<sup>37</sup> In their newfound assertiveness, U.S. analysts feared that a nuclear-armed China would be less willing to concede to U.S. demands and were sure "to exploit nuclear weapons for this end."<sup>38</sup> President Kennedy was convinced that China was "bound to get nuclear weapons, in time, and that from that moment on they will dominate South East Asia."<sup>39</sup> Considering the effect of nuclear proliferation more broadly, the Gilpatric Committee, a special committee set up by President Lyndon B. Johnson to analyze the implications of nuclear proliferation for U.S. foreign policy, assessed that nuclear proliferation could "eventually lead to the withdrawal of U.S. and Soviet forces from regions populated with new nuclear powers." The nuclear arming of China would lead to a reduction of U.S. influence in East Asia which could then "fall under Chicom (Communist China) hegemony."<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, in recent years, U.S. officials and U.S.-based analysts have assessed that nuclear proliferation would lead to constraints on U.S. influence and allow hostile states to gain greater sway in vital strategic regions. The administration of President George W. Bush feared that nuclear proliferation in Iraq could lead to a shift in regional influence. In the run up to the Second Gulf War, President Bush warned that if Saddam Hussein acquired nuclear weapons, he "would be in a position to dominate the Middle East."<sup>41</sup> In 2007, U.S. officials maintained that a nuclear armed-Iran would reduce U.S. leverage, giving Iran greater influence over Middle Eastern politics. Peter Brookes, a U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense in George W. Bush's administration, predicted that a nuclear-armed Tehran would

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<sup>35</sup> Ashley Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>36</sup> On the strategic effects of nuclear proliferation in Israel, see e.g., Michael Karpin, *The Bomb in the Basement: How Israel Went Nuclear and What That Means for the World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), NIE 13-2-63, "Communist China's Advanced Weapons Program," pp. 10, quoted in William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, "Whether to Strangle the Baby in the Cradle," pp. 66.

<sup>38</sup> "China as a Nuclear Power (Some Thoughts prior to the Chinese Test)," author unknown, October 7, 1964, National Security Files (hereafter cited as NSF), Committee on Non-Proliferation, box 5, pp. 2, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as LBJL), quoted in Francis J. Gavin, "Blasts from the Past: Proliferation Lessons from the 1960s," *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Winter 2004/2005), pp. 104.

<sup>39</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, pp. 320.

<sup>40</sup> "Probable Consequences: Permissive or Selective Proliferation," author and date unknown, PPRG, box 11, JFKL, quoted in Francis J. Gavin, "Blasts from the Past," pp. 110.

<sup>41</sup> The White House, "President Bush Outlines Iraqi Threat," October 7, 2002, [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).



become “the predominant state in the Middle East, replacing the U.S. as the region's power broker and lording over its Sunni Arab neighbors.”<sup>42</sup>

Other power-projecting states also assess that nuclear proliferation will reduce their diplomatic advantages and increase the bargaining power of the new nuclear weapon state. The Soviet Union feared that nuclear proliferation in Israel would reduce Moscow's strategic influence in the Middle East.<sup>43</sup> Egypt was adamantly opposed to nuclear proliferation in neighboring Israel in the 1960s because, according to Avner Cohen, Egyptian officials believed that an Israeli bomb would have the effect of “reducing the influence of the Egyptian armed forces.”<sup>44</sup> Presently, Turkey opposes nuclear proliferation in neighboring Iran because they believe that an Iranian bomb would enhance Tehran's coercive bargaining power and regional influence. Mustafa Kibaroglu writes that at present a rough “parity exists between (Iran and Turkey) in geographical location, demographic structure, and military capability” but, “should Iran develop nuclear weapons capability, the balance may tip dramatically in favor of Iran.”<sup>45</sup>

### **Triggers Regional Instability**

Nuclear proliferation can embolden new nuclear states, triggering regional instability that could potentially threaten the interests of power-projecting states and even entrap them in regional disputes. New nuclear weapon states may be more aggressive and this newfound assertiveness can result in regional instability. I define regional instability as a heightened frequency (but not necessarily the intensity) of militarized interstate disputes among states in a given geographical region. The threat that regional instability poses to power-projecting states is different from the concern about international instability expressed by the proliferation pessimists. Pessimists assume that international instability is bad in and of itself – and they may be right. But, power-projecting states have a different concern. They worry that nuclear proliferation will set off regional instability and that, because they have the ability to project power over the new nuclear weapon state, they will be compelled to intervene in a costly conflict. Power-projecting states could feel the need to act as a mediator between nuclear-armed disputants, provide conventional military assistance to one of the parties in the dispute, or because they have the ability to put boots on the ground in the new nuclear state, potentially be drawn into the fighting themselves.

There is direct evidence that nuclear weapons can contribute to regional instability. Robert Rauchhaus has demonstrated that nuclear weapon states are more likely to engage in conflict than nonnuclear weapon states.<sup>46</sup> Michael Horowitz extends this analysis to show that aggressiveness is most pronounced in new nuclear states that have less experience with

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<sup>42</sup> Peter Brookes, “Iran Emboldened: Tehran Seeks to Dominate Middle East Politics,” *Armed Forces Journal*, April 2, 2007.

<sup>43</sup> Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, *Foxbats over Dimona: The Soviets' Nuclear Gamble in the Six-Day War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>44</sup> Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*, p. 265.

<sup>45</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs,” *The Middle East Journal* Vol. 60, No. 2 (Spring 2006), pp. 207-235.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Rauchhaus, “Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis.”

nuclear diplomacy.<sup>47</sup> These related findings are not due to the fact that dispute-prone states are more likely to acquire nuclear weapons; the scholars carefully control for a state's selection into nuclear status. Rather, the findings demonstrate that nuclear weapons increase the frequency with which their possessors participate in militarized disputes. Qualitative studies have also provided supporting evidence of nuclear weapons' potentially destabilizing effects. Research on internal decision-making in Pakistan reveals that Pakistani foreign policymakers may have been emboldened by the acquisition of nuclear weapons, encouraging them to initiate militarized disputes against India.<sup>48</sup>

Proliferation optimists counter that nuclear proliferation should increase regional stability, but the most recent empirical investigations undermine the stronger versions of the optimism argument.<sup>49</sup> While nuclear-armed states may be less likely to experience full-scale war providing some support for the optimist position, the preponderance of evidence suggests that nuclear-armed states are more likely to engage in other types of militarized disputes.<sup>50</sup> This is true whether only one state or all of the contentious actors in a region possess nuclear weapons.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, for the sake of argument, even if nuclear proliferation does have stabilizing effects as optimists argue, as long as regional conflict among nuclear-armed states is possible, the basic argument presented here still holds. This is because power-projecting states may still feel compelled to intervene in the conflicts that do occur. These are conflicts that they perhaps could have avoided had nuclear weapons been absent.

There is direct evidence that regional conflicts involving nuclear powers can encourage power-projecting states to become involved in nuclear disputes. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was reluctant to aid Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur War until Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir threatened that, without U.S. assistance, she might be forced to use nuclear weapons against the Arab armies.<sup>52</sup> In response, Kissinger reversed his decision and provided emergency aid to the Israeli Defense Forces.<sup>53</sup> The Soviet Union also considered a military intervention to help its Arab proxies in the Yom Kippur War, causing the United States to go on nuclear alert, and leading leaders in both Moscow and Washington to consider the very real possibility that a conflict involving a regional nuclear power could spiral into a superpower war.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, in 1999 and 2002, the United States

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<sup>47</sup> Michael Horowitz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons and International Conflict: Does Experience Matter?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 53, No. 2, (April 2009), pp. 234-257.

<sup>48</sup> S. Paul Kapur, "India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace;" S. Paul Kapur, "Ten Years of Instability in a Nuclear South Asia."

<sup>49</sup> For the argument that nuclear weapons have helped to stabilize South Asia, see e.g., Hagerty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation*; Rajesh M. Basrur, Michael D. Cohen, and Ward Wilson, "Correspondence: Do Small Arsenals Deter?" Sumit Ganguly, "Nuclear Stability in South Asia." For an in-depth look at U.S. policy toward a nuclear Pakistan, see e.g., Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

<sup>50</sup> Michael Horowitz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons and International Conflict;" Robert Rauchhaus, "Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis."

<sup>51</sup> Robert Rauchhaus' results hold for both symmetric and asymmetric nuclear dyads.

<sup>52</sup> Seymour Hersh, *The Samson Option*, pp. 225-240.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*.

became caught in diplomatic initiatives to prevent nuclear war in crises between the nuclear-armed countries of India and Pakistan.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, the expectation that powerful states will intervene in conflicts involving a nuclear-armed state is so firmly ingrained in the strategic thinking of national leaders that small nuclear powers actually incorporate it into their strategic doctrines. South Africa's nuclear doctrine envisioned, in the event of an imminent security threat, the detonation of a nuclear weapon, not against the threatening party, but over the Atlantic Ocean in an attempt to jolt the United States into intervening on South Africa's behalf.<sup>56</sup> Israel's nuclear doctrine was also constructed along similar lines. While the Israelis are notoriously silent about the existence and purpose of their nuclear arsenal, Francis Perrin, a French official who assisted in the development of Israel's nuclear program in the 1950s and 1960s, explained that Israel's arsenal was originally aimed "against the Americans, not to launch against America, but to say 'If you don't want to help us in a critical situation, we will require you to help us. Otherwise, we will use our nuclear bombs.'"<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Pakistan's surprise raid on Indian-controlled Kargil in 1999 was motivated partly by the expectation that Pakistan would be able to retain any territory it was able to seize quickly, because Pakistani officials calculated that the United States would never allow an extended conflict in nuclear South Asia.<sup>58</sup>

For these reasons, power-projecting states worry about the effect of nuclear proliferation on regional stability. U.S. officials feared that nuclear proliferation in Israel could embolden Israel against its Arab enemies, or entice Arab states to launch a preventive military strike on Israel's nuclear arsenal. In a 1963 NIE on Israel's nascent nuclear program, the consensus view of the U.S. intelligence community was that if Israel acquired nuclear weapons, "Israel's policy toward its neighbors would become more rather than less tough...it would seek to exploit the psychological advantage of its nuclear capability to intimidate the Arabs."<sup>59</sup> President Kennedy concurred. In a letter to Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, Kennedy wrote that Israel should abandon its nuclear program because Israel's "development of such (nuclear) weapons would dangerously threaten the stability of the area."<sup>60</sup> Similarly, in the case of China's nuclear program, U.S. officials believed that a nuclear-armed China would "be more willing to take risks in military probing operations because of an overoptimistic assessment of its psychological advantage."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> S. Paul Kapur, "India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace;" Celia W. Dugger, "The Kashmir Brink," *The New York Times*, June 20, 2002.

<sup>56</sup> Mitchell Reiss, *Bridled Ambition: Why Countries Constrain their Nuclear Capabilities* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 15-16.

<sup>57</sup> Seymour Hersh, *The Samson Option*, p. 40.

<sup>58</sup> S. Paul Kapur, "India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace."

<sup>59</sup> CIA, Office of National Estimate, Memorandum for the Director, Sherman Kent, "Consequences of Israeli Acquisition of Nuclear Capability," March 6, 1963, 1, NSF Box 118, John F. Kennedy Library.

<sup>60</sup> Letter, Kennedy to Ben Gurion, in State Department Deptel 780 (Tel Aviv), May 4, 1963, NSF, Box 119a, John F. Kennedy Library.

<sup>61</sup> William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, "Whether to Strangle the Baby in the Cradle," pp. 66

More recently, U.S. officials have continued to fear the effect of nuclear proliferation on regional stability. In a 1986 Top Secret CIA Assessment, U.S. intelligence analysts predicted that a nuclear North Korea would have “a free hand to conduct paramilitary operations without provoking a response.”<sup>62</sup> Similarly, a U.S. expert testified before Congress in 2006 that “A nuclear arsenal in the hands of Iran’s current theocratic regime will be a source of both regional and global instability.”<sup>63</sup>

U.S. officials assessed that regional instability set off by nuclear proliferation could compel them to intervene directly in regional conflicts. In the early 1960s, U.S. officials speculated that Israel could potentially leverage its nuclear arsenal to compel the United States to intervene on its behalf in Middle Eastern crises.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, in 1965, Henry Rowen, an official in the Department of Defense, assessed that if India acquired nuclear weapons, it could lead to a conflict in South Asia “with a fair chance of spreading and involving the United States.”<sup>65</sup> At the time of writing, U.S. defense strategists are planning for the possibility that the United States may be compelled to intervene in regional conflicts involving a nuclear-armed Iran or North Korea and their neighbors.<sup>66</sup>

Leaders in power-projecting states also fear that regional instability set off by nuclear proliferation could entrap power-projecting states in a great power war. Other power-projecting states, facing a mirror-image situation, may feel compelled to intervene in a crisis to secure their own interests, entangling multiple great powers in a regional conflict. In a 1963 NIE, U.S. intelligence analysts assessed that “the impact of (nuclear proliferation in the Middle East) will be the possibility that hostilities arising out of existing or future controversies could escalate into a confrontation involving the major powers.”<sup>67</sup> President Johnson believed that a nuclear Israel meant increased Soviet involvement in the Middle East and perhaps superpower war.<sup>68</sup> If historical experience provides a guide, U.S. strategists at the time of writing are undoubtedly concerned by the possibility that China may feel compelled to intervene in any conflict involving a nuclear-armed North Korea, making the Korean Peninsula another dangerous flash-point in the uncertain Sino-American strategic relationship.

Power-projecting states, other than the United States, are also threatened by the possibility that nuclear proliferation will generate regional instability that could potentially require their intervention. During the Cold War Soviet intelligence estimated that a South African bomb, “would lead to a sharp escalation of instability and tension in southern

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<sup>62</sup> Jeffrey T. Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb*.

<sup>63</sup> Ilan Berman, “Confronting a Nuclear Iran,” Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, February 1, 2006.

<sup>64</sup> Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*.

<sup>65</sup> H.S. Rowen, “The Indian Nuclear Problem,” December 24, 1964, in National Security Archive, *Nuclear Nonproliferation Policy, 1945-1990* (Alexandria: VA: Chadwyck-Healey, 1991), Document No. 01086, pp. 1, 5, as quoted in Jeffrey T. Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb*, pp. 228.

<sup>66</sup> On North Korea, see e.g., Kim Se-jeong, “North Korea Collapse May Trigger U.S.-China Clash,” *The Korea Times*, May 5, 2009.

<sup>67</sup> NIE Number 4-63, June 28, 1963.

<sup>68</sup> Seymour Hersh, *The Samson Option*, pp. 128.

Africa.”<sup>69</sup> The Soviet Union also assessed that nuclear proliferation in Israel could trigger regional instability that could lead to a broader war. For example, the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs notified the Soviet embassies in Egypt and Israel, “The establishment of nuclear weapons production in Israel will make the situation...even more unstable, and is liable to trigger a serious conflict that can spill over the borders of the region.”<sup>70</sup> More recently, South Korean officials believed that they could become entangled in regional instability set off by nuclear proliferation in neighboring North Korea. In the mid-1990s, Seoul prepared military forces for participation in a possible second Korean War as North Korea’s nuclear program advanced.<sup>71</sup> In 2006, a Turkish analyst argued that nuclear proliferation in Iran could be a “spark (that) may be enough to ‘explode’ the entire region in almost every meaning of the word.”<sup>72</sup>

### **Undermines Alliance Structures**

Nuclear proliferation undermines the alliance structures of power-projecting states because the spread of nuclear weapons reduces the value of the security guarantees that power-projecting states extend to their allies. Power-projecting states use the promise of military protection as a way to cement their alliance structures and to cultivate patron-client relationships. The client states are asymmetrically dependent on a relationship that ensures their survival, allowing power-projecting states influence over their clients’ foreign policies. Power-projecting states can dangle, and threaten to retract, the security guarantee carrot to prevent client states from acting contrary to their interests. As nuclear weapons spread, however, alliances held together by promises of military protection are weakened in two ways. First, client states may doubt the credibility of their patron’s commitments to provide a military defense against nuclear-armed states, leading them to weaken ties with their patron. Second, nuclear proliferation could encourage client states to acquire nuclear weapons themselves, making them less dependable allies. If client states have their own nuclear arsenal, their need for an external security guarantee is reduced, giving them greater security independence and making them less compliant to their patron’s demands.<sup>73</sup>

One could argue that nuclear proliferation may also serve to strengthen alliances because the spread of nuclear weapons to a hostile state threatens both patron and client states and provides patron states with a strong incentive to extend the nuclear umbrella over the heads of nonnuclear allies. While this may be true in some cases, there are at least three reasons to be skeptical that the spread of nuclear weapons generally strengthens alliances, rather than innervates them. First, the very reason that the extension of a nuclear umbrella is necessary in these situations is precisely because client states are less confident in the ability of their power-projecting patrons to defend them against a nuclear-armed adversary. Second, even the extension of a nuclear umbrella may not be enough to repair an alliance in the face of nuclear proliferation, as allies may still question the patron’s willingness to fight a

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<sup>69</sup> James Adams, *Israel and South Africa: The Unnatural Alliance* (London: Quartet Books, 1984), pp. 182, as quoted in Jeffrey T. Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb*, pp. 278.

<sup>70</sup> As quoted in *Ibid*, pp. 34.

<sup>71</sup> Joel S. Wit, Daniel B. Poneman, and Robert L. Gallucci, *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2004), pp. 176-182

<sup>72</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs.”

<sup>73</sup> On nuclear weapons and security independence, see Steven Weber, “Cooperation and Interdependence,” *Daedalus*, Vol. 120, No. 2 (1991), pp. 183-201.

nuclear war on their behalf.<sup>74</sup> Third, the very fact that the extension of a nuclear umbrella, and not the direct transfer of nuclear weapons to allied states, is powerful states' preferred response to enemy nuclear proliferation strongly suggests that power-projecting states believe that they can better maintain their alliances by keeping their allies nonnuclear.

There is direct evidence that the spread of nuclear weapons to both allied and enemy states can weaken alliance structures and shift the terms of dependence between patron and client states. The Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal forced French officials to question the reliability of the United State's security guarantee. As Charles de Gaulle famously asked, in the event of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe, would Washington be willing to trade New York for Paris? The uncertainty of America's promise of military protection helped to convince France to develop its own nuclear capability and, according to many scholars, the acquisition of the *force de frappe* was instrumental in permitting the French Fifth Republic under de Gaulle to pursue a foreign policy path independent from Washington.<sup>75</sup>

Similarly, Israel's nuclear arsenal has provided it a source of leverage its relationship with Washington. Indeed, since Israel's acquisition of the bomb in 1967, there is no doubt that U.S. support for Israel has drastically increased. There are several reasons for the United States' greater willingness to accommodate Israeli demands, including the strength of the pro-Israel lobby in the United States, but it is indisputable that Israel's nuclear arsenal has also increased Israel's influence over Washington in critical moments, including, as was explicated above, in the 1973 Yom Kippur War.<sup>76</sup>

The ability of nuclear proliferation to change the nature of alliances to the detriment of powerful states is not unique to the Western world. In the Communist bloc during the Cold War, the impending development of a nuclear arsenal gave China the confidence to pursue an independent line from Moscow and China's acquisition of nuclear weapons in 1964 is considered to be a factor that contributed to the Sino-Soviet split.<sup>77</sup> The spread of nuclear weapons continues to threaten alliances in the post-Cold War world. In 2008, analysts pointed out that the development of a nuclear weapons arsenal in North Korea may already be driving a wedge between Washington and Seoul over defense policy in East Asia.<sup>78</sup>

As we might expect, leaders in power-projecting states often worry that nuclear proliferation will weaken the integrity of their alliance structures. John McCloy, a top

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<sup>74</sup> Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, outlined the potential steps that powerful states could take to increase the credibility of extended deterrent threats, but the fact that complicated mechanisms such as "trip wires" are required in situations of extended deterrence reinforce the fact that promises to defend a state against a nonnuclear weapon state are inherently more credible.

<sup>75</sup> See, e.g., Lawrence Scheinman, *Atomic Energy Policy in France under the Fourth Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965); Wilfred L. Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971).

<sup>76</sup> On the strength of the Israeli Lobby, see John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2007).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Carin Zissis, "The Fragile U.S.-South Korea Alliance: Background," *Council on Foreign Relations*, September 2006; "Rocket Man v. Bulldozer," *The Economist* (5-11 April 2008), pp. 45.

advisor to the Johnson administration, argued that as nuclear weapons spread, the United States would be forced to offer security guarantees to more and more states. McCloy worried, “The character of our determination will be diluted if we have 20 such commitments and our fundamental image of capability to defend the free world might be impaired.”<sup>79</sup> With U.S. credibility in question, weaker allies may decide that the best way to ensure their own security would be to abandon a close security relationship with the United States. The Gilpatric Committee speculated that if China acquired nuclear weapons, “a heightened sense of China’s power could create a bandwagon effect, with greater political pressures on states in the region to accommodate Beijing and loosen ties with Washington.”<sup>80</sup>

Officials further worried that nuclear proliferation could threaten alliance cohesion by encouraging weaker allies to acquire nuclear weapons themselves. One U.S. official pointed out, “European doubts about the credibility of our willingness to risk our destruction by using nuclear weapons” could “create the need for European independent capabilities.”<sup>81</sup>

Moreover, analysts in power-projecting states fear that the spread of nuclear weapons will shift the terms of dependence, undermining their ability to influence friendly states. For example, in a March 1963 intelligence memorandum, Sherman Kent argued that if Israel were to acquire nuclear weapons it would be detrimental to Washington’s interests because Israel “would use all its means at its command to persuade the U.S. to acquiescence in and even to support” Israeli interests.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, in recent years, U.S. officials have worried about how the development of nuclear programs in Taiwan and South Korea, among others could reduce U.S. influence over allies.<sup>83</sup>

The Soviet Union’s threat assessments mirrored Washington’s concerns about nuclear proliferation undermining alliance structures. The Soviet Union cut off nuclear assistance to China in 1960 partly because it feared that a nuclear-armed China would be a less reliable ally.<sup>84</sup> The Soviet Union also assessed that nuclear proliferation in Israel would jeopardize Moscow’s Middle Eastern alliances. According to Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, the Soviet Union assessed that they could use their military might “to limit Israeli action against their Arab clients, thus reinforcing these clients’ dependence on the USSR – as

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<sup>79</sup> William Bundy to Ambassador Thompson, “Nuclear Assurances to India,” March 16, 1965, RG 59, lot 67D2, box 24, United States National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter cited as USNA), quoted in Francis J. Gavin, “Blasts from the Past,” pp. 119.

<sup>80</sup> Jeffrey T. Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb*, pp. 144.

<sup>81</sup> “Europe, NATO, Germany, and the MLF,” author and date unknown, NSF, Committee on Nuclear Proliferation, box 1, pp. 5, LBJL, quoted in Francis J. Gavin, “Blasts from the Past,” pp. 119.

<sup>82</sup> Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*, pp. 117.

<sup>83</sup> On U.S. concerns with nuclear programs in: Taiwan, see Jeffrey T. Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb*; South Korea, see Yoon Won-sup, “Park Sought to Develop Nuclear Weapons,” *The Korea Times*, January 15, 2008.

<sup>84</sup> Sergei Goncharenko, “Sino-Soviet Military Cooperation,” in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998).

long as Israel had no counter-deterrent. Preventing Israel from” acquiring nuclear weapons “thus became a central objective of Soviet Middle East policy.”<sup>85</sup>

### **Sets Off Further Proliferation**

The strategic consequences of nuclear proliferation listed above are reasons why power-projecting states are threatened by nuclear proliferation in and of itself. Because nuclear proliferation is so threatening to power-projecting states, nuclear proliferation imposes an additional, secondary cost on power-projecting states: further nuclear proliferation. When a state acquires nuclear weapons, other states may seek to develop their own nuclear arsenal in response, setting off a chain reaction of nuclear proliferation. Power-projecting states are disproportionately threatened by reactive proliferation. Because they have the ability to project power over the initial nuclear proliferator, it is also likely that they will be able to project power over any other regional states that proliferate in response, compounding the strategic costs enumerated above.

There is empirical support for the idea that proliferation begets proliferation. Many countries have developed nuclear weapons as a response to nuclear programs in other states. The U.S. Manhattan Project was inspired by reports of a nuclear research program in Nazi Germany.<sup>86</sup> The Soviet Union pursued nuclear weapons to undercut America’s nuclear monopoly.<sup>87</sup> Nuclear programs in Britain and France were intended to deter the Soviet Union’s potential conventional and nuclear aggression.<sup>88</sup> China’s nuclear arsenal was at least in part a response to American nuclear threats.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, the Chinese bomb was a contributing cause to the development of nuclear weapons in India and, in turn, India’s nuclear program led to nuclear proliferation in Pakistan.<sup>90</sup>

The nuclear domino effect is far from automatic, of course, and there are many states that did not pursue nuclear programs in response to a rival’s proliferation. Nevertheless, nuclear dominoes do sometimes fall.

Further proliferation is probably the most widely-cited, negative strategic consequence of nuclear proliferation recognized by analysts and policymakers in power-projecting states. For example, in 1964, U.S. Undersecretary of State George Ball predicted that a Chinese nuclear test would set off a wave of nuclear proliferation in Asia. He assessed that there was a “fifty-fifty” chance that India would follow China down the nuclear path.

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<sup>85</sup> Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, *Foxbats over Dimona: The Soviets’ Nuclear Gamble in the Six-Day War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 32

<sup>86</sup> Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995).

<sup>87</sup> David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

<sup>88</sup> On the nuclear programs in Britain and France, see Margaret Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence: Britain and Atomic Energy 1945-1952, vols. 1 and 2* (London: Macmillan, 1974), and Lawrence Scheinman, *Atomic Energy Policy in France under the Fourth Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), respectively.

<sup>89</sup> John W. Lewis and Xue Litai, *China Builds the Bomb* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988).

<sup>90</sup> George Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb*.



According to Ball, Pakistan would likely respond to India's nuclear status by seeking its own nuclear arsenal. Ball further cited Japan, Indonesia, South Korea, and Taiwan as states that could eventually develop nuclear weapons as a counter to the Chinese arsenal.<sup>91</sup> U.S. State Department official George McGhee also noted in 1961 that if India were to develop nuclear weapons, it could unleash "a chain reaction of similar decisions by other countries, such as Pakistan, Israel, and the United Arab Republic."<sup>92</sup> U.S. officials also feared that Israel's nuclear program would lead to further nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. In a letter to David Ben-Gurion, President Kennedy argued that if Israel acquired nuclear weapons it would only encourage the Arab states to begin their own nuclear weapons programs.<sup>93</sup>

In recent years, U.S. officials have stressed that nuclear proliferation in Iran and North Korea could encourage a cascade of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East and East Asia. For example, nonproliferation officials in the administration of President William Jefferson Clinton argued that nuclear proliferation in North Korea could lead to a nuclear arms race in Asia and the potential for future nuclear weapons arsenals in South Korea, Taiwan and Japan.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, in 2004, John Edwards, the Democratic Party's Vice Presidential Nominee, stated, "A nuclear Iran is unacceptable for so many reasons, including the possibility that it creates a gateway and the need for other countries in the region to develop nuclear capability – Saudi Arabia, Egypt, potentially others."<sup>95</sup>

Policymakers and analysts in power-projecting states further fear that proliferation breeds proliferation by enhancing the supply of, not just the demand for, nuclear materials and technology. As the number of nuclear weapon states increases, so too does the number of states that are able to provide sensitive nuclear material and technology to nonnuclear weapon states, contributing to the international spread of nuclear weapons. Scholars have recently examined the causes and consequences of nuclear transfers, and the relationship between sensitive nuclear transfers and nuclear proliferation has long been suspected by officials working in nonproliferation policy.<sup>96</sup> During World War II, Selby Skinner of the U.S. Strategic Services Unit warned, "French scientists have the formula and techniques

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<sup>91</sup> Memcon, Couve de Murville, Charles Lucet, George Ball, and Charles Bohlen, December 2, 1964, record group (RG) 59, lot 67D2, box 7, pp. 2, USNA, as cited in, "Blasts from the Past," pp. 100-135.

<sup>92</sup> Position Paper, author unknown, "A Report to the President by the Committee on Nuclear Proliferation," January 21, 1965, Personal Papers of Roswell Gilpatric, box 10, John F. Kennedy Library, as cited in Francis J. Gavin, "Blasts from the Past."

<sup>93</sup> Letter, Kennedy to Ben Gurion, in State Department Deptel 780 (Tel Aviv), May 4, 1963, NSF, Box 119a, John F. Kennedy Library.

<sup>94</sup> Joel S. Wit, Daniel B. Poneman, and Robert L. Gallucci. *Going Critical*, pp. 389.

<sup>95</sup> Glenn Kessler and Robin Wright, "Edwards Says Kerry Plans to Confront Iran on Weapons," *Washington Post*, August 30, 2004, pp. A01.

<sup>96</sup> Matthew Kroenig, "Exporting the Bomb: Sensitive Nuclear Assistance and Nuclear Proliferation," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 103, No. 1 (February 2009), pp. 113-133; Matthew Kroenig, "Importing the Bomb;" Matthew Fuhrmann, "Spreading Temptation: Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation Agreements and Nuclear Proliferation," *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Summer 2009), forthcoming; Matthew Fuhrmann, "Exporting Mass Destruction? The Determinants of Dual-Use Trade," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 45, No. 5 (September 2008), pp. 633-652; Matthew Fuhrmann, "Taking a Walk on the Supply Side: The Determinants of Civilian Nuclear Cooperation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 53, No. 2, (April 2009), pp. 181-208.

concerning atomic explosives, and they are now willing to sell this information...to one of the smaller nations.”<sup>97</sup> In the early 1990s, U.S. officials worried that South Africa could transfer enriched uranium to other nations.<sup>98</sup> More recently, following North Korea’s nuclear test in October 2006, George W. Bush announced, “The transfer of nuclear weapons or material by North Korea to states or non-state entities would be considered a grave threat to the United States, and we would hold North Korea fully accountable of the consequences of such action.”<sup>99</sup> Similarly, Peter Brookes assessed that it is possible that, “Iran, as a nuclear weapons state, will involve itself in the dreaded ‘secondary proliferation,’ passing its nuclear know-how on to others.”<sup>100</sup>

The fear that proliferation will beget proliferation is not limited to the United States. Moscow feared that nuclear proliferation in Israel would lead Moscow’s Arab allies to seek nuclear weapons.<sup>101</sup> Presently, strategic thinkers in Turkey oppose nuclear proliferation in neighboring Iran because they believe that an Iranian bomb could contribute to further nuclear proliferation in their own region. Expressing the view from Turkey, Kibaroglu writes, “If Iran becomes a suspected or a *de facto* nuclear weapons state, it is feared that its neighbors such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, (and) Syria...may consider their nuclear options.”<sup>102</sup>

### ***WHY MORE CAN BE BETTER FOR NON-POWER-PROJECTING STATES***

For non-power-projecting states, the story is different. States that lack the ability to project power against a potential target state incur fewer costs and can, in certain circumstances, accrue benefits when that target state acquires nuclear weapons. I will begin by laying out the deductive logic demonstrating that non-power-projecting states are less threatened by the spread of nuclear weapons. I will then argue that non-power-projecting states will be more likely to actually benefit from nuclear proliferation because the spread of nuclear weapons imposes strategic costs on other, more powerful states. Next, I will provide empirical evidence to support these theoretical claims.

A simple exercise in deductive logic can begin to demonstrate that the spread of nuclear weapons is less threatening to non-power-projecting states. Non-power-projecting states lack the strategic advantages provided by conventional military power whether nuclear weapons are present or not, so nuclear proliferation does not further erode their strategic position. Logically, the problems that power-projecting states closely associate with the spread of nuclear weapons do not impinge upon non-power-projecting states in the same way. Non-power-projecting states will not be deterred from using military intervention to secure their interests as nuclear weapons spread; they are too weak to intervene militarily

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<sup>97</sup> Lt. Col. S. M. Skinner to Col. W.R. Shuler, Subject: Atomic Experiments in France, February 18, 1946, RG 226, Entry 210, Box 431, Folder 2, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), as quoted in Jeffrey T. Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb: American Nuclear Intelligence from Nazi Germany to Iran and North Korea* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), pp. 201.

<sup>98</sup> Jeffrey T. Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb*, pp. 380.

<sup>99</sup> President Bush’s Statement on North Korea Nuclear Test, October 9, 2006, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/10/20061009.html>.

<sup>100</sup> Peter Brookes, “Iran Emboldened.”

<sup>101</sup> Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, *Foxbats over Dimona*, pp. 33.

<sup>102</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Good for the Shah, Banned for the Mullahs.”

whether nuclear weapons are present or not. The effectiveness of their coercive diplomacy will not be reduced against new nuclear states; they lack the conventional military power that could have allowed them to use threats of military force to their advantage in the first place. Non-power-projecting states will not be compelled to intervene in costly conflicts involving regional nuclear powers; they lack the ability to operate their military forces in and around new nuclear weapon states. Nuclear proliferation will not weaken the security guarantees of non-power-projecting states; they are too weak to promise military protection as a way to cement their alliances. Finally, non-power-projecting states are less threatened by the prospect that proliferation could spur further proliferation. Since they lack the ability to project power over a potential nuclear weapon state, if that state's nuclearization also sends its neighbors down the nuclear path, it is likely that the non-power-projecting state will not be able to project power over, and will not be threatened by nuclear proliferation to, the neighbors either.

This is not to say that nuclear proliferation does not threaten non-power-projecting states. It is possible that states could become the victims of an attack from a nuclear-armed state. Nuclear proliferation could cause instability in their own geographic region that threatens their interest in some way whether or not they have the ability to project power over the potential proliferators. Allies could be deterred from coming to their defense if they are attacked by a nuclear power. Especially in more recent years, states may increasingly fear that they could become the victims of nuclear terrorism. Indeed, for these reasons and others many small powers have historically opposed the international spread of nuclear weapons.

Nevertheless, in contrast to power-projecting states, leaders in non-power-projecting states do not need to fear that nuclear proliferation will constrain their own conventional military power. For this reason, the spread of nuclear weapons, on average, threatens non-power-projecting states less than it threatens power-projecting states. A summary of these differential effects of nuclear proliferation is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1. The Differential Effects of Nuclear Proliferation**

<b>Nuclear Proliferation Effects</b>	<b>Power-Projecting State</b>	<b>Non-Power-Projecting State</b>
Deters military intervention	Yes	No
Reduces effectiveness of military coercion	Yes	No
Triggers regional instability that could require intervention	Yes	No
Undermines alliance structures	Yes	No
Sets off further nuclear proliferation within a relevant sphere of influence	Yes	No

Not only are non-power-projecting states less threatened as nuclear weapons spread, in certain situations, nuclear proliferation can actually improve the strategic environment of non-power-projecting states. Of course, non-power-projecting states may be able to benefit from possessing nuclear weapons themselves, but the argument here is that the spread of nuclear weapons to other states in the international system can benefit non-power-projecting states. Nuclear proliferation constrains the military freedom of action of power-projecting

states. As nuclear weapons spread, power-projecting states are less able to use conventional military power in a manner that potentially threatens the interest of non-power-projecting states. To the degree that the strategic costs of nuclear proliferation are concentrated on more powerful states, non-power-projecting states can exploit the payoff structure to their advantage. Statesmen in non-power-projecting states can even promote the spread of nuclear weapons with the intention of imposing strategic costs on power-projecting states.

Again, the benefits that non-power-projecting states can reap from the spread of nuclear weapons to additional states should not be overstated. The fact that nuclear proliferation will disproportionately constrain more powerful states is merely one strategic benefit that exists among many other potential costs and benefits of nuclear proliferation. It is far from the lone determining factor. Nevertheless, this strategic benefit is an important, and often overlooked, effect of nuclear proliferation for non-power-projecting states. When a new state acquires nuclear weapons, power-projecting states will suffer more than non-power-projecting states, and non-power-projecting states may sometimes welcome this effect.

To illustrate how nuclear proliferation is less threatening to, and can sometimes even benefit, non-power-projecting states, I will briefly examine four dyads of non-power-projecting states and potential nuclear weapon states: France and Israel (1959-1965); China and Pakistan (1981-1986); Pakistan in relation to Iran, Libya, and North Korea (1987-2002), and India vis-à-vis Vietnam and Taiwan (2009). To supplement the deductive logic presented above, I will provide evidence about how these non-power-projecting states assessed the threat of, and responded to, the prospect of nuclear proliferation. In these cases, we find that the concern that nuclear proliferation could constrain conventional military power rarely appears in the internal strategic assessments of non-power-projecting states. Furthermore, we find that non-power-projecting states sometimes believe that they can benefit from the spread of nuclear weapons to additional states. Indeed, in these cases non-power-projecting states either promoted, or considered the promotion of, the spread of nuclear weapons to additional states with the intention of imposing strategic costs on power-projecting states:

#### **France and Israel (1959-1965).**

France is a non-power-projecting state in relation to Israel. While France is a local-power-projecting state, and even has the ability to project power against some geographically-distant states, it lacked the ability to project power against Israel in the late 1950s and early 1960s. France's nearest military bases were located in Djibouti and Algeria, rendering a ground invasion of Israel impossible.<sup>103</sup> Putting French troops into a Middle Eastern theatre against a hostile opponent would have required an amphibious invasion, but the French lacked nearby air bases, the French navy had been almost completely destroyed in World War II and had yet to be reconstituted, and France never developed the specialized capabilities required for an amphibious invasion.<sup>104</sup> When French forces did partake in other

<sup>103</sup> Frederick Quinn, *The French Overseas Empire* (New York: Praeger, 2001).

<sup>104</sup> On French military capabilities in this period, see e.g., Thomas R. Christofferson, with Michael S. Christofferson, *France during World War II: From Defeat to Liberation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006); Michel L. Martin, *Warriors to Managers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981); Sten Rynning, *Changing Military Doctrine: Presidents and Military Power in Fifth Republic France*,

military actions in roughly the same geographical region in this time period, it was only able to do so under special circumstances. French forces were only able to participate in the Suez War of 1956, for example, because they relied heavily on British basing, air and naval power, and specialized, amphibious invasion capabilities.<sup>105</sup> France was able to fight the war in Algeria because French Algeria was a department of France, giving France local basing and substantial time to build up a French military presence without organized resistance.<sup>106</sup>

Because France lacked the military capabilities that would have allowed it to project power against Israel, officials in Paris did not believe that nuclear proliferation in Israel would threaten France's strategic position. From 1958 to 1965, French officials carefully considered the likely ramifications of a nuclear-armed Israel, but they never expressed concern that nuclear proliferation in Israel would threaten France's conventional military freedom of action. The primary concerns that appear over and over again in the strategic assessments of power-projecting states simply did not occur to French officials. Available evidence indicates that French officials never once expressed concern that nuclear proliferation in Israel could: deter French military intervention in the Middle East, reduce France's strategic influence in the region, generate regional instability that could require French intervention, prevent France from promising military protection to French allies in the region, or spur further nuclear proliferation. In fact, French officials recognized only a single, negative repercussion from France's nuclear assistance to Israel: displeasure from the international community. French President Charles de Gaulle is reported to have worried in 1960, "If France was the only country to help Israel, while neither the United States, Britain, or the Soviet Union has helped anyone else [get the bomb], she would put herself in an impossible international situation."<sup>107</sup> While France considered the diplomatic costs of an Israeli bomb, French officials did not consider the possibility that nuclear weapons in Israel would directly constrain French military freedom of action. France's inability to project power in the region precluded any such assessment.

Not only were French officials not threatened by nuclear proliferation in Israel; they also saw a potential upside to the spread of nuclear weapons in this case. French officials believed that by helping Israel acquire nuclear weapons they could constrain another state better able to project power over Israel: Egypt. In the mid-1950s, France was engaged in a counterinsurgency campaign in French Algeria against the rebels of the National Liberation Front (FLN). Nasser was the key external supporter of the FLN, providing funds and military equipment to help the FLN wage the insurgency against France. French officials,

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1958-2000 (London: Praeger, 2002); James F. Dunnigan, *How to Make War: A Comprehensive Guide to Warfare in the Twenty-First Century*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. (New York: Harper, 2003).

<sup>105</sup> On French participation in the Suez War, see e.g., A.J. Barker, *Suez: The Seven Day War* (London: Faber and Faber LTD, 1964); Jean-Paul Cointet, "Guy Mollet, the French Government and the SFIO," in Selwyn Ilan Troen and Moshe Shemesh, eds., *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956: Retrospective and Reappraisal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); André Martin, "The Military and Political Contradictions of the Suez Affair: A French Perspective" in Selwyn Ilan Troen and Moshe Shemesh, eds., *The Suez Crisis 1956: Retrospective and Reappraisal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

<sup>106</sup> For a careful military analysis of French force posture and military capabilities in the Middle East in this time period, see Matthew Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb: Technology Transfer and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons* (Cornell University Press, forthcoming 2010).

<sup>107</sup> Seymour Hersh, *The Samson Option*, p. 69.

eager to sever Nasser's ties to Algeria, believed that a nuclear-armed Israel would constrain Nasser's military freedom of action and divert his strategic attention away from Algeria and toward his nuclear-armed neighbor. From 1958 to 1965, France aided Israel's nuclear program, building the Dimona reactor and an underground plutonium reprocessing facility, transferring nuclear weapon designs, and allowing Israeli officials to view French nuclear tests.<sup>108</sup> Describing his motivations in later years, French Defense Minister Bourguès-Maunoury explained, "I gave [the Israelis] the atom...so that Israel could face its enemies in the Middle East."<sup>109</sup> According to Shimon Peres, the Israeli official responsible for acquiring nuclear assistance from France, France was willing to help Israel primarily because "Some [French] leaders, notably those responsible for defence matters, held that clipping Nasser's wings would limit his ambitions and impact on the Algerian front."<sup>110</sup>

The understanding that nuclear proliferation could benefit France by constraining other states was also occasionally reflected in French rhetoric. During the Cold War, French President Charles de Gaulle occasionally made statements, advocating the international spread of nuclear weapons as a way to redistribute power in international politics and reduce the international influence of the superpowers.<sup>111</sup>

#### **China and Pakistan (1981-1986)**

Historically, other non-power-projecting states have adopted policies that promote nuclear proliferation with the expectation that the spread of nuclear weapons would improve their own security because it would constrain more powerful states. China is certainly a local-power-projecting state, but it lacks the ability to project conventional military power outside of its region. For this reason, China is a non-power-projecting state in relation to much of the world and has in the past held a rhetorical policy in favor of nuclear proliferation.<sup>112</sup> Beginning in the 1960s, Chinese foreign policymakers explicitly advocated nuclear proliferation because they saw the spread of nuclear weapons "as limiting U.S. and Soviet power."<sup>113</sup>

China also provided sensitive nuclear assistance with the intent of helping another state acquire nuclear weapons. A close analysis of Chinese nuclear assistance to Pakistan in the 1980s reveals that Beijing was likely motivated to provide sensitive nuclear assistance in this case by the desire to constrain other power-projecting states. Given its lack of amphibious invasion capabilities and a shared border along a particularly treacherous stretch of the Himalayan Mountains, China could not conceivably fight a full-scale, conventional,

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<sup>108</sup> See e.g., Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*; Seymour Hersh, *The Samson Option*; and Pierre Péan, *Les Deux Bombes* (Paris: Fayard, 1981).

<sup>109</sup> Benjamin Pinkus, "Atomic Power to Israel's Rescue: French-Israeli Nuclear Cooperation 1949-1957," *Israel Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2002), pp. 118.

<sup>110</sup> Shimon Peres, *David's Sling* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), pp. 46.

<sup>111</sup> Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy*.

<sup>112</sup> On China's force-projection capability, see e.g., Office of the Secretary of Defense, *The Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2005*, Annual Report to Congress, available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2005/d20050719china.pdf>.

<sup>113</sup> Rodney W. Jones and Mark.G. McDonough with Toby F. Dalton and Gregory D. Koblenz, *Tracking Nuclear Proliferation: A Guide in Maps and Charts* (Washington, D.C. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1998), pp. 49.

military, ground war in Pakistan.<sup>114</sup> But China was able to provide sensitive nuclear assistance to Pakistan to constrain two other states, India and the Soviet Union, that were able to operate their conventional military forces against Pakistan. It is likely that the primary motivation behind China's assistance to Pakistan was to constrain India and divert New Delhi's strategic attention away from Beijing.<sup>115</sup> China was also threatened by growing Soviet influence in South Asia, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and may have hoped that a nuclear-armed Pakistan would contain the Soviet Union's presence in the region. In sum, according to Gordon Corera, China engaged in these sensitive nuclear transfers because, for strategic reasons, Beijing "was keen to see more nuclear powers in the world."<sup>116</sup>

### **Pakistan In Relation To Iran, Libya, and North Korea (1987-2002).**

In recent years, other non-power-projecting states have encouraged nuclear proliferation to constrain more powerful states. From 1987 to 2002, Pakistan, with assistance from nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan, distributed sensitive nuclear materials and technology to Iran, Libya, and North Korea. With the exception of Iran, Pakistan lacked the ability to project power against any of these states, meaning that nuclear proliferation in these countries would not constrain Pakistan's own military might. For example, when asked how the acquisition of nuclear weapons by North Korea (a country against which Pakistan could not conceivably project military power) would affect Pakistan's own security, Jehangir Karamat, Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, replied, "North Korean nuclear capability does not threaten us directly."<sup>117</sup>

Moreover, some of the key players involved in Pakistan's sensitive nuclear exports thought that nuclear proliferation could improve Pakistan's security by constraining U.S. military power. General Mirza Azlam Beg was Pakistan's Vice Chief of the Army Staff from 1987 to 1988, and the Chief of the Army Staff from 1988 to 1991. As the head of the military, he was a powerful figure in Pakistani politics. In this role, Beg was a key player promoting Pakistan's nuclear exports.<sup>118</sup> Beg believed that the global spread of nuclear weapons could lead to a multipolar world that would better suit Pakistan's interest than a bipolar or unipolar world dominated by the United States.<sup>119</sup> In particular, Beg was concerned about growing U.S. influence in the Middle East and South Asia following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Beg hoped that a band of nuclear-armed states hostile to Washington, supported by Pakistan and China, could form an alliance of "strategic defiance" against the United States.<sup>120</sup> A.Q. Khan, the nuclear scientist often considered the key actor

<sup>114</sup> On China's inability to project conventional military power against Pakistan, see Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb*.

<sup>115</sup> See, for instance, T.V. Paul, "Chinese-Pakistani Nuclear/Missile Ties and Balance of Power Politics," *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Summer 2003), pp. 21-29; Gordon Corera, *Shopping for Bombs: Nuclear Proliferation, Global Insecurity, and the Rise and Fall of the A.Q. Khan Network* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 45.

<sup>116</sup> Gordon Corera, *Shopping for Bombs*, pp. 45.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with author, April 2006. Mr. Karamat made it clear that a North Korean nuclear capability poses many problems for East Asian security and was adamant that Pakistan is opposed to the international spread of nuclear weapons.

<sup>118</sup> See Frantz and Collins, *The Nuclear Jihadist*; Gordon Corera, *Shopping for Bombs*.

<sup>119</sup> See Gordon Corera, *Shopping for Bombs*, pp. 74.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 75.

behind Pakistan's nuclear transfers, agreed with these sentiments. Khan, referring to the United States, proudly proclaimed, "I disturbed all their strategic plans, the balance of power and blackmailing potential in this part of the world."<sup>121</sup> Corera concurs, concluding that one of the primary motivations for Pakistan's sensitive nuclear exports was the belief among select members of the Pakistani elite that it was in "Pakistan's national interest for more countries to have bombs, thereby...reducing the power of the United States."<sup>122</sup>

### **India Vis-À-Vis Vietnam and Taiwan (2009)**

There are signs that the promotion of nuclear proliferation by non-power-projecting states to constrain more powerful states could continue in the future. Indeed, the understanding that nuclear proliferation constrains powerful states is endemic among strategists in non-power-projecting states. India, at present, lacks the means to project conventional military power beyond South Asia and while India has not yet been compelled by its structural position to advocate nuclear proliferation, there are signs that the weight of this strategic logic is being felt in foreign-policy making circles in New Delhi.<sup>123</sup> Bharat Karnad, a Professor of National Security Studies at the Centre for Policy Research in India, argues that New Delhi should provide sensitive nuclear assistance to Vietnam and Taiwan to impose strategic costs on China. According to Karnad, "India should, likewise, create precisely the kind of dilemmas for China that Beijing has created for it with respect to a nuclear weapons and missile-equipped Pakistan by arming Vietnam with strategic weapons" and by "cooperating with Taiwan in the nuclear and missile fields."<sup>124</sup> While Karnad's views may not be representative of India's foreign policy establishment, they are further evidence that a pro-nuclear proliferation doctrine remains attractive for strategic thinkers in non-power-projecting states.<sup>125</sup>

## **COUNTERARGUMENTS**

I have argued that nuclear proliferation has differential effects and that the consequences of nuclear proliferation depend on a state's ability to project power. At this point, one could grant the overall argument that nuclear proliferation has differential effects, but challenge the assertion that the differential consequences of nuclear proliferation depend primarily on power. Some may point to prominent counterexamples to question whether the empirical evidence supports the argument that power-projecting states are truly more threatened by the spread of nuclear weapons. Others may wonder whether there are other variables that determine the degree to which a state suffers as nuclear weapons spread. In this section, I will consider these counterarguments.

### ***CONSIDERING COUNTEREXAMPLES***

Some may question whether power-projecting states are truly threatened by nuclear proliferation. There are, after all, counterexamples in which power-projecting states

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<sup>121</sup> As quoted in *ibid*, pp. 123.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 79.

<sup>123</sup> On the limits of India's force-projection capabilities, see e.g., Sudha Ramachandran, "India's Blue Water Dreams May Have to Wait," *Asia Times*, August 21, 2007.

<sup>124</sup> Bharat Karnad, *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security: The Realist Foundations of Strategy* (New Delhi: Macmillan India Limited, 2002), pp. xvii-xviii.

<sup>125</sup> India is a rising power, however, and as Indian power grows, it is likely that India will become more threatened by the prospect of nuclear proliferation in distant states.



appeared to support the spread of nuclear weapons to additional states. For example, the United States assisted Britain and France with their nuclear weapons programs during the Cold War. The Soviet Union provided sensitive nuclear assistance to China from 1958 to 1960, and Pakistan helped neighboring Iran with its nuclear program from 1987 to 1995. If power-projecting states are disproportionately threatened by the spread of nuclear weapons, one might ask, why would these states promote nuclear proliferation to states over which they have the ability to project military power?

There are a number of answers to this question. First, the argument of this article is probabilistic, not deterministic, in nature. I argue that power-projecting states are more threatened by nuclear proliferation, and less likely to benefit from it, than are non-power-projecting states. I do not claim that power-projecting states will always be severely threatened by every instance of nuclear proliferation, nor would I maintain that power-projecting states will always vigorously oppose the spread of nuclear weapons. A few counterexamples cannot undermine a probabilistic argument. The argument can be falsified only if it can be shown that power-projecting states are less threatened by nuclear proliferation than non-power-projecting states, or if it can be demonstrated that there is no relationship whatsoever between power-projection capability and the threat posed by nuclear proliferation.

Second, a careful look at the evidence demonstrates that instances of power-projecting states warmly welcoming nuclear proliferation are few and far between. Moscow, for example, was very concerned about the prospect of nuclear weapons in neighboring China and this apprehension was reflected in the Soviet Union's behavior.<sup>126</sup> Moscow initially denied repeated requests for nuclear assistance from Beijing. When the Soviet Union eventually decided to help China's nuclear program with much reluctance, it only provided outmoded technologies. Moreover, the Soviet Union's assistance to China was cut very off soon after it started. Indeed, Moscow eventually became so threatened by the prospect of nuclear weapons in China that the Kremlin seriously considered a preventative military strike to eliminate China's nuclear facilities.

Similarly, the United States, despite a widespread misconception to the contrary, opposed the spread of nuclear weapons to both Britain and France. In fact, it was official U.S. government policy to maintain a nuclear monopoly and to deny the bomb to other states, including its closest allies.<sup>127</sup> Even during the Manhattan Project, the United States systematically prohibited British scientists from access to the most sensitive nuclear research, while selectively drawing on British expertise in nuclear physics.<sup>128</sup> The United States was even less willing to engage France in nuclear cooperation.<sup>129</sup> It was only after these countries acquired nuclear weapons, despite Washington's efforts to the contrary, that the United States decided to help its allies with the safety, security, survivability, and reliability of their

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<sup>126</sup> See e.g., John W. Lewis and Xue Litai, *China Builds the Bomb*.

<sup>127</sup> For more on the limits on U.S.-British nuclear cooperation, see e.g., Margaret Gowing *Independence and Deterrence*, Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> On the development of France's nuclear program, see e.g., Lawrence Scheinman, *Atomic Energy Policy in France under the Fourth Republic*.

nuclear arsenals.<sup>130</sup> In short, there is very little evidence to suggest that power-projecting states are likely to welcome the spread of nuclear weapons to additional states.

### ***FORCE OR FRIENDSHIP?***

One could argue that the effects of nuclear proliferation depend, not on power-projection capabilities, but on whether nuclear weapons spread to friends or enemies.<sup>131</sup> Richard Haas, President of the Council on Foreign Relations, has argued in favor of a double standard for U.S. nuclear nonproliferation policy because he claims that the United States is more threatened by nuclear-armed foes than it is by nuclear-armed friends.<sup>132</sup> While it is true that the nature and the degree of the threat posed by nuclear proliferation varies depending on who possess them, the friend/enemy distinction overlooks the fact that nuclear proliferation to friends still causes many problems for power-projecting states and that non-power-projecting states are not necessarily threatened when nuclear weapons spread to nonallies.

As Great Britain's Lord Palmerston famously remarked, nations have no permanent friends, they only have permanent interests. Nuclear proliferation does not provide an exception to this rule. For power-projecting-states, nuclear proliferation to both friends and enemies entails substantial strategic costs, though the type of cost is different in each case. States will not worry much that nuclear proliferation to an ally will deter them from launching a military invasion, since it is highly unlikely that states would want to invade an allied state. This does not mean, however, that nuclear proliferation to a friendly state is cost free. Power-projecting states incur many other strategic costs when allies acquire nuclear weapons. Nuclear proliferation leading to regional instability and potentially requiring costly intervention could occur whether the new nuclear state is an ally or an enemy. In fact, as we saw above, the fear of regional instability in the Middle East was a principal reason why both the United States and the Soviet Union opposed nuclear proliferation to Israel in the 1960s.<sup>133</sup> Further, nuclear proliferation to an allied state can encourage rivals to seek their own nuclear deterrent, contributing to further nuclear proliferation. Officials in Washington feared, for example, that nuclear proliferation in Israel could lead Arab states to develop their own nuclear programs in response. Moreover, the concern often expressed by power-projecting states that nuclear proliferation will undermine alliance relationships is primarily a fear about the spread of nuclear weapons to allied states. Indeed, the United States has almost invariably opposed the proliferation of nuclear weapons to allied states. Examples in which Washington attempted to prevent nuclear proliferation to allies include: Argentina,

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<sup>130</sup> For U.S. assistance to Britain and France after they acquired nuclear weapons, see Margaret Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence*, and Richard H. Ullman, "The Covert French Connection," *Foreign Policy*, No. 75 (Summer 1989), pp. 3-33.

<sup>131</sup> For a theoretical treatment of friendship and the friend/enemy distinction in international politics see Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>132</sup> Richard N. Haas, "India, Iran, and the Case for Double Standards," *Project Syndicate*, May 14, 2006, available at

[http://www.cfr.org/publication/10685/india\\_iran\\_and\\_the\\_case\\_for\\_double\\_standards.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/10685/india_iran_and_the_case_for_double_standards.html)

<sup>133</sup> While the United States and Israel had yet to develop the extremely close relationship that they share in 2009, by this time Israel had adopted a decidedly pro-western orientation. See John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby*.

Brazil, Britain, France, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and others.<sup>134</sup> The United States is not alone in this regard. Moscow prohibited its allies from acquiring nuclear weapons and had even greater success: no member of the Warsaw Pact ever acquired the bomb.<sup>135</sup>

Furthermore, the deductive argument laid out above demonstrated that non-power-projecting states are not necessarily threatened when nuclear weapons spread to unfriendly states. Indeed, recent scholarship has examined the factors that lead states to provide sensitive nuclear assistance to nonnuclear weapon states.<sup>136</sup> This study reveals that states have never provided sensitive nuclear assistance to a country with which they shared a formal alliance.<sup>137</sup> As we saw above, France did not share a formal alliance with Israel in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but, nevertheless, Paris helped Tel Aviv acquire nuclear weapons. On the other hand, France was a formal member of the NATO alliance in this time period, but it did not help any of its NATO allies develop a nuclear weapons capability. Similarly, China enjoyed friendly relations with Pakistan, but was not its formal ally. Nevertheless, Beijing provided sensitive nuclear assistance to Islamabad. Furthermore, Pakistan was not a formal ally of Iran, Libya, or North Korea, but it helped all three countries with their nuclear programs. Thus, it appears that states provide sensitive nuclear assistance more according to whom they are constraining and less according to whom they are helping.

In sum, power-projecting states are threatened when nuclear weapons spread to friends or enemies (though for slightly different reasons in each case), but non-power-projecting states are not negatively affected even when nuclear weapons spread to nonallies. The evidence suggests that the effects of nuclear proliferation do not depend primarily on whether the nuclear proliferator is a friend or enemy.

### ***POWER OR POSSESSION?***

Neither does whether a state possesses nuclear weapons determine the differential effects of nuclear proliferation. Some scholars have argued that nuclear weapon states are particularly harmed by the spread of nuclear weapons because they have an interest in

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<sup>134</sup> On U.S. opposition to nuclear proliferation in: Argentina, see e.g., Rodney W. Jones and Mark G. McDonough with Toby F. Dalton and Gregory D. Koblenz, *Tracking Nuclear Proliferation*, pp. 223; Brazil see, e.g., Norman Gall, "Atoms for Brazil, Dangers for All," *Foreign Policy* 23 (Summer 1976), pp. 155-201; France, see e.g., Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy*; Germany, see e.g., Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*; Great Britain, see e.g., Margaret Gowing, *Britain and Atomic Energy 1945-1952 vol. 2*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974), pp. 499-501;

Israel, see e.g., Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*; Japan, see e.g., Mitchell Reiss, *Without the Bomb: The Politics of Nuclear Nonproliferation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); South Korea, see e.g., Yoon Won-sup, "Park Sought to Develop Nuclear Weapons;" Taiwan, see e.g., Jeffrey T. Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb*.

<sup>135</sup> On the Soviet Union's nuclear proliferation policy, see Gloria Duffy, "Soviet Nuclear Export," *International Security*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Summer 1978), pp. 83-111.

<sup>136</sup> Matthew Kroenig, "Exporting the Bomb."

<sup>137</sup> The Correlates of War (COW) alliance variable measures three types of alliance relationship: defense pact, entente, neutrality agreement, or no alliance. Of the 79 dyad-years of sensitive nuclear assistance, all 79 are between states in the no alliance category. Not even Soviet assistance to China from 1958 to 1960 qualifies as sensitive nuclear transfer within the context of a formal alliance. According to COW, the Soviet Union and China did not share a formal alliance in this time period. Kroenig, "Exporting the Bomb."

maintaining the exclusivity of the nuclear club. George Quester has claimed that a nuclear weapon state has “an interest in shutting the [nuclear] door behind itself.”<sup>138</sup> Joseph Pilat has similarly argued that “France, as a nuclear weapons state, does have...a strategic interest in [non] proliferation.”<sup>139</sup>

There is a certain intuitive element to this argument, but it is not met with empirical support. As we saw above, France, China, and Pakistan all openly advocated the spread of nuclear weapons to other states at a time when they possessed nuclear weapons themselves.

Further, the nuclear exclusivity argument cannot explain why nonnuclear weapons states are threatened by nuclear proliferation. According to the logic of the argument, if a state lacks nuclear weapons itself, it should have an interest in devaluing a currency in which it is not invested. But nonnuclear weapons states almost invariably oppose nuclear proliferation to states against which they have the option to use conventional military force. For example, Egypt was adamantly opposed to the bomb project in neighboring Israel despite the fact that Egypt itself lacked a nuclear arsenal.<sup>140</sup>

Finally, internal strategic assessments detail in black and white the very reasons that power-projecting states are threatened by nuclear proliferation. Over and over again, policymakers and intelligence analysts in power-projecting states fret about how nuclear proliferation will undermine their conventional military advantages. But, according to the available evidence, no state has ever opposed nuclear proliferation primarily because it wanted to keep the *hoi polloi* out of its private nuclear club.

One could perhaps make the opposite claim and argue that nuclear weapon states are less threatened by nuclear proliferation because they could deter attacks from new nuclear states. As evidence, one could point to the three case studies presented above in which three nuclear weapon states, France, China, and Pakistan, provided sensitive nuclear assistance. This argument is undermined by the fact, however, that nuclear-armed, power-projecting states, like the United States and the Soviet Union, have vigorously fought to combat nuclear proliferation. Nuclear weapons possession is not a good determinant of whether a country is advantaged or disadvantaged as nuclear weapons spread because there is too much variation on this variable. It is power-projection capability, not nuclear weapons possession that best distinguishes whether countries are threatened as nuclear weapons spread.<sup>141</sup>

## CONCLUSION

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<sup>138</sup> George Quester, “The Statistical ‘N’ of the ‘Nth’ Nuclear Weapons States,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (March 1983), pp. 175.

<sup>139</sup> Joseph F. Pilat, “The French, Germans, and Japanese and the Future of the Nuclear Supply Regime,” in Rodney W. Jones, Cesare Merlini, Joseph F. Pilat, and William C. Potter, eds., *The Nuclear Suppliers and Nonproliferation: International Policy Choices* (Lexington MA: Lexington Books, 1985), pp. 88.

<sup>140</sup> Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, *Foxbats over Dimona*.

<sup>141</sup> Perhaps, a more compelling set of explanations for why all of the examples of countries exporting nuclear weapons technologies come from nuclear weapon states is not because they are less threatened by proliferation, but because they are better able to provide weapons-related assistance and are less vulnerable to pressure from power-projecting states.

In the ongoing debate about the consequences of nuclear proliferation, there has been a preoccupation with examining the aggregate effects of the spread of nuclear weapons. In particular, scholars have asked whether the net impact of nuclear proliferation on international and regional stability is positive or negative. The argument offered here supplements this debate with an analysis of the differential effects of nuclear proliferation. Nuclear proliferation threatens some states more than others. The hypothesis explored in this article is that the effects of nuclear proliferation depend on a state's ability to project military power over a potential target state. States with the ability to project power over a potential target state incur many costs and accrue few, if any, benefits when that target state acquires nuclear weapons. The spread of nuclear weapons constrains the conventional military freedom of action of power-projecting states. On the other hand, states that lack the ability to project power over a particular target state incur fewer costs and can accrue some benefits when that target state acquires nuclear weapons. These non-power-projecting states will not find their own ability to project power constrained by nuclear proliferation. Furthermore, the international spread of nuclear weapons can actually improve the security of non-power-projecting states because it imposes strategic costs on other, power-projecting states. Non-power-projecting states are not likely to benefit as nuclear weapons spread, but they are more likely to benefit than are power-projecting states. In sum, Waltz argues that the spread of nuclear weapons is good, Sagan argues that it is bad, but the evidence presented here demonstrates that it depends: the spread of nuclear weapons is bad for power-projecting states and can be good for non-power-projecting states. This argument emphasizes the differential, as opposed to the aggregate, consequences of nuclear proliferation.

Other factors are less able to explain nuclear proliferation's differential effects. This article found little support for the idea that the effects of nuclear proliferation depend on whether a state possesses nuclear weapons itself. I did find that alliances influence the nature and degree of the proliferation threat, but I also showed that political relationships are less important than power-projection capability in determining how a country will be affected by the spread of nuclear weapons. Power-projecting states are disadvantaged by nuclear proliferation to both friends and enemies, while non-power-projecting states are not necessarily affected even when nuclear weapons spread to unfriendly states. In short, while power-projection capability cannot tell you everything about how a state will be affected by the spread of nuclear weapons, it is the best place to start.

The analysis presented here also suggests a theory to explain variation in state responses to nuclear proliferation in other states: A state's ability to project conventional military power over a particular target state should determine the degree to which it will oppose nuclear proliferation to that state. Future research could examine the applicability of this theory to specific nuclear nonproliferation issue areas including: the provision of sensitive nuclear assistance, voting on nuclear proliferation measures in international bodies, state willingness to approve sanctions against nuclear proliferators, and state decisions to support the use of military force against other states' nuclear programs.<sup>142</sup> For example, of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, it has been the United States, the state best able to project power over Iran, which has consistently pushed for tougher sanctions against Iran's nuclear program. In contrast, Britain, China, France, and

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<sup>142</sup> On why states provide sensitive nuclear assistance, see Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb*.

Russia, states less able to project power over Iran, have been less willing to support the strongest measures against Iran in the United Nations Security Council.

The argument of this article helps us to better understand the consequences of other important real-world nuclear proliferation challenges. At the time of writing in 2009, Iran was on the verge of mastering the uranium-enrichment capabilities that it could use to develop nuclear weapons.<sup>143</sup> Proliferation optimists contend that the United States should learn to live with a nuclear-armed Iran.<sup>144</sup> They claim that an Iranian bomb does not directly threaten the United States because Tehran can be deterred. This analysis misses the point. U.S. strategists are quite confident that nuclear deterrence will work in Iran; they are only concerned that it is the United States that might be deterred. Presently, the United States has the option to use military power to its advantage in its relationship with Iran. Against a nuclear-armed Tehran, however, Washington's military freedom of action is greatly constrained, undermining the U.S.'s strategic position in the region. On the other side of the debate, proliferation pessimists argue that a nuclear Iran threatens the United States primarily because an unstable Iranian regime and loose government control over the Iranian security services could lead to some kind of nuclear accident.<sup>145</sup> A nuclear accident may be one concern of U.S. strategists, but if so, it is at the bottom of the list. As we saw above, it is likely that the United States fears nuclear proliferation in Iran for the same reasons that it has been threatened by nuclear proliferation to other states in the past. A nuclear Iran could: deter the United States from using military force in the Middle East, reduce the effectiveness of American coercive diplomacy against Iran, trigger instability in the region that could require U.S. intervention, undermine U.S. alliance relationships in the region and beyond, and lead to further nuclear proliferation in the region compounding these strategic costs.

This realization has important policy implications for the United States as it seeks to elicit international support to put pressure on nuclear programs in Iran and elsewhere. Policymakers in Washington are often puzzled as to why it is so difficult to get international cooperation on nuclear nonproliferation issues. Living in a world, the Washington, D.C. beltway, in which nuclear proliferation is demonized, they cannot imagine how officials in other capitals, like Beijing and Moscow, cannot be horrified by the thought of nuclear weapons in Tehran or Pyongyang. When China and Russia are unwilling to press other states on their nuclear programs, officials in Washington often assume that foreign officials do not fully understand the threat posed by nuclear proliferation.<sup>146</sup> Or, Washington chalks

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<sup>143</sup> On Iran's nuclear program, see e.g., William J. Broad and David E. Sanger, "Iran Has More Enriched Uranium than Thought," *New York Times*, February 19, 2009.

<sup>144</sup> Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, "Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (Spring/Summer 2007), pp. 135-15; Barry R. Posen, "A Nuclear-Armed Iran: A Difficult, but not Impossible Policy Problem," *A Century Foundation Report*, 2006.

<sup>145</sup> Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, "Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster;" Scott D. Sagan, "Keeping the Bomb Away from Tehran," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 5 (September/October 2006), pp. 45-59.

<sup>146</sup> It is interesting to note, and consistent with the argument of this article, that when the Soviet Union enjoyed global force projection capabilities, it promoted a strict nuclear nonproliferation policy. Moscow's concern with nuclear proliferation collapsed with the Soviet Union, however. Russia, a state much less able to project power beyond its near abroad, has demonstrated much less interest in preventing the international spread of nuclear weapons.

it up to economic incentives. They assume that foreign governments are unwilling to push a potential proliferator because they do not want to jeopardize their trade relationship with that country.

In fact, Russia and China have not been willing to authorize tough sanctions against Iran's nuclear program, not primarily because they have important economic interests in the country as many analysts believe, but because they are not particularly threatened by Iran's nuclear development. Russia and China are not currently operating military forces in the Middle East and, given the degradation of Russia's military since the end of the Cold War and China's military modernization focusing on a Taiwan Straits contingency, it is very unlikely that these countries will have the capability to do so for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they do not need to worry that nuclear proliferation in Iran will constrain their military freedom of action. They might be concerned that Iran could attack them in the bolt-out-of-the-blue nuclear strike, or provide nuclear weapons to terrorists who might target them, but such scenarios are extremely unlikely. In sum, Beijing and Moscow have very little to fear from nuclear proliferation in Iran. They are unwilling to place serious pressure on Tehran and are willing to continue economic relations with the country, not because the economic benefits are so high, but because the strategic costs are so low. Indeed, given that many strategic thinkers in Russia and China believe that what is bad for Washington must be good for Moscow and Beijing, some foreign officials undoubtedly welcome Iranian nuclear development as a means of tying down the United States.

In short, U.S. officials need to understand the difficulty to get international nuclear nonproliferation cooperation for what it is: *nuclear proliferation threatens the United States more than any other state on the globe.* The United States is a global superpower and nuclear proliferation anywhere threatens America's dominant strategic position. For other states, with more limited spheres of influence, nuclear proliferation in a distant region is not a threat. In fact, these countries may even see a significant upside to the spread of nuclear weapons – because nuclear proliferation means a constrained and thus weakened United States. Foreign governments' reluctance to bear a burden to stop proliferation in a distant region is not the result of their failure to understand the strategic consequences of nuclear proliferation; it is because they understand them perfectly well. The failure of understanding is on the U.S. side. Washington will continue to struggle to convince other states to join in a fight against nuclear proliferation that disproportionately threatens the United States.

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