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Research Memorandum REU-25 from Thomas L. Hughes to the Secretary, 'Attitudes of Selected Countries on Accession to a Soviet Co-sponsored Draft Agreement on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons'

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Summary:

With a nuclear nonproliferation treaty under consideration in Washington, INR considered which countries were likely to sign on and why or why not. INR analysts, mistakenly as it turned out, believed it unlikely that the Soviet Union would be a co-sponsor of a treaty in part because of the "international climate" and also because Moscow and Washington differed on whether a treaty would recognize a "group capability."

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REU-29, July 15, 1965

To : The Secretary
Through: S/S
From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes

Subject : Attitudes of Selected Countries on Accession to a US-Soviet Co-sponsored
Draft Agreement on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

This paper reviews current world interest in a possible non-proliferation treaty. It assesses the receptivity to such a treaty of those countries which either possess nuclear weapons or have the interest in acquiring them or the capability of constructing them.

INTRODUCTION AND ABSTRACT

The basic assumption of this paper is that the US and USSR have agreed on the text of a draft non-proliferation treaty to which they would urge all other governments to accede. Without going into textual details, the treaty, in its general terms, would require both a promise by all existing nuclear powers not to transfer any of their military-nuclear know-how or weapons to any non-nuclear country and a pledge by the non-nuclear states not to acquire nuclear weapons, either by transfer from a nuclear power or by domestic production. No assumption is made about the procedures adopted by the US and USSR to induce the cooperation and participation of other countries in this endeavor.

Admittedly, it is highly questionable and unlikely, at present, to assume US-Soviet co-sponsorship of a draft treaty. In part, this is because the US insists that the treaty terms should not outlaw new national nuclear capabilities, but not joint

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capability controlled by a group of nations, such as might come about under the Multilateral or Atlantic Nuclear Force proposals. The USSR takes the opposite view, and wants to reject new group capability, as well. An even more important immediate reason for doubting the assumption is that the international climate does not now seem propitious for new US-Soviet accords, and that there is no way of knowing when and if this situation may change.

The governments whose attitudes are here explored include, among NATO countries, Great Britain, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, and Canada. The positions of two European neutrals, Sweden and Switzerland are also examined. In addition, the stand of Communist China is reviewed, as well as the probable attitudes of such important lands as Japan, India, Israel, and the UAR.

The general conclusion is that Great Britain, Italy, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland, and Japan would adhere to such a treaty, though some more speedily than others. West Germany would probably do so after behind-the-scenes protests, debates, soul-searching, and misgivings. France also might well join, while Communist China's participation would be unlikely. Israel and the UAR would either accede together or not at all, and the UAR is not beyond refusing if Peking and Paris do not join up. Finally, India would probably attach to its accession so many conditions difficult to fulfil that its adherence must be rated as doubtful.

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I. THE NORTH ATLANTIC AREA

The nuclear powers of Western Europe are the United Kingdom and France. The presently non-nuclear Western European and North American countries considered independently capable, in varying degrees, of "going nuclear", include the Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden, Italy, and Canada. Switzerland has been reported to have shown interest in the possibility of acquiring nuclear weapons by purchase from abroad or through joint programs with other countries.

We believe that if the US and the USSR agreed to co-sponsor a nuclear non-dissemination, non-acquisition treaty proposal of agreed draft text, the attitudes of the foregoing countries and the decisions they would make as to whether to adhere, would be as follows:

UK. The United Kingdom has long been actively interested in the prevention of further nuclear proliferation, and has produced its own draft treaties and declarations for use in negotiations to this end. (A new British non-proliferation draft was only recently put forward to some of the Western governments.) The UK can be expected to support any non-proliferation proposals that are not nakedly propagandistic or in some way discriminatory in favor of the communist countries. The British would probably not be fussy about the political implications of adherence by such potential signatories as East Germany. The UK would hope to participate in any initial US-USSR discussions as a principal from the outset, but this would not be a precondition of its own support of the treaty plan. The UK would bend maximum efforts to encourage the US to keep moving, and would also exert itself strongly to drum up support elsewhere. The British will continue in the future to show concern about any proposed NATO arrangements that might threaten to make achievement of a non-proliferation agreement more difficult.

France. French officials from de Gaulle on down have stated that France follows a policy of non-dissemination, but the French do not believe that the pursuit of a non-dissemination policy by the nuclear powers will prevent proliferation, which they consider inevitable.

Despite this skepticism, France has not taken a categorical stand against non-proliferation agreements when the question has arisen in the past, and any such agreement would, in fact, serve at least some French interests. A non-proliferation agreement would have to recognize France's status as a member of the select company of nuclear powers. France would also see benefit in Germany's adherence, since this would increase the pressures against an eventual independent German nuclear capability, which France fears.

The French would probably be more receptive to a simple Five Power non-dissemination agreement or declaration (President de Gaulle has strongly implied his readiness to join in negotiations toward such a declaration) than to one with a non-acquisition feature, since they consider it inappropriate and fruitless for nuclear powers to call upon the non-nuclear states to remain so.

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Nevertheless, if they saw sufficient political fringe benefits accruing to themselves from a Five Power agreement as such, they might not refrain from joining the other four nuclear powers in putting forward a plan that included a non-acquisition provision for the have-nots.

The procedural aspects of negotiation would also be important to France. France has not taken its seat at the UN-sponsored Eighteen Nation Disarmament Conference in Geneva because it involves countries that, in France's view, are not entitled to participate. But the French would, for example, probably participate in talks involving only the five nuclear powers (if Red China is so defined). We would expect France to be more likely to sign an agreement that had gone through the stage of Five Power negotiations than to adhere to one presented by the US and the USSR on a take-it-or leave it basis. But it cannot be ruled out that France would sign an agreement produced solely under bilateral US-USSR auspices if enough countries, including Red China, committed themselves to it. In any case, we would not expect the French to take any initiatives in the non-proliferation field.

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FRG. The Government of/Federal Republic of Germany, with the support of a sizable majority of the public, has repeatedly declared its adherence to a policy of nuclear non-acquisition, and the Germans are treaty-bound not to produce nuclear weapons in Germany. Nonetheless, the West German Government has become increasingly resistant to the idea of a formal non-acquisition undertaking, for two fundamental reasons. First, the West Germans suspect that East Germany would inevitably be a signatory to any such agreement, and would thereby gain some degree of de facto international recognition. The German Government was subjected to severe domestic criticism for its failure to anticipate and prevent this eventuality in the case of the partial nuclear test ban treaty. Second, West Germany argues that disarmament measures and other measures contributing to East-West detente must be accompanied by progress toward German reunification. Specifically in the case of non-acquisition, the Federal Republic has taken the position that if Germany's signature on such an agreement is a désideratum of the East, then it is also one component of Germany's limited leverage on the Soviets in the reunification context, and should be used in that context.

We do not believe that Germany will be prepared to consider a non-proliferation agreement before the German elections of September 1965. Thereafter, the Germans would probably put up a behind-the-scenes fight to short-circuit any non-proliferation agreement not coupled with progress on the German question. But if such an agreement were reached by others, presented as a fait accompli, and signed by a large number of powers, world opinion, especially in allied countries, and German domestic opinion as well, would probably impel Germany to sign.

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Further Comments on the Franco-German Aspect. We have been discussing the French and German prospects, above, in a partial vacuum. Certain considerations, however, cannot be overlooked. If France were favorably motivated toward a non-proliferation agreement, this would not necessarily result from a belief in the efficacy of such an agreement as a means of avoiding proliferation, but rather from the degree to which the form of the agreement and the procedures by which it had been reached advanced France's place in the world. In this respect, if the agreement were being proposed at a time and under circumstances in which West Germany were prepared to go to great lengths to oppose it, and if France continued at that date to see hope for political benefits from a Franco-German entente, then France might conclude that it had more to gain by aligning itself with Germany in opposition to or abstention from the non-proliferation treaty than by supporting the agreement. This eventuality might act to limit the amount of effective pressure which third parties could bring to bear on the Federal Republic to adhere.

However, another complication in this picture is relevant. FRG Foreign Minister Schroeder again declared on July 3 that West Germany would be willing to sign a non-acquisition agreement only as part of a package deal setting up the MLF, or some "equivalent" Alliance nuclear arrangement, and even then only in the form of a pledge to its allies, not to all the world. France would, of course, not relish German adherence to a non-dissemination treaty if formation of the MLF were the price, since defeat of the MLF is central to de Gaulle's policies. Thus, if the absence of new Alliance nuclear arrangements of the MLF type became the tactical ground on which the FRG based its opposition to the non-dissemination agreement, Paris would be very unlikely to support Bonn's intransigence in rejecting the treaty. On the other hand, it must be recalled that the assumption behind this paper is Soviet-US co-sponsorship of a draft treaty, and this virtually presupposes prior American abandonment of the MLF project. Thus, if FRG opposition to the treaty were still being manifested, it would probably be in terms either of the GDR's likely accession or of reunification issues, rather than of the non-creation of the MLF. In that case, the comments of the previous paragraph would be applicable.

Sweden. An agreed US-USSR non-proliferation proposal (if it included a non-acquisition provision) would present the Swedes with a perplexing problem. Sweden, whose traditionally neutral status requires a strong defensive capability, has for some time been putting itself in a position to exercise an option to produce nuclear weapons if it decides that this is indispensable for a credible defense posture. However, it has not yet gone into production, partly because it hopes the US and the Soviet Union will make some progress toward disarmament, but even more because of domestic political dissonance on this issue. A non-proliferation agreement that was not part of a larger disarmament package would face the Swedes with a permanently weakened defensive capability vis-a-vis the USSR. But at the same time, the Swedes would not wish publicly to stand in the way of a measure that would appear to contribute to an East-West detente.

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We would expect Sweden to attempt to stall off such a dilemma by diplomatic maneuvering before the fact. But if a US-USSR proposal reached Sweden in a form like that of the partial nuclear test-ban treaty, that is, as a signed treaty open to further signatories, and if many other countries adhered, we believe that Sweden would eventually probably also sign, perhaps with a reservation about possibly invoking the treaty's escape clause if there were no long-term progress toward nuclear disarmament among the five existing nuclear powers.

Switzerland. The situation of the Swiss is analagous to that of the Swedes in that the cornerstone of their national security policy, armed neutrality, is potentially jeopardized by the appearance in the world of nuclear weapons. In both countries, therefore, there are pressures from the military in favor of acquiring such weapons. There are, of course, certain important differences: Switzerland has not, so far as is known, inaugurated a research and development program to put itself in a position to produce nuclear weapons if it decides it wants them; Switzerland does not now lie in the shadow of a nearby threatening, nuclear-armed power; the Swiss lack domestic uranium. To the extent that Swiss interest in nuclear weapons has been reported, it has centered largely about the possibility of buying weapons or producing them jointly with others. But, although the Swiss Government has so far successfully resisted domestic pressures to declare itself out of the nuclear weapons field, we believe that the Swiss would adhere to a non-proliferation agreement if presented with the issue, for reasons, and probably also with conditions, similar to those noted above for Sweden.

Italy. Italy has shown no interest in acquiring independent control of nuclear weapons. The government is, in fact, committed to work against nuclear proliferation. If a US-USSR draft non-proliferation treaty or declaration were forthcoming, we would expect the Italians to support it, and to join in whatever agreement eventuated. Barring some unforeseeable international upheaval, we would expect no change in this forecast as long as the Italian left remains a major political force and Italy's economic development needs remain strong, which means for a long time.

Canada. Canada strongly and actively supports the non-proliferation concept and would almost certainly participate in any reasonable agreement to that end.

II. COMMUNIST CHINA

In considering the reaction of Communist China to a US-Soviet co-sponsored draft non-dissemination agreement, it is analytically useful to consider substantive and procedural questions separately. This is because such willingness as Peking may feel to see a non-proliferation agreement come into world-wide operation is probably outweighed by a strong determination to insure that Communist China's accession be compensated by a general enhancement of the CPR's status.

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Peking has made it clear on a number of occasions that it would not be averse to the general global elimination of nuclear delivery systems and nuclear weapons, since this would leave China in the position of being one of the world's mightiest conventionally-armed powers. However, given its views of the aggressive nature of U.S. imperialism and of the inevitability of armed confrontations between America and various sorts of "people's forces", Peking neither expects much progress to be made on disarmament matters nor will take many initiatives to that end. Its interest is largely confined to preventing any propaganda setbacks to the CPR image that might result from a candidly negative posture.

In these circumstances, apart from its advocacy of the total destruction of nuclear arms, Communist China has, since 1964, given most attention to achieving a "first step" agreement by all countries not to use nuclear weapons. It has explicitly added that, if this were done, non-nuclear nations would have no need to develop or import nuclear arms. The latter point ties in with its support, in 1963, for an agreement banning the "import and export" of nuclear weapons.

It would thus appear, on the record, and in principle, that Peking is not hostile to the concept of a non-dissemination, non-acquisition agreement, and this coincides with what can be assumed of its policy goals. A primary objective, of course, has been to augment the CPR's stature as a major world power, and the possession of nuclear weapons has been seen as an important way of attaining this by making visible to all China's "different-ness" from all other less-developed countries. Nuclear proliferation, especially in Asia, would diminish Peking's gain in this regard, as well as raise obstacles to its ability to use its nuclear power status as an instrument of political pressure and military threat. Hence, Communist China itself is unlikely to transfer nuclear weapons (of which it so far has only a few anyway) or production know-how to friendly or allied states. Moreover, it would certainly like to inhibit similar transfers by other nuclear powers (e.g., the U.S. or USSR to India), and it would probably be pleased to have various non-nuclear countries undertake self-denying, non-acquisition pledges.

Nonetheless, procedural difficulties could act very strongly to impede Peking's adherence to a US-USSR co-sponsored draft treaty. In the first place, the mere fact of a joint American-Soviet initiative would arouse intensely hostile feelings among the Communist Chinese leaders, and they would interpret the move as an effort by their two foremost enemies to isolate and denigrate China. They would almost certainly counter with a call for the entire issue to be taken up at some sort of world conference, not under United Nations auspices. They would not look with much favor on any French call that might be made, for consideration of the proposal at a meeting limited to the five nuclear powers, inasmuch as they are still anxious to build up their position among the great LDC majority of nations. Moreover, while probably not rejecting outright the draft proposed by the U.S. and USSR, they would be most likely to seek to broaden the agenda by adding more far-reaching disarmament proposals, as well as propaganda items unacceptable to the U.S., such as an unenforced and unenforceable ban on the use of nuclear weapons. In addition, in all of this, they would exert maximum efforts to ensure that Peking became even more widely accepted as an indispensable participant in the consideration of all major world problems, and they would insist that Nationalist China be excluded from participation in the undertaking.

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These Chinese tactics would pose a dilemma for the treaty's co-sponsors. Should they acquiesce in Peking's procedural demands and thus risk having the project bog down in the confusion and distractions of a world conference? Or should they press ahead with their draft in the hope that a mass of accessions by other nations all around the globe will eventually bring the CPR to accede? It should be noted, in the latter connection, that Peking could probably not be bluffed into thus adhering to the agreement. However, this might not seem too important, given China's own disinclination to disseminate nuclear weapons and the probable accession of almost all the non-nuclear states (except North Korea, North Vietnam, Albania, and, perhaps, Cuba) to which Peking might even consider transferring nuclear arms in the next decade.

III. OTHER COUNTRIES

Israel and the UAR. Israel's nuclear development is substantially ahead of that of the UAR, but its main deficiency for a weapons program remains the lack of a plutonium separation plant. Israel could build such a plant in about two years after a decision to do so and could test a first nuclear device less than a year after the plant's completion. At least another two years would be needed to develop a weapon suitable for aircraft delivery, provided outside assistance were not available in the form of technological advice. Israel would probably need about four years after testing its first device to produce a nuclear warhead compatible with the MD-620 missile. The UAR, however, would have to acquire almost all the technical know-how from another country or else receive the weapons themselves from abroad.

The UAR and Israel each probably feels that it must acquire nuclear weapons in the event the other does so. The motivation for acquiring nuclear weapons is probably stronger in Israel than in the UAR simply because nuclear arms can be seen as a potential equalizer of Arab manpower and resources in the future, when and if these develop into a serious military threat to Israel. Nevertheless, the Israelis know that their acquisition of nuclear weapons would arouse strong disfavor in the U.S. and could, at best, only spur on the UAR to match them and that such arms in Egyptian hands would create a host of serious problems for Israel.

In these circumstances, even if Israel is already toying, as it may well be, with a decision to develop its own nuclear weapons, there is a good chance that both Israel and the UAR would be willing to adhere to a non-proliferation treaty if each were certain that the other were also a party to the treaty. Both countries accepted the test ban treaty, and their views on the IAEA safeguards suggest that they recognize their interest in preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Near East. As in the case of the test ban treaty, the UAR would strongly emphasize the need for France and Communist China to adhere to the agreement and might refuse to adhere itself unless these two countries also signed the agreement.

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India. It has been a long-standing policy in New Delhi to oppose the existence of nuclear weapons, to say nothing of their proliferation into many hands. The conflict with Communist China in 1962 caused India to review its traditional stand, but, so far, the government has maintained its position against Indian acquisition of nuclear arms, either by indigenous production or by procurement abroad. At the same time New Delhi has so arranged its peaceful uses nuclear research program as to keep open the option of diverting it to weapons research and development, if a political decision to do so were made. There have also been indications that India has become somewhat less enthusiastic about piecemeal international arms control agreements that would inhibit future Indian freedom of choice, while leaving Communist China unrestrained in developing its nuclear arsenal. This attitude has been reflected in a tendency in New Delhi to make Indian accession to any self-denying agreement contingent on broader scale international disarmament agreements or at least on satisfactory US and USSR guarantees to India in the event that any other nuclear power (i.e., Peking) were to launch an atomic attack on India.

The proposed non-proliferation treaty would present India with serious domestic political problems. Much would depend upon the way in which the treaty were introduced, its timing in relation to India's 1967 general elections, the possibility of obtaining guarantees from the nuclear powers and similar factors. The reception which the proposal received elsewhere in the world would also be important.

Arguing for Indian adherence would be the country's traditional espousal of a non-proliferation agreement, its leadership in disarmament councils, its prominent role in the Afro-Asian community, and the small likelihood that an Indian nuclear force, even if created, could counterbalance China's strategic-geographic advantages. Nevertheless, these arguments tend nowadays to appeal mainly to the minority group of sophisticated Indians. Hence, if Communist China and Pakistan were not parties to the treaty, there is a good chance that India would refuse to sign in the absence of assurances, satisfactory in form and substance, from the US and USSR. It is even possible that the process of facing up to the issue of future nuclear policy, which is implicit in the decision on accession to the treaty, would trigger a domestic debate that ended up with a decision to move ahead with an independent nuclear capability.

If, on the other hand, Pakistan did adhere to the treaty, and if India received satisfactory assurances from the US and the USSR against nuclear attack from Peking, the chances are it would adhere. It might be helped to this decision if the draft treaty contained an escape clause of the type incorporated into the partial nuclear test ban treaty of 1963. However, even then, this would not take place without deep soul searching and protracted argument inside the ruling Congress Party, where pro-bomb elements are now considerably stronger than they were at the time the test ban treaty was concluded.

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Japan. Many of the defense problems which beset India also afflict Tokyo, in that there is concern about long-term Chinese Communist intentions. Nevertheless, Japan is even further than India from taking serious steps to develop its own nuclear weapons, and it relies heavily on the American commitment to Japanese security. With these factors in the background, as well as with the mass Japanese aversion to nuclear weapons dating from World War II experience, it is highly likely that Japan would speedily adhere to a non-proliferation treaty.

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