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Introduction: Global Order, Cooperation between the Superpowers, and Alliance Politics in the Making of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime

Roland Popp*

An often-quoted statement by President John F. Kennedy at a press conference in 1963 acquainted the wider public with a major international problem originating from the invention of a new class of weapons with hitherto unimaginable destructive capabilities: the spread of nuclear weapons. Commenting on the on-going negotiations with Moscow on a possible test-ban agreement, Kennedy declared ‘the possibility in the 1970s of the President of the United States having to face a world in which 15 or 20 or 25 nations may have these weapons’ as ‘the greatest possible danger and hazard’.1 The signing of the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT) in August 1963 was seen as an important first step towards containing the spread of nuclear-weapons technology.2 It also furthered the on-going process which finally led to the signing of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1968. With the entering into force of the NPT in 1970, the capstone of an edifice was in place which would progressively develop into a global non-proliferation regime, extending into the post-cold-war era.

Since the dawn of the nuclear age, strategists, policy-makers, scientists, and concerned citizens alike have struggled to find the means to control the dangers originating from atomic weaponry. Having experienced the devastation of the Second World War and the willingness of belligerents to consciously target enemy civilian populations, many feared that the properties of this new technology and the near-impossibility for effective defence against it heralded even greater cataclysms in the future. Early attempts to contain the threat by regulating access to nuclear technology, such as the Acheson-Lilienthal, Baruch, and Gromyko plans, were ambitious, verging on utopian. As tensions rose between the two main great powers to emerge from the Second World War, the United States and the Soviet Union, leading to the antagonistic competition labelled the ‘cold war’, a global agreement on such a sensitive and critical matter as nuclear weapons proved to be unattainable for the time being.3

Given the impossibility of mutual agreement and co-operation on international control of atomic energy, and the noticeable effect of the ‘nuclear revolution’ on international relations as well as military planning, the subsequent years were shaped by uncontrolled proliferation, both ‘vertically’, through increasing superpower stockpiles, and ‘horizontally’: nuclear tests by Great Britain (1952) and France (1960) expanded the exclusive nuclear ‘club’ to four powers, in the wake of the Soviet crossing of the threshold in 1949. Dwight D. Eisenhower’s Atoms for Peace initiative in late 1953 – which promised countries US assistance in the development of civilian

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nuclear energy for peaceful use – was more a propaganda ploy and cold-war weapon than a sincere attempt at containing the spread of nuclear weapons. It may have even had the (unintended) effect of accelerating it.\(^4\) Up to the late 1950s, preventing the spread of nuclear weapons was clearly of secondary importance to the superpowers. Indeed, both the United States and the Soviet Union abandoned early unilateral policies based on restriction and secrecy and instead tolerated – or in some instances even actively supported – nuclear acquisition by close allies through the means of nuclear assistance, sharing, or even outright ‘permissive’ proliferation.\(^5\) The United States renewed active nuclear co-operation with Great Britain in 1958, while the Soviet Union undertook a massive effort to help the People’s Republic of China build its own nuclear weapons, leading to Beijing’s successful testing of a nuclear device in 1964. In accordance with these attitudes, the United States also pursued a policy of nuclear sharing in the NATO alliance, \textit{de facto} pre-delegating authority to use nuclear weapons to non-US forces.\(^6\)

This nonchalant attitude towards proliferation disappeared rather suddenly in the early 1960s. It was in this decade that the foundations of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime were laid, and it is impossible to fully understand the actual functioning of this complex set of rules, treaties, and norms without taking into account the specific historical context of its creation. A number of separate developments were responsible for this shift in attitudes in around 1962–3. One important factor was the realisation on both sides – caused by the near-catastrophe of the Cuban Missile Crisis – that the proliferation of independent nuclear decision-centres in additional states would magnify the dangers of similar escalations and make the actual use of nuclear weapons in the future more likely. This \textit{nuclear pessimism}, the realisation of the inherent dangers of proliferation, was amplified by growing societal pressures on governments to reduce the dangers, environmental and other, connected to the possession and development of nuclear weapons.\(^7\) On the international scene a vociferous non-alignment movement demanded likewise. All these factors may be considered important. However, the available documents seem to suggest that the most crucial driver of this sudden urge to pursue effective non-proliferation policies was a simultaneous change in perceptions in Moscow and Washington based on an understanding of a confluence of interest on the question of further nuclear spread.

\textbf{The emergence of ‘atomic complicity’}

The counterintuitive momentum towards co-operation between the superpowers on arms control and non-proliferation, culminating in 1963, has led authors such as Marc Trachtenberg to postulate the emergence of a ‘Constructed Peace’ between the cold-war antagonists in this year. What brought the United States and the Soviet Union together was a joint interest in preventing the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) from gaining access to an independent nuclear deterrent. While the general thesis of an actual tacit settlement of the major geopolitical problem underlying the cold war in 1963 is still contested, there is agreement that the historical origins of the modern non-proliferation regime should be located in this particular context.\(^8\) The growing Sino-Soviet split from the late 1950s and Moscow’s second thoughts on the desirability of an independent Chinese nuclear deterrent opened a historic opportunity for a joint US–Soviet initiative in favour of a nuclear non-dissemination treaty. Kennedy’s special arms-control emissary Averell Harriman cherished hopes of closer collaboration between Moscow and
Washington ‘to prevent Red China from obtaining nuclear capability, and the possibility of working with the Soviets to this end’, based on a similar understanding regarding the FRG.\(^9\) And Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev seemed to confirm Moscow’s interest in a ‘genuine’ nuclear non-dissemination agreement in a letter to Kennedy in April 1963, making sure that ‘neither Western Germany nor anyone else would dare go against the collective will of the participants in that agreement’, lest they face the ‘moral ostracism of all mankind’.\(^10\) In the end, negotiations on such a treaty during Harriman’s mission to Moscow in 1963 failed, as the Soviets believed the Chinese programme too far advanced to be forestalled, while Khrushchev shied away from close collaboration with the cold-war enemy because he was still hoping for a rapprochement with Beijing.\(^11\) But the powers were able to agree on a limited test-ban treaty, which not only reduced fallout from nuclear testing by the superpowers and the United Kingdom but was also a first, if limited, step towards preventing further proliferation.\(^12\)

For a number of reasons, it took another five years to conclude negotiations on a non-proliferation agreement. Kennedy’s assassination and Khrushchev’s overthrow brought to the fore new leaders with different priorities. More important, however, was the fact that with the PRC’s crossing of the nuclear threshold in October 1964, the main impetus for the United States to seek such an agreement seemingly ceased to exist. From then on, it was mainly the US allies who would be most affected by a superpower agreement on non-proliferation. Superficially, it seemed as if the most recent idea of nuclear sharing, the NATO Multilateral Nuclear Force (MLF), was the main obstacle to the conclusion of a non-proliferation agreement.\(^13\) The MLF, however, varied significantly from earlier Eisenhower nuclear-sharing initiatives resembling de facto proliferation. All the rather misguided MLF project did, in fact, was to promise a placebo for West German and Italian nuclear-status anxieties, keeping participating states worlds apart from independent nuclear decision-making. The MLF could justifiably be described as more of a means of preventing further proliferation, as the United States consistently tried to argue in its talks with Soviet counterparts. At one point, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy gave the Soviet Ambassador the ‘categorical assurance that there was no one in the USG who had the smallest intention of allowing the Germans to have national control of nuclear weapons’.\(^14\) Indeed, the Kennedy administration had already moved in mid-1962 to install ‘permissive action links’ (PALs) on nuclear weapons stationed in Allied countries, thereby revising previously lax US custody and ending the controversial Eisenhower approach. It can therefore be argued that, inside their respective realms of influence, both superpowers had already moved towards implementing the core ingredients of a non-proliferation agreement, long before the actual signing of the NPT.

Furthermore, while more encompassing evidence is still lacking, there are some indications that Soviet opposition to the MLF was not as categorical as might have been suggested by contemporary rhetoric, as well as by later historical research. According to Polish sources, Moscow was willing as early as October 1963 to relinquish the demand for a clause prohibiting the establishment of joint nuclear forces, thereby acquiescing to the creation of a MLF. Polish, East German, and Romanian opposition forced a revision of this Soviet stance in late 1964, tying Moscow’s hands in negotiations with Washington.\(^15\) On the other side of the Iron Curtain, the intransigence of the United States’ allies similarly reduced Washington’s freedom of action. The intra-NATO debate on the MLF stymied US arms-control policies during the
first half of the 1960s. A complicating factor was de Gaulle’s challenge to US leadership in Western Europe and to the NATO alliance at large. But there was also determined opposition to an activist non-proliferation policy inside the US administration, based on a belief in the inevitability of nuclear proliferation. Historical experience, the argument went, showed that sooner or later every military innovation was diffused to other powers in the international system, thereby contributing to the reordering of its overall structure. The very idea of an active non-proliferation policy was therefore wrong-headed, potentially harmful and, ultimately, unrealisable. The standard bearer of in-house non-proliferation sceptics, presidential advisor John McCloy, gave expression to this sentiment by warning of the counterproductive effects of the perception of any superpower collusion in preventing the acquisition of nuclear armaments by other states. Forcing through a discriminatory nuclear order – especially against the stated opposition of one’s allies – could well undermine the cohesion of existing alliances and convince West German and Japanese leaders to reconsider their alliance choices. Moreover, McCloy argued, it was an ‘oversimplification to associate all evil with proliferation and all good with nonproliferation’.

The demise of the MLF concept in combination with the effects of the Chinese nuclear test in October 1964 helped overcome these obstacles. After the Chinese test, both superpowers reviewed their non-proliferation stances. On the US side, in January 1965, the high-level Gilpatric Committee recommended that non-proliferation be made a stronger priority in US foreign policy. This constituted something of a turning point towards a generally more robust US posture. With respect to the emergence of a non-proliferation regime, one can detect an interesting change in emphasis in internal US deliberations on the nuclear question at this point. While non-proliferation advocates and opponents alike still regarded the FRG nuclear problem as the central question and constructed their arguments around the possible effect on Bonn’s attitude on nuclear acquisition, there nevertheless seems to have been a rethink of the general nuclear proliferation complex in the middle of the decade. Previously, concerns regarding conceivable Swedish, Indian, or Israeli nuclear acquisition had been routinely appraised in relation to their potential effect on the FRG’s thinking on nuclear weapons. Now, however, the arguments used in favour of a robust non-proliferation policy moved to a higher plane. Non-proliferation advocates now insisted that proliferation anywhere in the world would severely endanger US strategic interests. Apart from the possible nuclear arming of US enemies and the exacerbation of regional conflicts, there was another, previously overlooked, aspect of a further spread of nuclear weapons: the weakening of the strategic influence of the superpowers. New nuclear powers could well result in the end of the US role as world policeman, the Gilpatric Committee warned. Ultimately, the committee warned, this could force a US withdrawal from South-East Asia and even Western Europe.

Walt Rostow, then Chairman of the Policy Planning Council in the State Department, summarised this view. Rostow explicitly outlined the dangers for the US-led global order based on collective security if nuclear weapons were to spread further: What U.S. interests are involved? I do not believe it possible for us to go on building a world of interdependent political and economic institutions, if, at the same time, national nuclear capabilities develop all over the lot. If other nations claim the right to fire nuclear weapons independently of tight collective security arrangements with the
U.S., we may well increasingly draw back from their defense. We are not going to let others determine when we take the risks of a nuclear war. If we draw back in the critical field of security, our total influence on the way things go in other parts of the world will diminish. They will then try to organize political and economic relations, as well as military arrangements, at arms [sic] length from us. [...] In short, whether we solve the nuclear proliferation problem on a collective security basis, with the U.S. playing a key role in each area, or whether we let national nuclear capabilities rip, will shape the whole political and economic bone structure of the world of the future.23

Around the time Rostow wrote this memorandum, there were signs of similar concerns on the Soviet side. In their mutual talks, both superpowers took pains to reassure each other of the sincerity of their non-proliferation stances, agreeing that ‘it would be best to close all channels and all possible ways for other countries to acquire nuclear weapons.’24 And both Moscow and Washington condemned the ‘doctrine of proliferation proclaimed from Peiking and Djakarta’, which encouraged other Afro-Asian nations to acquire nuclear weapons in order to ‘shake off imperialist control’.25

It is this US–Soviet co-operation on non-proliferation, perceived by many other world leaders as collusion – or even ‘atomic complicity’ (’atomare Komplizenschaft’), in the words of West German Chancellor Kiesinger – which was the central precondition for the emergence of the NPT and the wider non-proliferation regime. One indicator of its major importance (and success) might be the fact that the pace of proliferation slowed considerably after the 1960s. Israel’s clandestine (and apparently unnoticed) crossing of the nuclear threshold in 1967 had extended the nuclear club to six powers in a period of only two decades. In the following forty-five years, however, only four more powers acquired nuclear weapons, with one of them, South Africa, relinquishing them again in the 1990s. While contemporary non-proliferation advocates prefer to trace this ‘success’ back to the cogency of the main bargain between nuclear haves and have-nots, as codified in the final NPT, it can be more convincingly argued that a much more decisive role in this outcome was played by the agreement of the main nuclear powers to forestall a further enlargement of the nuclear club. In some important respects – which have been unacknowledged in cold-war historiography – the counterintuitive accommodation between the super-powers to freeze the nuclear status quo implicitly involved a tacit agreement on the contours of the desirable international order in general, transcending the somewhat limited arms-control agreements that followed in the 1970s, and perhaps even superseding them in long-term historical importance.26

The New International Nuclear History

The emergence of this superpower agreement is one of the many questions which a new historiographical school, which might aptly be called the New International Nuclear History, has been trying to tackle in the recent past. Nuclear history has been a constituent part of general cold-war history from the beginning, albeit with a much stronger emphasis on deterrence, stockpiles and delivery systems, strategies, and the role of nuclear weapons in warfighting as well as ‘nuclear events’ such as the Cuban Missile Crisis. However, the whole complex of proliferation/non-proliferation has so far been largely ignored by historians, despite the prominence of these issues in the contemporary world.27 In the past few years, a growing number of international historians has reignited interest in nuclear weapons and concomitant policies.
Influenced at the same time by the presentist interest in proliferation matters in the context of the Iraqi, North Korean, and Iranian nuclear programmes and the new global focus of contemporary cold-war history, these nuclear historians have focused their research on the perspectives of peripheral actors, such as regional middle powers, on nuclear weapons and non-proliferation, the emergence of the non-proliferation norm, attempts at global governance through the establishment of an institutional order in the service of non-proliferation goals, and the long-term repercussions that this order had on the post-cold-war international system.\textsuperscript{28}

This special forum can be regarded as a part of the New International Nuclear History. The five contributions assembled here may be seen as a first step by scholars in the critical assessment of the emergence of the non-proliferation regime in a historical perspective. While retaining the central agency of the cold war and the dominant position of the superpowers inside their alliance systems as the main point of reference – superpower collusion as the major precondition for the founding of the non-proliferation regime being the obvious example – new nuclear historians have at the same time adopted a \textit{pericentric perspective} and directed their interest at the positions, policies, and nuclear ambitions of European and non-European middle powers, the influence of international institutions and agencies, the views of the decolonised world and the Non-Aligned movement, the effects of technological advances on the nuclear field, and the societal and cultural reactions to the nuclear threat, testing, and the promises of civilian nuclear development. Given the pervasive secrecy surrounding nuclear issues and the far from satisfactory access to archives in many parts of the world, much of the research on peripheral actors had to be undertaken using documentation of US and European origin. Some recent research initiatives, however, seem to have aided the declassification processes in countries such as India, Brazil, and others, creating a future opportunity for dense and evidence-based histories of their nuclear programmes.\textsuperscript{29}

In addition to the questions of secrecy and archival access, the New International Nuclear History also faces conceptual challenges, deriving from the complexity and contradictory nature of its topic. While the history of nuclear-arms build-ups and deterrence strategies took place in lockstep with the general course of the cold war, other currents and ordering principles seem to have had a bearing on the evolution of the proliferation/non-proliferation complex. Many of them do not really fit into the dominant cold-war narrative or appear to have been somewhat obscured by the latter. Francis Gavin has underlined this largely unacknowledged fact: ‘The history of the nuclear age is not the same thing as the history of the Cold War.’\textsuperscript{30} The central question for historians will remain the need to explain the ‘unholy co-operation’ between the superpowers in creating the early regime and the driving forces inside the US and Soviet governments which prioritised the NPT over the wishes of their main allies in the face of their bitter opposition, and, in addition during a cold-war phase characterised by escalation in Indochina and the general absence of other serious arms-control negotiations. The need for a comprehensive explanation for the ‘Nuclear Yalta’, the emergence of the nuclear condominium of the superpowers, continues to be a major gap in cold-war scholarship. A profound re-evaluation of the position of the NPT in the broader context of the cold war and the relations of the superpowers seems to be in order.\textsuperscript{31}

Beyond the superpower negotiations on the fledging non-proliferation regime, the new history has to take into account the effects of a changing global order in the 1960s and 1970s on the nuclear field. The final agreement between Moscow and
Washington on an NPT draft treaty, presented to the UN-sponsored Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee in late 1966, turned out to be only the first step towards the finalisation of a global non-proliferation agreement. In order to make a non-proliferation treaty acceptable to other states, the superpowers had to stop treating the issue as ‘basically a US–Soviet problem’ and understand the necessity of taking into account the fact that ‘centrifugal tendencies are greatly changing the bipolar world of the 1950’s’: the non-proliferation policies had to adapt accordingly.32 It took another one and a half years after the Soviet–US agreement on a draft before the NPT was opened for signature in mid-1968. During this period, elements were added to the treaty which today are seen by many as the ‘central bargain’ or the ‘three pillars’ of the NPT, through which the newly established discriminatory nuclear order was balanced with the promise of the legitimate nuclear-weapon states as defined by the treaty to work towards disarmament (Article VI) and to facilitate access to peaceful nuclear technologies (Article IV).

The idea of balancing renunciation with nuclear-technology transfers had already been at the centre of President Eisenhower’s 1953 ‘Atoms for Peace’ initiative. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), established in 1957 in the course of the same initiative, was now designated as the verification body of the new order. Non-nuclear-weapon states agreed to place all their nuclear activities under IAEA safeguards. Regarding the aim of nuclear disarmament, President Lyndon Johnson even declared it publicly as the ‘most pressing task which the treaty lays on its parties’, immediately on the treaty’s opening for signature.33 The main emphasis of the treaty, however, was clearly on non-proliferation. Still, it is also doubtful whether some of the most important non-nuclear-weapon states would have acceded to the treaty in the absence of the concessions of the ‘grand bargain’.34

The debate on the significance of these diplomatic trade-offs and the actual relationship between the different pillars continues to this day.35 At the heart of these debates in the past and the present has been the impossibility of finding a convincing argument justifying nuclear abolition for the majority while allowing a minority to continue practising nuclear deterrence at the same time. This was the main criticism made by non-aligned states such as India, which argued that not only the prevention of further proliferation but also the reversal of present proliferation should have been the object of such an international undertaking. While the challenge of ‘managing hypocrisy’ remained a persistent weakness of the regime, the entering into force of the NPT in 1970 created the central component of an increasingly elaborate non-proliferation approach which could be labelled non-proliferation by persuasion, aimed above all at convincing governments to forego the nuclear option. Persuading other states to abandon the option of nuclear acquisition and join the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon states was an important step in implementing the new nuclear order. The policies, means, and incentives used in order to persuade other governments were manifold. Disarmament promises and technology-transfer pledges clearly played a subordinate role in convincing governments to join the NPT, compared to diplomatic pressure from the superpowers on the one hand, and the reaffirmation of alliance guarantees in the form of extended deterrence on the other. In some respects, nuclear sharing and consultation arrangements played a key role in preventing further proliferation by reducing the incentive to acquire an independent deterrent. Non-proliferation by reassurance and participation can therefore be thought of as a sub-component of the wider strategy of non-proliferation by persuasion.
In order to understand the complexity of the non-proliferation nexus, it is important to understand that the NPT, notwithstanding a negotiation process of almost a decade and the enormous efforts undertaken to bring the agreement into being, was fairly limited in its initial effect. Apart from the dissatisfaction of many states with the treaty’s discriminatory character and the expected failure of nuclear-weapon states to live up to their disarmament and nuclear-assistance commitments, the final agreement was also criticised for its doubtful effects on proliferation. Despite being assigned legal status as nuclear-weapon states within the NPT, France and the PRC stood apart. Some of the main candidates for future proliferation such as the FRG, Italy, Switzerland, and Japan, did not ratify the treaty until the mid-1970s. Others, such as Brazil, Egypt, Israel, South Africa, India, Pakistan, and Spain, did not join in the first place. The dual-use nature of nuclear technology and the treaty’s affirmation of states’ ‘inalienable right’ to develop a nuclear infrastructure for peaceful purposes, plus the IAEA’s imperfect verification and accountability instruments, left the way open to a strategy of developing a future option to manufacture actual nuclear weapons in a short time frame if needed, a strategy of ‘nuclear hedging’ or ‘nuclear pregnancy’. In the US government bureaucracy, there was a clear expectation that nuclear proliferation would continue under the NPT.

In spite of these ambiguities and weaknesses, the movement towards a more comprehensive and complete non-proliferation regime continued, albeit characterised by some fairly capricious ups and downs. The above-mentioned drawn-out NPT ratification process was in parts a consequence of the sceptical attitude of the Nixon administration vis-à-vis non-proliferation. It took the shock of India’s ‘peaceful nuclear explosion’ in 1974 to reignite the political determination to pursue active non-proliferation policies. Indian nuclearisation, together with the (exaggerated) expectation of a global expansion of nuclear-energy production and the demise of the previously more or less unchallenged US monopoly in civilian nuclear technology and trade outside the Communist bloc gave momentum to yet another surge in non-proliferation activities. Contrary to the diplomatic emphasis of the 1960s, the preferred approach now changed into a strategy of non-proliferation by denial. It was less aimed at the demand side in persuading other governments to abandon the weapons option, focusing instead on the supply side by hindering access to sensitive nuclear technology which could be used in military programmes. This purpose was served by international institutions aimed at managing export controls, promoting ‘proliferation-resistant’ technologies, and balancing commercial competition with safeguard obligations, such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in 1976, a cartel in all but name, and the International Nuclear Fuel Cycle Evaluation Program in 1977. New unilateral approaches through national legislation such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act in the US in 1978, renewed efforts to discourage proliferation while creating new causes for tensions in the respective alliance systems, above all between the United States and its European allies.

A third approach, in addition to persuasion and denial, was non-proliferation by coercion, encompassing measures to force other states to forego nuclear weapons through means beyond diplomacy. However, with the exception of the plans for joint military US–Soviet action against the PRC’s nuclear facilities before 1964 and some ideas hatched at the time of the Gilpatric Committee regarding active nuclear rollback policies – also aimed at allies such as France using coercive methods such as sabotage and covert action – coercive non-proliferation was not a preferred option for the superpowers during the cold war. It did, however, play an important role for
other proliferators, the most famous expression of such a policy being Israel’s covert operations against scientists working in unconventional-weapons programmes in Egypt during the 1950s and 1960s and the military attack on an Iraqi reactor in 1981. However, given the extreme sensitivity of such operations, revelations in the future regarding coercive non-proliferation measures carried out by other powers cannot be ruled out. *Non-proliferation by coercion* would gain much greater prominence in the post-cold-war world.

**Roadmap of the special forum**

All three different strategies for containing nuclear proliferation may be identified in policies of the main powers in the history of the nuclear age, often used in combination. The contributions in this special forum mostly deal with the first two approaches: non-proliferation by persuasion and non-proliferation by denial. Dane Swango’s contribution to this forum deals with the controversial question of the status of civil nuclear co-operation and assistance inside the wider bargain constituting the NPT. Based on his reading of the documentary record, he finds only scarce evidence for the later claim that Article IV, containing the promise of nuclear assistance, played a significant role in the overall construction of the treaty. Swango confirms the above view of the basic superpower agreement on non-proliferation as central to the NPT, but goes further; he has a different interpretation of the insertion of a clause promising nuclear assistance in the later negotiation phases. While he agrees that there was a departure from previous US policies on nuclear assistance, Swango maintains that US policy-makers did not regard Article IV as a *quid pro quo* for states’ adherence to the NPT and that the Johnson administration insisted on the continued provision of such assistance to non-NPT members. 40

John Krige’s contribution highlights some of the difficulties in forging a proliferation regime arising from technological progress in combination with alliance politics and commercial competition. Krige recounts the growing awareness of both the economic and proliferation potential of gas centrifuges for enriching uranium. This new technology had the potential to upset the United States’ technological lead and dominance of nuclear trade while at the same time endangering the fledging NPT regime through potentially providing a way – both cheap and easy to conceal – of clandestinely producing weapons-grade enriched uranium for military purposes. Krige’s analysis illustrates the many demands and pressures that officials faced in their nuclear decision-making. Great Britain was torn between concerns regarding the proliferation dangers emanating from gas-centrifuge technology, its economic potential and the possibilities of co-operation with the Dutch and West Germans with a view to future EEC membership, and the objective of strengthening its central nuclear special relationship with the United States. 41 Washington used the leverage of London’s dependency on military nuclear co-operation to force access to British centrifuge prototypes, thereby gaining reaffirmation of its continued technological superiority. Krige’s contribution demonstrates the complexity of nuclear politics in the middle cold war and analyses how US technological dominance amplified its diplomatic leadership inside the Western alliance. 42

In the aftermath of the signing of the NPT, *non-proliferation by denial* quickly gained in importance as the preferred strategy. William Burr’s thoroughly documented reconstruction of the reaction of the superpowers and their main alliance partners to the Indian nuclear test in 1974, as well as the growing consensus between
the major industrial states regarding the necessity of co-ordinating their nuclear exports policies in order to impede proliferation, is the first detailed account of the creation of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Burr demonstrates the many difficulties on the way towards the NSG, above all the hesitation of Western European exporters given the expectation of an imminent global nuclear bonanza as a consequence of the energy crisis and the resultant commercial opportunities. Something that stands out in Burr’s analysis is that he sees the pivotal role as having been played by France, although France was not an NPT signatory, and not by the Soviet Union as one might have expected. This once again suggests that nuclear and cold-war histories could be out of tune. In order to keep the French in line, the US administration had to settle for much weaker NSG guidelines than desired, above all on making full-scope safeguards obligatory, something that was a burden to subsequent non-proliferation attempts.

The failure to effectively limit and safeguard the export of reprocessing and enrichment technologies would later put new strains on transatlantic relations. Determined to make the most out of its new competitiveness in the global nuclear market, in 1975 the FRG signed a deal with Brazil – in fact the largest export agreement in its history – on the sale of a complete nuclear-fuel cycle including enrichment and reprocessing facilities. The Brazil deal added another burden to the already strained West German–US relations. Fabian Hilfrich’s analysis of the affair demonstrates once again the tensions between the non-proliferation strategies of persuasion versus denial. While Washington interpreted the Brazil deal above all from the vantage point of nuclear proliferation given the extent of technology transfer implied in the deal, Bonn on the contrary suspected hidden commercial interests behind the US stance. In response, the West Germans insisted on a legalistic interpretation of NPT obligations, despite Brazil not being a member of the treaty, and castigating the US position as ‘technological colonialism’. The intensity of the subsequent crisis between the allies, which in many respects surpassed previous West German–US confrontations and which occurred despite the awareness of the FRG’s pivotal military role inside NATO, is testimony to the growing prominence of non-proliferation concerns within the wider spectrum of Washington’s global policies. Hilfrich also shows the decisive role, once again, of the French in dissuading Bonn from continuing exports of sensitive nuclear technology. Washington’s increasing determination during the 1970s to implement the non-proliferation norm, even against the will of its main allies, added a new momentum to the edifice of global politics.43

The last contribution to this special forum, by Tatiana Coutto, gives an example of one important aspect of the New International Nuclear History, the de-centring of this history without losing sight of the importance of the major decision centres in creating the nuclear order. Coutto analyses the reaction of peripheral actors vis-à-vis the emerging nuclear order and the emphasis on halting proliferation, demonstrating the breadth of new information and insight that can be gained through a change of perspective. From the vantage point of South American states such as Argentina and Brazil, the US emphasis on halting proliferation seemed very much like a continuation of imperialist attitudes. Coutto demonstrates convincingly that, contrary to Western proliferation predictions resulting from a security dilemma in the Southern Cone and despite the suspicions on each side regarding the other’s clandestine pursuit of nuclear weapons, US pressure actually brought both countries together in opposing the enforced non-proliferation norm. Argentina and Brazil, even before the re-establishment of democratic governance in the 1980s, stayed away from the
NPT, feeling it was discriminatory in character and realising the unlikelihood of substantial technological assistance from the advanced industrial states. These two countries opted for the alternative of mutual trust building and ‘nuclear bilateralism’, finally leading to the creation of the Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials in 1991. The success of ‘nuclear bilateralism’ created a practicable alternative to a Western-imposed nuclear order, perhaps pointing to a course for the nuclear order of the future.

Historicising the nuclear order and the development and implementation of the non-proliferation norm will not only shed light on crucial and often overlooked aspects of past history but will also help us to amend, revise, or even correct the nuclear catechism – the many beliefs which today form the core of thinking on proliferation and non-proliferation, whirling around in academic circles, think tanks, governmental departments, and the wider non-proliferation community.44 Historians have long neglected the topic of non-proliferation and left the field to political scientists, who have analysed the phenomenon in the pursuit of more efficient strategies to halt the spread of nuclear weapons. Instead of looking at the history of the nuclear age through the framework of non-proliferation, the new international history will offer the opportunity to put non-proliferation itself back into the frame. It will analyse the contested phenomenon of non-proliferation in its various aspects, taking different perspectives, carving out the positions of the different actors, state and non-state, examining the intersections between the nuclear realm and the cold war, analysing superpower antagonism and collusion, tracing the fabrication of global institutions, norms and rules, and studying domestic, national, regional, and local responses. A look at the recent past leaves no doubt that this history is, indeed, much too important to be left to political science.45

Notes
5. On the role of nuclear assistance in the development of the nuclear order see M. Kroenig, Exporting the Bomb: Technology Transfer and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons (Ithaca, 2010); ‘permissive proliferation’ was the designation du jour in the mid-1960s for a deliberate policy of facilitating nuclear proliferation to selected allies or neutral powers.
12. See Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Study, 'Relationship of Nuclear Test Ban to Non-Proliferation', 1963–64.

11. See Working Group No. 4 memo 'Nuclear Containment and Non-Proliferation', 29 June 1963.


7. See L.S. Wittner, *Confronting the Bomb: A Short History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement* (Stanford, 2009); on cultural representations see P.S. Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York, 1985); D. Seed, *Under the Shadow: The Atomic Bomb and Cold War Narratives* (Kent, OH, 2013); on the interplay between social forces and diplomatic developments see A. Wenger and J. Suri, 'At the Crossroads of Diplomatic and Social History: The Nuclear Revolution, Dissent and Détente', *Cold War History*, i, no. 3 (2001), 1–42; for an example of the influence of societal pressures on national-security decisions see James Cameron's article on suburban protests against missile defense facilities in this *IHR* issue (From the Grass Roots to the Summit: The Impact of American Suburban Protest on US Missile Defense Policy, 1968–72, 342–362).


13. Treating the MLF as the 'most important' aspect of the NPT process is H. Brands, 'Non-Proliferation and the Dynamics of the Middle Cold War: The Superpowers, the MLF, and the NPT', *Cold War History*, vii, no. 3 (2007), 389–423, here 390.


16. See Rostow memo to Rusk, 'Arms Control and the Alliance; Or How to Persuade Allies to Make Peace', 6 April 1964, USNA, G/PM, DAC, box 4, fol. 'DEF – DEFENSE AFFAIRS (1) DEF 18-1 General Policy & Plans 1964'; see Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid*, 217–50; G.T. Seaborg and B.S. Loeb, *Stemming the Tide: Arms Control in the Johnson...


21. For an example of an argument claiming that the abandonment of a non-proliferation agreement would in effect doom the chances of an MLF, ultimately resulting in West German proliferation, see Foster Memo to Committee of Principals, 16 July 1965, USNA, G/PM, DAC, box 3, fol. ‘DEF – DEFENSE AFFAIRS (1) July 65 to; DEF 18-1 General Policy & Plans’.

22. See Gavin, ‘Blasts from the Past’, 109–10; the Committee foresaw the emergence of ‘conceivable new regional groupings and balances, coupled with the responsibility which may come with nuclear accession’, an essentially nuclear-optimist perspective. The final Gilpatric Committee report stated: ‘As additional nations obtained nuclear weapons, our diplomatic and military influence would wane, and strong pressures would arise to retreat to isolation to avoid the risk of involvement in nuclear war.’ Report by the Committee on Nuclear Proliferation, 21 Jan. 1965, FRUS 1964–68, xi. 174.


26. Coming to a similar interpretation is Gavin, ‘Nuclear Proliferation and Non-Proliferation during the Cold War’, 414–16.

27. On the many historical inaccuracies on which the contemporary dominant view on proliferation dynamics is based, see F.J. Gavin, ‘Same as It Ever Was: Nuclear Alarmism, Proliferation, and the Cold War’, International Security, xxxiv, no. 3 (2010), 7–37; for a sceptical view on nuclear alarmism by a political scientist see J.E. Mueller, Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism from Hiroshima to Al-Qaeda (New York, 2010).

29. The most potent initiative is the multinational project called the Nuclear Proliferation International History Project (NPIHP), started in 2011 and funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. For the project’s website see http://www.wilsoncenter.org/program/nuclear-proliferation-international-history-project [Accessed 20 December 2013]; the project supported the declassification of important documents on the Indian nuclear programme. The documents can be accessed at http://www.idsa.in/npihp/document.html [Accessed 20 December 2013]; the interdisciplinary Nuclear Studies Research Initiative hosted by the Robert S. Strauss Center at the University of Texas at Austin emphasises the policy relevance of nuclear history.

30. Gavin, ‘Nuclear Proliferation and Non-Proliferation during the Cold War,’ 415.


38. On the non-proliferation policies of the Nixon administration see Gavin, Nuclear Statecraft, 117–19.

39. See Walker, A Perpetual Menace, 86–97; M.J. Brenner, Nuclear Power and Non-Proliferation: The Remaking of U.S. Policy (Cambridge, 1981); another factor generating renewed activism was the new phenomenon of international terrorism in combination with the nuclear threat. See J.S. Walker, ‘Nuclear Power and Nonproliferation: The Controversy


42. Additional US leverage derived from the fact that Washington had the option to terminate the 1958 agreement on military nuclear co-operation during this time period. See Katzenbach memo to Johnson, 22 Nov. 1968, LBJL, National Security File, Country File, box 212, fol. ‘United Kingdom, Vol. XIV, Cables & Memos 8/68-1/69’.


44. On the production of an uncritical acceptance of non-proliferation as a global good and the consequences of these attitudes see the important article by C. Craig and J. Ruzicka, ‘The Nonproliferation Complex’, *Ethics & International Affairs*, xxvii, no. 3 (2013), 329–48.