

# ISRAEL AND THE EVOLUTION OF U.S. NONPROLIFERATION POLICY: THE CRITICAL DECADE (1958-1968)

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Ever since the Baruch Plan (1946), the United States has opposed the spread of nuclear weapons. Until the 1960s, however, that opposition was hardly translated into a coherent and well-defined policy of nuclear nonproliferation. During the 1950s, nuclear proliferation was not regarded by American policymakers as a global concern to be addressed by a global policy. It was under President John F. Kennedy that the United States “discovered” nuclear nonproliferation as a foreign policy problem; it was under President Lyndon B. Johnson that the idea of a Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was endorsed as the solution to the problem.

America’s experience in dealing with the Israeli nuclear program was critical to both the discovery of the problem and its solution. Israel was

a powerful testimony to the Eisenhower administration’s failure to come to grips with the reality of nuclear proliferation. Although the Israeli nuclear project had been conceived in 1955-57 and its physical construction initiated in early 1958, only in December 1960 did the departing Eisenhower administration determine that Israel was in fact building a major nuclear facility in the Negev desert aimed at establishing a nuclear weapons capability. The challenge of how to apply the American opposition to the spread of nuclear weapons to the complexity of the Israeli case was left to the incoming Kennedy administration.

President Kennedy was by far the most forceful American president in dealing with the Israeli problem. He recognized that the consequences of U.S. efforts to stem Israeli proliferation went far beyond U.S. policy to-

wards Israel and even beyond American interests in the region. While he was committed to the security of Israel, he was also concerned about nuclear proliferation. In the spring and summer of 1963, these two interests came to a head-on collision as Kennedy made his last ditch effort to curb Israel’s nuclear ambitions. Three months later, he was assassinated and the torch was passed on to President Johnson. It was under Johnson, who in his first two years had other priorities than nonproliferation, that a special arrangement was crafted: Israel pledged not to be the first to introduce nuclear weapons to the Middle East, and, in return, the United States provided Israel with weapons to maintain Israel’s security (tanks and planes).

Although Israel has long been viewed as a key state in the devel-

opment of U.S. nonproliferation policy, it has not been known how, and to what extent, the Israeli experience shaped the evolution of that policy. Most of the little that has been written on this subject, deals with the Israeli side of the story, that is, how American pressure determined Israel's nuclear policy.<sup>2</sup> Almost no research has been done on how the experience with Israel shaped the evolution of American nonproliferation policy in the critical decade that led to the NPT.<sup>3</sup> Recently declassified archival material, and other new evidence, allow us now to reconstruct some of this history.

Based on this evidence, this study argues that lessons and insights drawn from the experience with Israel were critical in persuading American policymakers that the bilateral approach to nonproliferation may be insufficient. By the mid-1960s, it became evident that the bilateral approach had failed with Israel and might fail elsewhere. Instead, the United States should use its influence and power to create an international nonproliferation norm and to form a regime to embody and support that effort. The way to accomplish this task was through a global nonproliferation treaty to be backed by the two superpowers. The Israeli case was an important experience in obtaining this insight.

### **THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION ON NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION**

Every American president since Harry S. Truman has opposed the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Atomic Energy Act of 1946 solidified this opposition by prohibit-

ing the transfer of nuclear weapons, or any nuclear technology defined as "restricted data," to other countries. However, the record of the Eisenhower administration shows that preventing nuclear proliferation was not as high a priority as sharing the civilian-industrial benefits of atomic energy.

On December 8, 1953, President Eisenhower unveiled his Atoms-for-Peace program at the United Nations. The new initiative sharply reversed the policy of nuclear denial maintained since 1945, bringing an end to the decade of total nuclear secrecy.<sup>4</sup> In accordance with the new initiative, the administration asked Congress in 1954 to amend the Atomic Energy Act of 1946 to allow the United States to declassify and distribute a huge amount of scientific information, theoretical and experimental nuclear research data as well as nuclear material. Research reactors, previously prohibited for export purposes, were now promoted as a necessary step towards the future. Meanwhile, plutonium separation techniques were declassified.

Atoms-for-Peace reflected the expectation that nuclear energy would be the third wave of the industrial revolution, and that American technology should lead the march forward. The distinction between peaceful and destructive uses of atomic energy, and the belief that it was possible to promote the one and to control the other, was at the heart of the initiative. In retrospect, Atoms-for-Peace was successful in promoting American nuclear technology, but less so in maintaining safeguards and control. Nuclear historians Richard G. Hewlett and Jack M. Holl wrote the following about

this American naiveté:

Atoms-for-Peace was a sincere but yet almost desperate effort to find some redeeming value in what seemed a uniquely American engineering triumph. This moral imperative provided a special incentive for the Atoms-for-Peace program. Without it, Atoms-for-Peace and Eisenhower's extraordinary dedication to the idea were not really understandable. At the same time, the sobering realities of thermonuclear warfare made international control of the atom a matter of paramount concern. The dilemma was that the two conflicting goals could not be separated.<sup>5</sup>

The geopolitics of the Cold War and the stalemate between the superpowers regarding nuclear arrangements in Europe made it difficult for the Eisenhower administration even to conceptualize nuclear proliferation as a foreign policy problem. The United States dealt with proliferation risks through its own nuclear-related legislation, bilateral safeguards agreements on nuclear cooperation, and, most significantly, by supporting the creation of international organizations, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and EURATOM, as instruments to both promote and safeguard nuclear cooperation among nations. Promoting the peaceful atom became an important tool of American foreign policy, certainly in Europe, where American support of EURATOM was the cornerstone of Eisenhower's idea of a "United States of Europe."<sup>6</sup> The United States was also committed to safeguarding its nuclear cooperation with other nations. Safeguards, however, are not sufficient to prevent nuclear proliferation.

The Eisenhower administration opposed the spread of nuclear weapons, but it recognized that sovereign nations had the right to pursue such an objective on their own. This presumption was embedded in the IAEA founding statute (1956). The objective of the IAEA was to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to set in place a safeguard system ensuring that such nuclear cooperation would not be diverted to military purposes. The founding statute, however, did not forbid a member from acquiring nuclear weapons, nor did it require a member to accept safeguards on nuclear materials and facilities acquired outside of IAEA assistance programs. The idea of a “no-weapons pledge” was considered by American policymakers but rejected as unfeasible.<sup>7</sup> Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was convinced that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the United States to persuade other nations to forego permanently their right to build nuclear weapons as long as the Big Three (the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain) continued to do so. In the absence of a nonproliferation norm, the Big Three were not in a position to appeal to the rest of the world to abjure nuclear weapons.

By the mid-to-late 1950s, it had become evident that technologically advanced and politically determined nations were capable of acquiring nuclear weapons on their own. The Soviets acquired the bomb in 1949, the British in 1952, and it was only a matter of time until France did the same. Other West European nations, such as Sweden, Italy, West Germany, and Switzerland, were deliberating whether to pursue the nuclear weapons option. The United States, as part of its “New Look” policy on

nuclear weapons, produced large quantities of tactical nuclear weapons, which it justified as a counter to the rising costs of conventional weapons. It was predicted that tactical nuclear weapons would become the future means of war-fighting, assets that any advanced, technologically capable, state should possess.<sup>8</sup>

The dilemma for America was whether to provide the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with nuclear weapons, making it unnecessary for members to build their own nuclear arsenals, or, alternatively, to limit its security commitment to Europe, or possibly to withdraw militarily from Europe. The Eisenhower administration chose to introduce nuclear weapons into NATO and have greater nuclear sharing with its NATO allies.<sup>9</sup>

In 1958, the U.S. Congress amended the Atomic Energy Act to accommodate the growing American nuclear deployment in NATO. The revised act allowed the transfer of weapons-grade fissionable material and weapons design information to nations that had “made substantial progress in the development of nuclear weapons” (the reference was to Great Britain). The Eisenhower administration thus gave priority to nuclear weapons cooperation with allies over efforts to stem nuclear proliferation.

When the idea of an international agreement to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons was introduced for the first time at the United Nations in 1958 by Ireland—calling for the Big Three not to transfer nuclear weapons to any other state and for all other nations not to manufacture them—the Soviets supported it, while the United States, along with its NATO allies, opposed

it. The Eisenhower administration’s opposition was driven by concerns about allied nuclear deployments.<sup>10</sup> A year later, when Ireland modified its resolution, introducing weaker language under which the nuclear powers would “refrain from handing over control of such weapons to any nation not possessing them,”<sup>11</sup> the United States supported it, while the French and Soviets abstained. In 1960, when the Irish proposal was amended further, calling on the nuclear states not only to refrain from relinquishing control of nuclear weapons, but also from transmitting “information needed for their manufacture,” this time the Soviets voted in favor of it and the United States continued to abstain, citing verification concerns.<sup>12</sup>

These shifts in position reveal the conflict and confusion within the Eisenhower administration over the merit of a nuclear weapons nonproliferation policy relative to other goals and priorities. The Atoms-for-Peace legacy was that preventing nuclear proliferation was less of a priority than sharing nuclear information and technology and the civilian-industrial benefits of nuclear energy within NATO. America was undecided about what it could or should do to prevent nuclear proliferation. France and Israel posed dilemmas for U.S. policy.

In the case of France, the Eisenhower administration recognized its nuclear intentions but felt it had no political or moral grounds to dissuade France. When EURATOM was founded, with American backing, its statute was written to allow France to acquire the bomb.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the United States did not launch an all-out diplomatic effort against the French nuclear program,

although such an effort most probably would have failed.<sup>14</sup>

### THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION'S INTELLIGENCE BLUNDER ON DIMONA

The Israeli case was even more dramatic in highlighting the inadequacies of the Eisenhower administration's nuclear nonproliferation policies. In January 1961, only days after President Kennedy was sworn in, he asked the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) to prepare a "post-mortem" report on the Israeli nuclear case, to explain "why the intelligence community did not recognize this development earlier," and to draw lessons from this intelligence failure for the future.<sup>15</sup> The "post-mortem" report confirmed that it took the United States almost three years to determine that Israel was constructing a major nuclear facility with strong military implications. This long delay was due to a substantial American intelligence failure.

Only in early December 1960, weeks after Kennedy had been elected, had the Eisenhower administration realized that Israel was building a second nuclear reactor in Dimona.<sup>16</sup> On December 8, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) issued a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) about Dimona and immediately notified the National Security Council of the discovery.<sup>17</sup> A day later, Secretary of State Herter summoned Israeli Ambassador Harman, presented him with the new American findings, and asked for an explanation.<sup>18</sup> Ten days later, Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) Chairman John McCone confirmed publicly the discovery on "Meet the

Press." After three days of silence, on December 21, Prime Minister Ben Gurion confirmed that Israel was building a second nuclear reactor in Dimona, but insisted that it was for peaceful purposes.<sup>19</sup> Dimona had now become a matter of public knowledge.

The conclusions of the USIB report assert that "[t]he Israelis probably made the decision to go forward with their nuclear program as early as 1956, and collaboration with the French on this project had been initiated by 1957." The report confirms that "[i]nformation was available to some elements of the intelligence community as early as April 1958 that could have alerted the atomic energy intelligence community to Israeli intentions." Furthermore, it states that: "if the atomic energy intelligence community had properly interpreted information available on Israeli reactor plans and promptly and persistently sought additional information on this program, we believe that the ultimate secrecy or deception surrounding this development would have been detected and Israeli intentions recognized at least one year earlier."<sup>20</sup>

In its effort to explain this failure, the report's authors stress Israel's deliberate efforts to deceive and confuse the United States through various public and private statements about their future nuclear energy plans. The authors also emphasize the fact that Israel was not classified as a serious proliferation threat until the discovery of Dimona. The report refers to a "general feeling" that:

Israel could not achieve this capability without outside aid from the U.S. or its allies, and the belief that any such aid would be readily

known to the U.S., led to a tendency to discount rumors of Israeli reactor construction and French collaboration in the nuclear weapon area.<sup>21</sup>

The report recounts in great detail how many pieces of information from numerous sources available to the U.S. nuclear intelligence system since 1956 were either lost in the bureaucratic shuffle or simply misinterpreted.

One cannot escape the conclusion, however, that the roots of the Eisenhower administration's intelligence blunder went deeper than matters of intelligence oversight and misjudgment. The Eisenhower administration's nuclear policies, both on nuclear power (Atoms-for-Peace) and nuclear weapons ("nuclear sharing" among allies), generated a climate that led to the breakdown of oversight. This climate explains the administration's failure to interpret properly the many signs and indications that Israel might be developing a nuclear weapons program. Some intelligence officials even believed at the time that President Eisenhower himself was reluctant to take political action against Israel, even when unequivocal evidence was presented to the president. They interpreted his failure to act as an indication that he was tacitly permitting Israel to develop nuclear weapons.<sup>22</sup> Israel deliberately took advantage of this climate in its concealment efforts and was successful in keeping the Dimona project unidentified for almost three years after its initiation.

The importance of the "post-mortem" investigation of the American intelligence blunder in the Israeli case went far beyond Israel itself. The report's conclusion stressed that

“it is considered that nuclear developments by other potential ‘N-th’ countries may also be shrouded in secrecy and more than a routine overt collection effort will probably be required in some instances to effectively predict them.”<sup>23</sup> It was the task of the incoming Kennedy administration to assure that such an intelligence blunder would not happen again.

### **KENNEDY, NONPROLIFERATION, AND ISRAEL: THE FIRST ENCOUNTER (1961)**

Just as the United States lacked in 1960 a coherent global nonproliferation policy, the international community too did not consider a state’s acquisition of nuclear weapons a violation of an international norm. The reason is plain and simple: at that time there were no international norms against nuclear proliferation. As Secretary of State Dulles recognized, there were no legal grounds that allowed the United States to discourage any other country, large or small, from developing nuclear weapons. Both the United Kingdom and France, the only countries to develop nuclear weapons capabilities in the 1950s, considered their achievement as a matter of national prestige and pride, a confirmation of their great power status. There was a sense that other technologically advanced countries would follow the trend. Proliferation was seen as likely, perhaps even inevitable.

John F. Kennedy was the first president who came to the White House personally convinced that the spread of nuclear weapons to new nations would create a more dangerous world and undermine U.S. global influence. He was aware that the

problem of nuclear weapons proliferation became more acute as nuclear technology and knowledge became increasingly available and less expensive. He believed that it was a vital American interest to act decisively to stem nuclear proliferation beyond the four powers (now including France) that already possessed such weapons. He came to office with the intention to place nuclear arms control and nonproliferation in the center of the American foreign policy agenda.<sup>24</sup> In the words of Glenn T. Seaborg, Kennedy’s appointed chairman of the AEC, nuclear proliferation was Kennedy’s “private nightmare.”<sup>25</sup>

Kennedy’s nuclear arms control agenda was derived, at least to some extent, by his commitment to nonproliferation. He supported a nuclear test ban agreement—the first arms control issue that his administration had to deal with—in part because he saw it as a nonproliferation tool. Even before the 1960 presidential elections, Kennedy was on record opposing the resumption of nuclear testing because of the pretext it gave to other nations to acquire nuclear weapons. The only example Kennedy used in order to make his point was that of Israel.<sup>26</sup>

When Kennedy took office, Israel was the prime embodiment of the “N-th” country problem. The issue of the Dimona nuclear reactor involved more than Israel or even the Middle East; it was about how the United States could combat nuclear proliferation worldwide effectively. Israel showed that a small- to mid-sized state with scientific talent could secretly develop the bomb (with European assistance), without the United States even detecting it for three years. If a small country

like Israel was on its march to the bomb, how could the United States persuade other nations, bigger nations, not to follow the same path? Success or failure in the Israeli case would be fateful for the entire nonproliferation cause. Israel was the awakening that led Kennedy to discover nuclear proliferation as a global U.S. concern.<sup>27</sup>

Kennedy pressed Israel on the matter of Dimona during the first half of 1961.<sup>28</sup> He made it clear to his administration that he had a “personal interest” in the issue of Dimona and considered it a high foreign policy priority.<sup>29</sup> Within days of taking office, Kennedy received oral and written reports on Dimona, all stressing that the United States must either place Dimona under international safeguards or ensure promptly an American inspection of the site. In the absence of a nonproliferation regime, or a binding international norm, the only political tool available to Kennedy was strong presidential pressure at the bilateral level. For these very reasons, Israel was reluctant to accept IAEA safeguards on Dimona. Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion did agree, in principle, to an American visit to Dimona at some indefinite time in the future. After persistent American pressure and a series of Israeli delays, Ben Gurion finally agreed to an unpublicized visit by two American scientists to the Dimona site.

On May 18, 1961, two AEC scientists visited Dimona and concluded that the unfinished reactor “is of the scope and peaceful character previously described to the United States.”<sup>30</sup> Due to Israeli control of the visit, the CIA doubted the veracity of the AEC report, a pattern that persisted throughout the entire pe-

riod during which AEC scientists visited Dimona.<sup>31</sup> After December 1960, the intelligence community now held the consistent assessment that Israel was aiming at the bomb and would do everything possible to advance its pursuit. The White House, however, had to endorse the scientists' report without questions. This was probably not just for reasons of political convenience, although the report was no doubt politically convenient to the White House in preventing a confrontation with Israel, but primarily because the White House was not in a position to reject its own scientists' report after it had fought so hard to force Israel to accept the U.S. visit.

In any case, the positive report of the AEC scientists assured that the meeting in New York between Kennedy and Ben Gurion two weeks later was successful. Ben Gurion affirmed that the purpose of Dimona was peaceful, but he qualified it with the phrase "for the time being." Kennedy, who explained his firm commitment to the cause of nonproliferation, exerted no new pressure. He asked Ben Gurion's permission to pass the report's conclusion to others, and Ben Gurion agreed. The confrontation with Kennedy that Ben Gurion had so much feared did not take place. "Ben Gurion felt relieved—the reactor was saved," writes his biographer.<sup>32</sup>

In retrospect, the visit and the Kennedy-Ben Gurion meeting demonstrated the weaknesses and ineffectiveness of Kennedy's bilateral approach of dealing with Israel. Kennedy had insisted upon, and obtained, an American visit to Dimona to verify Israel's verbal pledges. Thus, it would be awkward for him to question the AEC report. How-

ever, under the conditions and modalities for the visit, its effectiveness could be questioned. The CIA felt from the very beginning that a one-day visit by two or three AEC scientists, under strict Israeli escort, was not the way to detect secret activities, let alone intentions. Under those conditions it was very unlikely that the scientists would have found discrepancies between what Israel had told the United States and what was actually going on. Many years later McGeorge Bundy (Kennedy's national security advisor) wrote that such visits "were not as seriously and rigorously conducted as they would have had to be to get the real story."<sup>33</sup>

A testimony of the American intelligence community's thinking about nuclear weapons proliferation, including its suspicions towards Israel, appears in a top secret 1962 study that the Pentagon prepared for the White House.<sup>34</sup> Assuming the technological trends continue, the study predicted that some 16 countries, excluding the four present nuclear countries, would be able to acquire nuclear weapons and a delivery capability over the next 10 years. Among those states, China was considered "most certainly" to acquire nuclear weapons and Israel was defined as the next most likely proliferator, preceding both Sweden and India. Only in two of these cases, China and Israel, did the study forecast when the state would acquire a nuclear capability, assuming that the proliferation decision was already made at the time of the study was written. It estimated that Israel could conduct its first nuclear test in 1966-67 (the projected date for China was 1964-65), and it would have a rudimentary aircraft and Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM)

capability by 1968 (before China, which was estimated to do so in 1970 and 1972). Among these 16 nations, as far as motivations was concerned, Israel was categorized (along with France and China) at the top of the list: "The pressures for possession: prestige, coercive and deterrent value and military utility have overridden inhibitions, apart from the two superpowers, only in the cases of the U.K., France, almost certainly China, and probably Israel."<sup>35</sup>

The memo noted that in 1962, the cost of building a rudimentary nuclear weapon program (producing only a few bombs) would come to about \$150-175 million. The total bill, however, was expected to decline greatly over time due to the diffusion of weapons technology, wider distribution of research and power reactors, and advances in technology resulting from continued testing. As to the question of testing, the subject matter of the memo, it stated that unrestricted testing would lower significantly the cost of acquiring nuclear weapons. While the memo recognized that a test ban would be politically helpful to stem proliferation, it noted that even a comprehensive ban would only slow a determined proliferator. It stressed that a more important measure would be the political pressure that both the United States and the Soviet Union were willing to employ.<sup>36</sup>

The Kennedy administration recognized early on that the bilateral approach, as applied to the Israeli case, had serious shortcomings and that the most promising method of halting proliferation was through superpower cooperation in crafting a nuclear nonproliferation agreement. This realization was probably among the reasons for the change of

policy towards the Irish nonproliferation proposal. In December 1961, the Kennedy administration supported a revised Irish resolution calling for a nonproliferation agreement under which the nuclear powers would commit themselves not to relinquish control of their nuclear weapons, nor to transmit manufacturing information, while the non-nuclear states would undertake "not to manufacture or otherwise acquire control of such weapons." The Irish resolution, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in December 1961, was the first formal expression of the superpowers' nonproliferation interest, which led to the NPT in 1968.

The adoption of the Irish resolution by the U.N. General Assembly made the concept of a nonproliferation treaty the subject of superpowers discussions. The first round of U.S.-Soviet negotiations on the issue started in Geneva in March 1962, but it soon became evident that major disagreements over the United States' existing (NATO) and future (the idea of Multilateral Forces, or MLF) nuclear arrangements blocked any progress. The United States adhered to the language of the Irish proposal that interpreted a ban as relinquishing "control of nuclear weapons," while the Soviets insisted on banning direct or indirect "transfers" of nuclear weapons.<sup>37</sup> Just as U.S. negotiators were more committed to protecting their European interests over an agreement on nonproliferation, so their Soviet counterparts seemed more interested in keeping nuclear weapons out of NATO and Germany than in the cause of nonproliferation. The idea of a nonproliferation treaty was not yet ripe.

### **KENNEDY, NONPROLIFERATION, AND ISRAEL: THE SECOND ENCOUNTER (1963)**

The Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 was an exhausting and sobering experience for Kennedy. It highlighted the anxiety of living under the shadow of the bomb and reinforced Kennedy's conviction that the spread of nuclear weapons was a global danger that must be stemmed. In the coming year, nuclear nonproliferation became even more central to Kennedy's global agenda. In a public speech in late March of 1963, Kennedy expressed his sense of urgency about nuclear proliferation in the following way:

Personally I am haunted by the feeling that by 1970, unless we are successful, there may be ten nuclear powers instead of four, and by 1975, fifteen or twenty.... I see the possibility in the 1970s of the President of the United States having to face a world in which fifteen or twenty or twenty-five nations may have these weapons. I regard this as the greatest possible danger and hazard.<sup>38</sup>

Kennedy did not name Israel in his speech, but in the spring of 1963, Israel was at the center of Kennedy's nonproliferation effort. An updated version of the July 1962 study on "nuclear diffusion" was prepared for Kennedy in February 1963.<sup>39</sup> This time the memo named only eight states as capable of acquiring nuclear weapons and a crude delivery capability within the coming decade. Still, Israel was the most likely proliferator after China. The memo projected 1965-66 as the date when Israel could conduct its first nuclear test. "In some cases," the memo

ends, "we and others would probably have to employ stronger incentives and sanctions than have seriously been considered so far."<sup>40</sup>

Weeks later the head of the CIA Office of National Estimates, Sherman Kent, issued an eight-page memorandum to CIA Director John McCone on the consequences of Israeli nuclearization, particularly in terms of greater Soviet influence in the region.<sup>41</sup> It is evident that the knowledge that within a few months the Dimona reactor would become critical drove U.S. concerns. If the United States did nothing to halt the Israeli program, it would have to face these consequences in a few years. Thus, if the United States was serious about halting nuclear proliferation, it had to act forcefully with Israel before this time.

Newly declassified archival documents show that in the second half of March 1963, the Israeli nuclear program was high on President Kennedy's agenda. On March 25, Kennedy discussed the Israeli nuclear program with McCone, who handed him the CIA's estimate of the consequences of Israeli nuclearization. After that meeting Kennedy asked National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy to issue a presidential directive to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, CIA Director McCone, and AEC Chairman Seaborg, requesting them to look for "some form of international or bilateral U.S. safeguards" to curb that eventuality.<sup>42</sup> The result was National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 231, titled "Middle Eastern Nuclear Capabilities," which stated:

The President desires, as matter of urgency, that we undertake every feasible measure to improve our in-

telligence on the Israeli nuclear program as well as other Israeli and UAR [United Arab Republic] advanced weapons programs and to arrive to a firmer evaluation of their import. In this connection he wishes the next informal inspection of the Israeli reactor complex to be undertaken promptly and to be as thorough as possible.<sup>43</sup>

Within days, NSAM 231 was put into motion. On April 2, the U.S. Ambassador to Israel initiated a new request for an American visit to Dimona. At the same time, the State Department formed an interagency working group to develop a plan for action, using both carrots and sticks, to curb the introduction of “advanced weaponry”—nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles—to the Middle East. NSAM 231 was a test of the bilateral approach to curb nuclear and ballistic missile proliferation in the Middle East. This bilateral approach was consistent with the recommendation of the February Pentagon study urging the use of “stronger incentives and sanctions” to persuade Ben Gurion not to go nuclear.

The “battle of Dimona” between Kennedy and Ben Gurion followed between April and June 1963.<sup>44</sup> Beginning in early April, Kennedy pressed Ben Gurion hard on the importance of American visits to Dimona and the dangers of introducing “advanced weaponry” to the Middle East. Ben Gurion repeatedly attempted to dodge those efforts and to discuss instead the issue of American security guarantees to Israel. The Kennedy administration also studied detailed ideas on how it could respond positively to Ben Gurion’s security requests, including the possibility of providing Is-

rael with formal security assurances, while in return asking Ben Gurion to consider favorably American proposals for stemming nuclear and ballistic missile proliferation in the region. This *quid pro quo* formed the background for John McCloy’s first mission to Egypt and Israel planned for June-July 1963. The desire to curb the Dimona project was at the heart of McCloy’s mission.

Ultimately, Ben Gurion’s efforts to dodge Kennedy’s pressure on Dimona backfired. Ben Gurion reluctantly accepted Kennedy’s demands for “periodic” U.S. visits to Dimona. Shortly thereafter, Ben Gurion resigned as prime minister and the task of resolving the confrontation with Kennedy was passed on to Ben Gurion’s successor, Levi Eshkol. Kennedy, determined not to allow Ben Gurion’s resignation to sidetrack his effort, quickly approached Eshkol on the matter of U.S. visits to Dimona. In his strongly worded letter of July 5, 1963, less than two weeks after Eshkol took office, Kennedy used the most powerful sanction that an U.S. president could ever use against Israel: if Israel did not allow American visits to Dimona, under Kennedy’s tough conditions, he threatened to deprive Israel of the U.S. commitment to ensuring Israel’s security. This brought U.S.-Israeli relations to a state of crisis. In an effort to diffuse the crisis, Ambassador Walworth Barbour interceded, telling Eshkol and other leading Israelis that the question of Dimona was important to Kennedy for global reasons, whose significance went far beyond any bilateral issues, and pleaded with them not to interpret Kennedy’s pressure on

Dimona as indicating a fundamental change in the special relationship between the United States and Israel.<sup>45</sup>

Recently declassified U.S. archival documents support Barbour’s point and suggest that, in the spring and summer of 1963, Kennedy thought of Israel’s nuclear problem in terms of his global nuclear agenda. At that time, Kennedy was preoccupied with a complex and delicate global nuclear arms control agenda, particularly the linkage between the issues of the nuclear test ban treaty and nuclear proliferation. Towards the final stage of negotiations on the Partial Test Ban treaty (PTBT) in July, Kennedy explored some broad policy ideas on how to link it with the proliferation problem. In early July 1963, in anticipation of Governor Averell Harriman’s mission to negotiate the PTBT in Moscow, Kennedy tried to bring together a set of international nuclear agendas. It appears that the Israeli case was an integral part of his global nuclear agenda.

Since its outset, the Kennedy administration took the view that the key to a nonproliferation treaty depended on a preliminary agreement with the Soviet Union. It was assumed that nonproliferation was one of the few areas in which both nuclear superpowers shared a common interest.<sup>46</sup> In April 1963, the United States gave the Soviet Union its draft of the Non-Transfer Declaration, in a sense the first American draft of a nonproliferation treaty. According to the American document, the nuclear powers were to commit themselves:

...not [to] transfer any nuclear weapons directly or indirectly through a military alliance, into the national



control of individual states currently not possessing such weapons, and that they will not assist such states in the manufacturing of such weapons.<sup>47</sup>

Non-nuclear signatories would agree not to manufacture or acquire nuclear weapons. The United States also provided the Soviet Union a memorandum to the effect that MLF would not be precluded by such an agreement. This the Soviet Union firmly opposed, maintaining that the MLF idea constituted nuclear proliferation, and any acceptable non-proliferation agreement must preclude it. It particularly objected to any German role in MLF, since this would allow in practice German control over nuclear weapons.<sup>48</sup> Thus, in early summer of 1963, the discussions on the NPT were at an impasse.

American policymakers hoped that the final negotiations of the PTBT in July would be an opportunity to advance the cause of nonproliferation.<sup>49</sup> A memo produced by the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), titled "Political Implications of a Nuclear Test Ban," pointed out that:

although a test ban alone would not offer an answer in the most acute cases, such as that of Communist China, it would increase the leverage the U.S. might exert and would open the way for the development of new combinations of inducements and persuasions, possibly on an international scale, which are difficult to set in motion as long as the U.S. itself continues to test.<sup>50</sup>

Harriman's mission to Moscow took place just days after Kennedy had sent his tough letter to Eshkol on Dimona. The mission to Moscow was defined as having two aspects: negotiation and exploration. Within

his exploratory mandate, Harriman was asked to find to what extent the two superpowers could extend cooperation into the nonproliferation area. The official National Security Council (NSC) instructions for Harriman made Harriman's mandate more open-ended and flexible:

On the exploratory side, you should canvass, in so far as appears practical, the range of issues involving peace and security which divides us from the Soviets. [...] You should continue to emphasize the relation between the nuclear test ban treaty and our desire to control the diffusion of nuclear weapons. In pursuing this subject, you should be guided by the talks on non-dissemination of nuclear weapons between Secretary Rusk and Ambassador Dobrynin. You may indicate that the U.S. will endeavor to secure adherence to or observation of any non-dissemination agreement by those powers associated with it, if the Soviet Union is willing to undertake a parallel responsibility for those powers associated with it.<sup>51</sup>

The NSC meeting minutes provide a better sense of the exploratory aspect of Harriman's mission to Moscow. In this meeting, Secretary Rusk stressed that in his earlier talks with the Soviets they had accepted the American definition of the nuclear powers as being four, the United States, Great Britain, France, and the USSR.<sup>52</sup> According to his official instructions, Harriman's most sensitive mandate was to see how open the Soviets were to a joint U.S.-Soviet effort to ban proliferation beyond the "big four." Just as the United States would work to prevent states associated with it from going nuclear, the United States wanted to know what the Soviets thought about the Chinese nuclear

case and whether they would be ready to do something about it. If the United States made efforts to bring on board all the powers associated with it, would the Soviets do the same?

Israel was not mentioned by name in that NSC document, but it is clear in July 1963 that Israel and Germany were the only countries that the United States was referring to in terms of its willingness to "take some responsibility with regards to dissemination." The NSC meeting took place only five days after Kennedy sent his most threatening letter to Eshkol about Dimona. Harriman's most sensitive instructions were given to him verbally in a one-on-one meeting with Kennedy on July 10. We know that the questions of China and Germany were deliberately excluded from the NSC meeting.<sup>53</sup> There are no minutes of the Kennedy-Harriman meeting, so we do not know if, and to what extent, the Israeli issue and the bilateral approach to proliferation were discussed.<sup>54</sup>

As it happened, Harriman's exploratory mission with the Soviets concerning cooperation on a nonproliferation agreement yielded no results. The Soviets cited their firm opposition to the creation of MLF in Europe as the primary obstacle to such an agreement. They considered the MLF as a device that would allow the transfer of nuclear weapons to German control. The United States pushed the view that a nonproliferation agreement would guarantee that MLF would not become such a device. Nikita Khrushchev refused to talk about China, and apparently Harriman had no chance even to explore the Chinese nuclear issue with the Soviets in the context

of a nonproliferation agreement. The Harriman mission did not provide the breakthrough on nonproliferation that some in Washington had hoped for.<sup>55</sup>

Even without progress on a nonproliferation agreement with the Soviets, Kennedy continued to push forward his firm, aggressive nonproliferation policy, primarily focusing on the Israeli case. Israel was seen in Washington that summer as the most determined proliferator after China, and the most serious proliferation case among all Western states. It was vital for Kennedy to get a nonproliferation commitment from Eshkol and to establish a long-term bilateral procedure that would verify that Israeli commitment. In the absence of a treaty, the United States had no choice but to push the issue via bilateral means.

It is important to recognize the global impact of the Israeli case in the eyes of U.S. policymakers at the time. If Israel were to detonate a nuclear device (underground) in the next two or three years—as the U.S. intelligence community believed it could do—this would have devastating effects on the delicate nuclear equation in Europe, particularly in Germany. Under these conditions, warned ACDA's Deputy Director Adrian Fisher, the Germans would not remain content with MLF participation, “for under such circumstances there would be strong forces to argue that Germany would remain a second class nation so long as she had less independent nuclear capability than Israel or Sweden or India, however small that capability might be.”<sup>56</sup> The conclusion, then, is that Israel's national decision could have negative effects upon the objectives of the American MLF

policy.

Kennedy's pressure on Israel did yield some tangible results. After weeks of intense deliberations and consultations, Prime Minister Eshkol wrote Kennedy on August 19, accepting most of Kennedy's demands concerning the visits to Dimona. In particular, Eshkol accepted Kennedy's demand that American scientists could conduct periodic visits to the Dimona site, including one before the reactor became critical, but left vague his reply on the matter of frequency (Kennedy specifically asked for “semi-annual” visits). In his reply of August 26, Kennedy wrote to the Israeli leader: “Your letter of August 19 was most welcome here.”<sup>57</sup> The crisis over Dimona was thus resolved by bilateral means. It looked as if American diplomacy had won in the Israeli nuclear case: Israel accepted an arrangement by which it committed itself, in words and deeds, to nonproliferation. The semi-annual U.S. visits to Dimona, as formulated in Kennedy's letter, were designed to mirror IAEA safeguards. Strong presidential action was able to establish some brakes on Israel's nuclear ambitions.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps, the bilateral approach to proliferation was working after all.

#### **THE EARLY JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION: THE CHINESE TEST, THE GILPATRIC COMMITTEE, AND ISRAEL**

On November 22, 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated and Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as president. For President Johnson, nuclear proliferation was not as important an issue as it had been for Kennedy; he certainly lacked

Kennedy's sense of urgency on curbing Dimona. Johnson had no grand vision of his own about proliferation, at least not until after he was forced to deal with the Gilpatric task force's report. As to the matter of Dimona, Johnson followed Kennedy's arrangement through his aides (Kennedy's team, most notably McGeorge Bundy, Robert Komer, and Myer Feldman, remained intact until 1965-66) but without the personal interest that Kennedy attached to it. For a brief while there was a sense that the Israeli nuclear case could be contained through bilateral means. The new president had more urgent issues to focus on, mostly domestic issues (including his own election campaign), and the issue of nuclear proliferation was put on the back burner.

It was the imminence of the Chinese test that forced nuclear proliferation to the forefront of Johnson's policy agenda in 1964. In August 1964, ACDA Director William Foster discussed the proliferation issue in a long position paper to Rusk. This paper is important because it outlined a view of the entire nuclear proliferation issue. The imminence of the Chinese explosion, he argued, posed a problem to the United States: the Chinese test could happen any time and would place great pressure on the three or four states considered technically capable to produce nuclear weapons to make their own national decision, either for reasons of security or national prestige. Due to regional conflicts, a national decision by any of these states could force others, countries that were still technically less qualified, to make a similar decision to initiate an all-out effort to acquire nuclear weapons either. As Foster argued: “Once this

process starts it may be impossible to halt.”<sup>59</sup> The American dilemma, then, was “how to prevent it from starting,” or, more specifically:

[H]ow to develop political inhibitions against the development of further national nuclear capabilities which are sufficiently strong to stand the shock of the Chinese nuclear detonation. If we do not solve this problem—either because of mistake or because of delay—we will soon be faced with a world in which there are ten and then possibly twenty states having national nuclear capabilities. This would be a world of greatest danger and insecurity.<sup>60</sup>

In laying out the proliferation problem, Foster’s paper distinguished among the following courses of action: 1) discouraging individual states on a case-by-case basis; 2) impeding the spread of technical capabilities; 3) negotiating with the Soviets on a nuclear nonproliferation agreement open to accession by all states; and 4) trying to develop the widest possible political consensus against proliferation, even before such an agreement would come into effect. While discussing efforts to discourage individual states from embarking on a nuclear weapons program, the report named Israel, India, Sweden, Japan, and the Federal Republic of Germany as the nations with the technical capability to support a national decision to produce nuclear weapons. “The development of a national nuclear weapons capability by any one of these countries would exacerbate international tensions and tend to induce additional states to follow suit.”<sup>61</sup>

Among these five states, the report noted, the United States had an

ongoing active nonproliferation program only in the Middle East, i.e., Israel. This included the bilateral U.S.-Israeli arrangement concerning the Dimona visits and the U.S. efforts (the two McCloy missions, 1963 and 1964) to maintain an arms control dialogue with Egypt.<sup>62</sup> The paper recommended that this bilateral program must continue and should be expanded on a case-by-case basis. To be effective, the program should consider the desirability of some form of security arrangement, in which U.S. participation or assistance “may represent a principal source of the incentive to acquire nuclear weapons.”<sup>63</sup> As to timing and tactics, the paper warned that:

...the estimates as to when these various countries could detonate a nuclear device is not a true measure of the time available to us. The critical time is the time of national decision to develop nuclear weapons. Once made, such a decision may be hard to change, even though the actual nuclear detonation may not occur for some period of time afterwards.<sup>64</sup>

The paper also suggested that the success of the bilateral approach may be intimately tied to progress towards a global nonproliferation agreement, which in itself is conditioned on a global agreement between the two superpowers. China would not join any nonproliferation agreement, and if the United States were to insist on such a pact, opportunities for a treaty would be foreclosed. For this reason, it recommended that the United States should not delay its nonproliferation efforts until the Chinese problem was resolved. “Even if the Chinese were to develop a nuclear capability, a world of five nuclear powers would be far preferable to a world

of ten or twenty.”<sup>65</sup> The paper proposed that the United States also engage in a third track based on multilateral efforts “to develop political inhibitions against the creation of further national nuclear capabilities.”<sup>66</sup>

On October 16, 1964, in accordance with U.S. intelligence predictions, China detonated its first nuclear device; coincidentally, a day later, Khrushchev was removed from office. These two events together provided a sober reminder of the fragility of the nuclear age. President Johnson emphasized this point in a speech to the nation. He noted that in recent years Khrushchev had shown himself “aware of the need for sanity in the nuclear age.” He also pointed out that Communist China lacked experience as a major power and argued that “its nuclear pretensions are both expensive and cruel to its people.” The Chinese explosion dramatized the fears of global nuclear proliferation:

Communist China’s expensive and demanding effort tempts other states to equal folly. Nuclear spread is dangerous to all mankind. What if there should come to be 10 nuclear powers, or maybe 20 nuclear powers? What if we must learn to look everywhere for the restraint which our own example now sets for a few? [...] The lesson of Lop Nor is that we are right to recognize the danger of nuclear spread; that we must continue to work against it, and we will. [...] We continue to believe that the struggle against nuclear spread is as much in the Soviet interest as in our own. We will be ready to join with them and all the world in working to avoid it.<sup>67</sup>

The Chinese explosion also highlighted the change in the outstand-

ing proliferation cases' priority and urgency in the eyes of the administration. In 1962-63, Israel was considered the most serious and urgent proliferation case after Communist China, but in the wake of the Kennedy-Eshkol nuclear arrangements and Eshkol's subsequent visit in June 1964, the sense of urgency surrounding the Israeli case greatly diminished. In 1964, there was a sense in Washington that the Israeli nuclear problem was contained, at least politically, and probably could remain so as long as the United States met Israel's conventional armaments needs. On the other hand, the Chinese explosion raised the possibility of a proliferation chain reaction, particularly on behalf of India, Japan, and Pakistan.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, these countries' status were not upgraded on the proliferation watch list.

About a month after the Chinese explosion, President Johnson appointed a special task force, consisting of 10 distinguished Americans with experience in nuclear affairs and arms control and chaired by former Undersecretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric, to study the problem of nuclear proliferation and how the United States should combat it. The task force's appointment meant not only recognition that the world situation after the Chinese explosion required fresh thinking about proliferation, but also that the U.S. nonproliferation policy was substantially and institutionally fragmented. It was recognized that the United States lacked a coherent and well-coordinated global nonproliferation policy, based on a clear understanding of national priorities and missions regarding nuclear proliferation. There were some preliminary

questions that were posed before the Gilpatric Committee: Is nuclear proliferation really inevitable? If inevitable, is proliferation always bad for America? How high should America rank its nonproliferation policies over other foreign policy considerations?

The mandate of the Gilpatric task force was broad. Although there was a diversity of opinion among its members, the task force unanimously reached the opinion that preventing further proliferation "is clearly in the national interest despite the difficult decisions that will be required," and that the United States must, as a matter of great urgency, "substantially increase the scope and intensity of its nonproliferation efforts, if it wants to have any hope of success."<sup>69</sup> Specifically, the Gilpatric task force reached the following conclusions. First, nuclear proliferation "poses an increasingly grave threat to the security of the United States." In saying so the committee took a universal stance on all cases of proliferation, without categorizing proliferators as friends or foes. Any additional nuclear capabilities, however primitive and regardless of who developed them, "will add complexity and instability to the deterrent balance between the United States and the Soviet Union, [and] aggregate suspicions and hostility among states neighboring new nuclear powers." Nuclear proliferation would also reduce the influence of the United States worldwide: "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."<sup>70</sup>

Second, the world was fast approaching a point of no return in the

prospect of controlling the spread of nuclear weapons. The technology of the mid-1960s, especially atomic energy programs, made access to knowledge, and nuclear equipment and materials much easier to gain. For this reason, the Gilpatric Committee recommended that vigorous and comprehensive steps be taken "to discourage further acquisition of nuclear weapons capabilities, .... possibly beginning within a matter of months."<sup>71</sup>

Third, success in preventing the future spread of nuclear weapons required a concerted and intensified effort. Although U.S. foreign policy always opposed proliferation, the United States needed to intensify its efforts, both through multilateral agreements and by affecting the motivations of specific states. The committee noted that actions affecting proliferation relate to a broad range of U.S. interests and activities under the responsibility of various agencies. In order to ensure effective efforts to halt proliferation, it recommended that the United States unify its nonproliferation policy at the highest level. The report also recognized the importance of the participation of the Soviet Union as a partner in these efforts.<sup>72</sup>

Finally, the Gilpatric Committee noted that coordinated nonproliferation efforts could be successful. The Committee recommended that the United States undertake its nonproliferation efforts along three distinct tracks: 1) negotiation of a formal multilateral nonproliferation treaty; 2) the application of U.S. influence on individual nations' decisions concerning nuclear weapons acquisition; and 3) leadership by example, showcasing nuclear policies and actions in the areas of arms control and

weapons policies. The task force was unanimous in determining that such efforts should be made. "The rewards of long-term success would be enormous; and even partial success would be worth the costs we can expect to incur."<sup>73</sup>

The Gilpatric report also issued policy recommendations concerning specific non-nuclear states. Israel was one of those cases:

As long as Israel remains a non-nuclear power, we should continue to give Israel assurances against being overrun by the UAR. We should make clear to Israel that these assurances would be withdrawn if she develops a nuclear weapons capability and that we would be prepared to consider other measures as well.<sup>74</sup>

The Gilpatric Committee's report and other relevant archival materials (in particular the working papers that were submitted to the task force), suggest the following points. First, Israel was among the four states, along with India, Japan, and Sweden, that were regarded as having the technical capability to produce nuclear weapons and were viewed as actively considering whether to do so.<sup>75</sup> Second, the Israeli case demonstrated the "severe difficulties" in attempting to deal with the problem of proliferation on a strict country-by-country basis. These difficulties suggested the importance of negotiating a nonproliferation treaty.<sup>76</sup> Third, it was recognized that there was a material linkage between the behavior of these four states and the prospects for a nonproliferation treaty. The linkage cut both ways. On the one hand, the success of efforts to dissuade these four states might well be determined by parallel progress on a worldwide nonproliferation

treaty. Such a treaty would greatly strengthen the domestic forces that were opposing nuclear weapons programs, particularly in India and Sweden. On the other hand:

If the government[s] of these four countries could be brought to accept a comprehensive nuclear test ban and non-proliferation arrangement the chances that most other governments would also sign would be very much brighter. Conversely, if any one of these four governments decided to manufacture nuclear weapons, the problem generated by this decision would make the outlook for non-proliferation by common consent very black indeed. In the cases of pro-nuclear decisions by India and Israel, Pakistan and the Arab states would inevitably insist that they, too, should be free to acquire nuclear weapons.<sup>77</sup>

The task force's conclusion clearly recognized this point: "We should be prepared to bring strong pressure on significant countries (including Germany, France, India, Japan, Israel, the UAR and Sweden) to achieve their participation in such an agreement."<sup>78</sup>

The Gilpatric task force report was formally presented to President Johnson on January 21, 1965. Though the report was highly classified, its recommendations leaked and soon became domestically politicized. Later in the year, Senator Robert Kennedy advocated the cause of nuclear nonproliferation in a major Senate speech along the lines of the Gilpatric report's recommendations. He attacked the Johnson administration's position on the MLF issue, and asserted that India and Israel "could fabricate an atomic device within a few months."<sup>79</sup> A survey of American nuclear scien-

tists released by opinion analyst Louis Harris in August 1965 ranked Israel as the next nation to detonate a nuclear device. India was predicted to follow Israel in exploding a nuclear device by a two to one margin.<sup>80</sup>

### THE LATE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION: ISRAEL AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE NPT

The Gilpatric Committee was an important milestone in conceptualizing and highlighting the importance of the NPT over other U.S. foreign policy objectives. The Johnson administration, however, was slow to adopt its policy recommendations.<sup>81</sup> It faced a dilemma between its commitment to the cause of nonproliferation and the requirements of its existing and future nuclear arrangements with its European allies. In particular, the dilemma focused on the future of the long-standing MLF plan, which would have involved joint ownership, manning, and command of a NATO strategic nuclear force.

Even before the Chinese test, throughout 1964 ACDA leaders warned of the consequences of not securing a nonproliferation agreement soon. ACDA's chiefs, Director John Foster and Deputy Director Adrian Fisher, argued that the United States should not hold its nonproliferation policy hostage to the fate of the MLF negotiations.<sup>82</sup> They maintained that leaving the nonproliferation agreement on hold until the MLF issue was decided could be detrimental to the cause of nonproliferation. They made the point that the three key states for the NPT—Israel, Sweden and India—were soon to make their critical nuclear

decisions. To further hold off on the nonproliferation agreement would be to risk failing to secure the adherence of these states to the treaty. These efforts, however, came to naught as both the White House and the State Department remained committed to the MLF concept over the NPT.<sup>83</sup>

The MLF died naturally from a lack of political support both in Europe and the United States in late 1965,<sup>84</sup> but the Johnson administration was still not ready to go along with a nonproliferation treaty that would preclude nuclear weapons from a future European collective security arrangement. In addition, the Soviets objected to legitimizing the MLF plan through the NPT. Their actions clearly indicated that one of their principal interests in the NPT was to deny the Germans any kind of nuclear capability. The long-held impasse over the MLF plan obscured the more important issue: whether the Soviets would accept a nonproliferation treaty that was consistent with existing NATO nuclear arrangements.

It took another year and a half after the Gilpatric report was issued before President Johnson was ready to follow through on it. In early 1965, Senator John Pastore introduced a Senate resolution urging "additional efforts by the President...for the solution of nuclear proliferation problems."<sup>85</sup> The resolution led to a series of well-publicized Senate hearings on the danger of further nuclear proliferation, in which Defense Secretary Robert McNamara expressed his opinion that the administration should do more to secure a nonproliferation agreement. On May 17, the Senate approved the Pastore

resolution by a vote of 84 to 0. A month later President Johnson wrote to Senator Pastore, acknowledging that there was a strong domestic support for the cause of nonproliferation.<sup>86</sup>

By the summer and fall of 1966, President Johnson moved to adopt new language for the first article of a nonproliferation treaty that precluded the *transfer* of nuclear weapons to any recipient whatsoever, as well as *relinquishing control* of such weapons. The new language did not include the MLF or similar plans, but it preserved present U.S. arrangements and commitments with its NATO allies. Soon after, the Soviets dropped their own formulation that did not recognize existing NATO nuclear arrangements. Despite probes of many of the NATO allies, the German issue was the only country-specific issue that played a major role, either in internal discussions in Washington or during the negotiation with the Soviets in Geneva.<sup>87</sup> With these mutual concessions, the path to serious negotiations of the NPT was opened in early 1967. By now, as a consequence of President Johnson's support, the idea of a nonproliferation treaty seemed politically feasible.<sup>88</sup>

While lessons from the Israeli case were probably among the incentives for the new treaty approach, by the mid-1960s, Israel did not play a prominent role in the Johnson administration's change of attitude regarding the treaty (though Senator Kennedy cited the Israeli and Indian cases in his criticism of the administration). Nevertheless, by 1966, it became evident that the special nuclear arrangement that President Kennedy had crafted earlier in his exchange with Eshkol had begun

to sour. Those written understandings between the two heads of state were too vague; key issues were open to different interpretations. In practice, however, the Israeli interpretation prevailed. The U.S. visits at Dimona were never conducted in accordance with Kennedy's initial request (his letter to Eshkol of July 5, 1963). Israel strictly controlled the rules of conduct throughout those visits. Both sides grew uncomfortable and even began to resent this secret bilateral nuclear arrangement. As the Israelis continued to erode the conditions that Kennedy had insisted on,<sup>89</sup> U.S. "periodic visits" to Dimona became a political nuisance for both parties. In mid-1965, President Johnson sent a letter to Eshkol, asking that Israel agree to place Dimona under IAEA safeguards; Eshkol did not even answer the American request.<sup>90</sup> The United States appreciated Eshkol's political commitment that Israel would not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons, but also realized that this verbal commitment was a very lean one. It was a non-binding unilateral pledge that Israel could always change at a moment's notice.

By 1965-66, the U.S. intelligence community already recognized that the bilateral arrangement had failed to curb the Israeli effort.<sup>91</sup> The American visits to Dimona did little to change this state of affairs, leading instead to the realization that the Israeli program was unstoppable. The practice of U.S. visits to Dimona differed significantly from Kennedy's original intention of creating a verification system mirroring as closely as possible the IAEA safeguards system. All the U.S. agencies involved in those visits, ACDA, AEC, Department of State and the White House, were aware of

their major shortcomings.<sup>92</sup> When Harriman and Komer came to Israel in March 1965 to talk to Israeli leaders, one of the primary objectives of the mission was to persuade the Israelis to replace the Dimona visitation arrangement with a formal safeguards agreement with the IAEA. A year later, the United States was ready to offer Israel a nuclear desalinization plant in exchange for Israel acceptance of IAEA safeguards on Dimona. Israel resisted all those efforts. In the absence of a substitute, the American visits to Dimona continued. On the Israeli side, the Eshkol government, too, was becoming increasingly uneasy about this bilateral arrangement. The practice of U.S. visits to Dimona caused Eshkol political embarrassment at home, exposing him as someone who compromised both Israeli sovereignty and national security.

Around 1966-67, elements in both sides quietly reached the conclusion that the Dimona arrangement had outlived its usefulness. Many in Washington realized that the procedures and findings of the Dimona visits were lacking credibility. It was concluded that the only possible long-term solution to the Israeli nuclear case would be through an international treaty. If Israel joined such a treaty it would relieve the United States of an uncomfortable, and possibly suspect, bilateral arrangement, and would make the Israeli nuclear program an international, rather than solely an American responsibility.

#### WOULD ISRAEL SIGN THE NPT?

Since mid-1960, the U.S. government has operated under the assump-

tions that: 1) Israel was a key state for the NPT; 2) it would require special and laborious negotiations between the United States and Israel to make the latter sign it; and 3) with the right mixture of rewards and sanctions, Israel would probably sign it. The American rationale appears in a long background paper on national attitudes towards adherence to a nonproliferation treaty prepared by the State Department for the Gilpatric Committee. At the outset, the study's authors stress that their projections about how countries would react to the NPT had to be heavily qualified because of the uniqueness of the decision:

Not only has no government ever been faced with the need to make a decision to renounce its right to acquire nuclear weapons, no government has ever had to take such a decision in the knowledge that at least two other governments [France and China] of a similar power status are steadily proceeding towards a significant nuclear strike force. Thus, past UN votes, acceptance of IAEA safeguards, and views expressed in disarmament forums, cannot now be construed as proofs of how a government will react at the moment of truth.<sup>93</sup>

The prospects for a favorable national decision on nonproliferation would be dependent on a variety of factors that states would have to assess, such as a superpower agreement, adherence to nonproliferation by regional rivals, evaluations of strategic stability, and access to nuclear power technology. As to the particular case of Israel, the first key state in the study, the authors emphasized that "neither public nor private statements by Israeli leaders suffice to establish a clear Israeli position"

on these matters.<sup>94</sup> They noted that Israel had signed the PTBT, and had joined the Irish nonproliferation resolution at the United Nations, but had refused to accept IAEA safeguards on Dimona. Israel "has always avoided any commitment, either private or public, which would bind its hands with respect to production of nuclear weapons. It has been, in fact, moving steadily into a position where it would have the capability to fabricate nuclear weapons."<sup>95</sup> Still, all these caveats notwithstanding, the paper estimated that Israel would probably sign the NPT if certain conditions were met: 1) if the Arab countries signed; 2) if the agreement contained escape clauses similar to that in the PTBT; and, most significantly, 3) "if the Israel government received some assurances of aid from Western governments in the event of an overwhelming Arab attack."<sup>96</sup>

During the negotiation of the NPT, U.S. officials thought that there was a fair chance that the United States would be able to persuade Israel to sign the treaty, with the right tradeoffs between sticks and carrots, once the treaty was ready and open for signature. However, it appears the question of Israel's signature was carefully avoided by both sides until Eshkol's visit to Washington in January 1968. By that time, the treaty was essentially completed. If the Israeli factor were as important in solidifying American support for the idea of the NPT in 1963-66, why then were there virtually no discussions with Israel on that matter until January 1968?

There is more than one answer to this question. For one thing, the extreme sensitivity of the matter caused both parties to avoid discuss-

ing it. Before a final draft was ready, it was deemed unwise for the United States to pressure Israel, just as Israel distanced itself from discussing a non-existent treaty. From the outset, Israel was ambivalent about the proposed treaty and was reluctant to make up its mind before the treaty was ready. Recognizing Israeli sensitivities and the problems with the Europeans, the United States saw no reason or need in 1966-67 to consult with Israel on a bilateral basis regarding the treaty. Israel was not included among the European allies that the United States was obligated to consult with; it was not a member of NATO or a member of EURATOM. Furthermore, Israel was not a member of the Conference on Disarmament. During this period, Israel was considered to be a non-weapon state whose leaders had pledged publicly (and privately) their commitment to its non-nuclear posture. Also, the timing of the NPT negotiations in Geneva and the crisis and war in the Middle East in 1967 did not allow serious discussions between Israel and the United States prior to 1968. Until early 1967, the contested issues at the NPT negotiations between the superpowers were about present and future nuclear alliances in Europe. Those issues blocked the treaty's progress, but were irrelevant to the Israelis. At that point there was no need for U.S.-Israeli consultations.

By spring 1967, as the NPT negotiations in Geneva proceeded in earnest, Israel's response to the treaty became more relevant to American policymakers. From an American perspective, it was essential that Israel sign and accept international safeguards. By that time, the United States had started to think

about how to approach Israel on the NPT at the highest level. On May 16, 1967, Harold Saunders, the NSC senior staffer on the Middle East, wrote a memo to National Security Advisor Walt Rostow, titled "The President's Stake in the Middle East," in which he elaborated on the importance of the NPT for the president's agenda in the region. The memo states:

He [the President] has a stake in *arms limitations*. Israel must maintain qualitative superiority. But beyond that, the President is deeply committed to *nuclear non-proliferation*. The main hurdle in the Middle East is Israel. Before signing an NPT, Israel may want assurance from the US and the USSR that major arms suppliers will keep the lid on the Arab arms inventory while the conventional balance is still in Israeli favor.<sup>97</sup>

The Johnson administration, however, had no real chance to initiate talks with Israel on the question of the NPT in the summer or fall of 1967. The crisis, the war, and its aftermath changed the Middle East in very profound ways. New and urgent political issues dominated the American-Israeli agenda. Apart from the war, Israel considered the negotiations in Geneva focusing on the relationship between IAEA and EURATOM safeguards to be largely irrelevant. The question of Israel and the NPT had to be put aside for a few more months. When the United States raised the issue during and after Eshkol's visit in early January 1968, the political and strategic context had changed. On January 18, 1968, the two superpowers presented identical draft treaties to the Conference on Disarmament.

The American expectation that

Israel would eventually sign the NPT was not entirely unreasonable or unrealistic before the 1967 war. On the political side, the Eshkol government was perceived in the United States, and correctly so, as firmly committed not to nuclearize the Middle East conflict. On a more technical level, there was a sense that Israel could live with the treaty's safeguards provisions. It was believed that in exchange for a renewed and more persuasive security package with America, Israel could probably be persuaded to join the NPT. While there were some intelligence indications that Israel might be technically close to the bomb, those indications included elements of uncertainty that allowed the State Department to discount their political reliability.<sup>98</sup>

As it turned out, these considerations were obsolete in the post-1967 environment. On the eve of the 1967 war, Israel had secretly achieved a nuclear weapon capability; by late May 1967, in the midst of the crisis, Israel had improvised and made operational two nuclear devices.<sup>99</sup> Israel was no longer a non-nuclear weapon state. Furthermore, had Israel signed the treaty, it would have had to renounce its ambiguous nuclear policy. The Israeli commitment not to be the first to introduce nuclear weapons would have been reinterpreted in light of the NPT as a stronger and clearer commitment not to manufacture nuclear weapons. It was in 1968, the year the NPT was concluded, that Israel was forced to respond to its nuclear dilemma. At the end of that year, after another clash with the United States over the NPT and the sale of the F-4s,<sup>100</sup> Israel remained stubborn in its reluctance to sign the NPT. Officially the



NPT was “under study”; unofficially, the United States understood that Israel would not sign it.

## CONCLUSION

It is difficult to judge with certainty which country contributed the most to the evolution of U.S. nonproliferation policy. Israel, however, should be high on any list. The Israeli nuclear program was certainly a catalyst for the development of a new American nonproliferation policy in the decisive decade from Eisenhower to Johnson (1958-1968).

Israel was the first case of nuclear weapons proliferation in which the United States had to take action, outside the nuclear legacy of World War II. It was not an easy case. Israel was a small, friendly state, surrounded by larger enemies, and outside the U.S. sphere of containment. It was also a country with strong domestic support in the United States, with which it had an implicit security guarantee. Unlike the Chinese and Indian cases, the Israeli case did not involve a country attempting to parlay its nuclear capability into great power status. Finally, Israel was deemed by some to be exceptional because of its birth out of the ashes of the Holocaust. In sum, Israel was a special case for reasons that transcended considerations involving both domestic and foreign policy.

In the early 1960s, Israel’s nuclear program was an important incentive for the Kennedy administration’s search for a coherent global nonproliferation policy. Israel was seen as the test for American resolve in curbing nuclear proliferation worldwide. In the spring and summer of 1963, the United States and Israel reached a point of crisis over this issue pre-

cisely because Kennedy did *not* want to grant Israel’s nuclear program an exemption. In the coming years, however, both nations learned to find a unique *modus vivendi* that granted Israel a *de facto* special status but without publicly changing America’s commitment to nonproliferation.

Nevertheless, it became evident that the United States had failed to stop the Israeli nuclear effort. The key Israeli decisions on nuclear acquisition had been made in the mid-1950s and began to be implemented in the late 1950s. During that time, the United States had neither provided reliable security guarantees nor developed a committed global nonproliferation policy. Part of the problem was that Washington—due to its intelligence failure—had no sense that the Israelis were seriously aiming at the bomb. When the problem was finally addressed directly under Kennedy, he tried to exert pressure, and finally got the visit arrangements. In retrospect, however, it was too little and too late. Israel’s nuclear program had already been set in motion.

Fortunately, it was not too late for the NPT. The lessons learned from the Israeli case helped to shape U.S. perceptions on the seriousness of the threat of unrestricted nuclear proliferation and led to the decision to pursue—with the Soviet Union—serious negotiations to bring a treaty to its successful conclusion. In this regard, while the “special deal” with Israel (U.S. tolerance of Israeli’s nuclear capability in return for Israeli opacity in its official nuclear posture) became an established feature of U.S. policy, the experience of trying (and failing) to deal with Israel as a committed proliferator is

significant for having provided the incentive needed to craft a new U.S. nonproliferation policy: the shift from bilateralism to multilateralism that has lasted to this day.

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on extensive historical research conducted during the last eight years for my forthcoming book, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). I owe thanks to numerous individuals, but especially to George Bunn, John Hadden, Richard Helms, Spurgeon M. Keeny Jr., Robert Komer, and Paul Warnke, who all played roles in this history. My friend and colleague Marvin Miller spent dozens of hours in discussing these historical issues with me. All errors are, of course, mine only. Financial support had been provided by the W. Alton Jones Foundation. The paper was written during my term as a Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace. Last, my deep personal thanks to my research assistant, Joseph Kupsky, who helped me to prepare this manuscript.

<sup>2</sup> Avner Cohen, “Most Favored Nation,” *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* 51 (January-February 1995), pp. 44-53; Avner Cohen, “Israel’s Nuclear History: The Untold Kennedy-Eshkol Dimona Correspondence,” *The Journal of Israeli History* 16 (Summer 1995), pp. 159-194; Zaki Shalom, “Kennedy, Ben Gurion and the Dimona Project 1960-63,” *Israel Studies* 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 3-33. This is also the focus of my forthcoming book, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> The only book on this subject is still by investigative journalist Seymour M. Hersh, *The Samson Option: Israel’s Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Random House, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, 1953: Dwight D. Eisenhower* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), p. 822. On the origins of the Atoms-for-Peace program, see Richard G. Hewlett and Jack M. Holl, *Atoms for Peace and War, 1953-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 209-270; McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), pp. 287-95.

<sup>5</sup> Hewlett and Hall, *Atoms for Peace and War, 1953-1961*, p. 307.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 320-21.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 323.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 160-168; Andrew J. Pierre, *Nuclear Politics: The British Experience with an Independence Nuclear Force, 1939-1970* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 95-100.

<sup>9</sup> As early as 1953 American tactical nuclear weapons were stationed in Europe for use by NATO ground troops. Although the U.S. maintained physical custodianship over its nuclear weapons, the delivery means—artillery, aircraft and missiles—were owned and manned by the NATO allies. This created a “two-key” system of control which required some level of sharing nuclear defense information with its allies.

<sup>10</sup> Department of State, *Documents on Disarmament, 1945-1959* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), pp. 11-86.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1520-26; George Bunn, *Arms Control by Committee* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> Bunn, *Arms Control by Committee*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>13</sup> Lawrence Scheinman, *Atomic Energy Policy in France Under the Fourth Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 129-165.

<sup>14</sup> On this issue, see Dean Rusk’s testimony on proliferation before the Gilpatric Committee in January 1965 (Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, “Secretary Meeting with the Gilpatric Committee,” January 7, 1965, NSF Committee File, box 8a, LBJL).

<sup>15</sup> See “Post-Mortem on SNIE 100-8-60: Implications of the Acquisition by Israel of a Nuclear Weapons Capability” (hereafter referred to as “Post-Mortem”), January 31, 1961, Department of State Lot Files, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot no. 57 D 688, 21.5 Country File: Israel, F. Reactor, 1961, Part 1 of 2.

<sup>16</sup> It was Dr. Henry Gomberg, a University of Michigan nuclear scientist who had visited Israel, that reached on his own the firm conclusion that Israel must be secretly engaging in building a second nuclear reactor with French assistance, in addition to the 1 MW, pool-type, American reactor that had been built in Nacahl Soreq. Gomberg alerted the American embassy in Tel Aviv about his discovery, and on December 1 he was debriefed at length in Washington by representatives of the AEC, CIA, and the State Department. In the wake of Gomberg’s reports the American intelligence community finally understood what that mysterious project near Beer Sheba was all about. For additional details, see Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (forthcoming), Chapter 5.

<sup>17</sup> “Memorandum of Discussion at the 470th Meeting of the National Security Council, December 8, 1960,” Foreign Relations of the United States, (hereafter FRUS), 1958-1960, Volume XIII (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992), pp. 391-92.

<sup>18</sup> “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel,” FRUS,

1958-1960, Volume XII, pp. 393-94.

<sup>19</sup> “Ben Gurion Explains Project,” *The New York Times*, December 22, 1960.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>22</sup> This relates to the most intriguing episode of the failure to disseminate intelligence data regarding Israel’s nuclear activities—the fate of the early aerial photographs of Dimona. I discuss the matter in some detail in Chapter 5 of *Israel and the Bomb* (forthcoming). Briefly, in early 1958 the United States became aware, through CIA U-2 aerial reconnaissance flights, of the extraordinary construction underway at the Dimona site. Arthur C. Lundahl, the director of the CIA Photographic Intelligence Center (CIA/PIC), went personally to brief President Eisenhower and other officials on the Dimona site in early 1958. According to Lundahl’s aide, Dino A. Brugioni, it was the appearance of a lack of reaction on the part of President Eisenhower and Lewis Strauss, the AEC chairman, that amazed Lundahl. CIA/PIC was not asked for further photographs of the site or for follow-up presentations. For an enthusiastic consumer of intelligence like Eisenhower, this was quite unusual. Lundahl and Brugioni were left with the peculiar feeling that maybe President Eisenhower wanted Israel to acquire nuclear weapons (Dino A. Brugioni, interviews by author, March 12, 1996, April 9, 1997, and July 11 and 25, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> “Post-Mortem,” p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> The characterization of Kennedy as the non-proliferation president repeated itself in all the interviews I conducted with Kennedy’s principal advisors: the late McGeorge Bundy, Myer (Mike) Feldman, Carl Kaysen, and Robert Komer.

<sup>25</sup> Glenn T. Seaborg (with Benjamin S. Loeb), *Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Test Ban* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 30-37.

<sup>26</sup> Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Test Ban*, p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> In the pre-inauguration meeting between Kennedy and President Eisenhower on January 19, 1961, a day before Kennedy took office, Kennedy specifically asked questions about nuclear proliferation. In response to his inquiries, outgoing Secretary of State Christian Herter cited two cases, Israel and India, and advised the President-elect to demand inspection and control of the Israeli reactor to deny it the opportunity to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East at a later date (Reeves, *Kennedy*, pp. 32-33).

<sup>28</sup> Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (forthcoming), Chapter 6; Cohen, “Most Favored Nation,” pp. 44-53.

<sup>29</sup> The reference to Kennedy’s “personal interest” in Dimona appears in the cover note of a draft, titled “Memorandum to the President,” and addressed to the Secretary of State (March 1, 1961, National Security Files, Country Israel: Box 118, John F. Kennedy Library—hereafter referred to as JFKL).

<sup>30</sup> Memorandum, Lucius Battle to McGeorge Bundy, “U.S. Scientists’ Visit to Israel’s Dimona Reactor,” May 26, 1961, in FRUS, Vol. 17, p.

126.

<sup>31</sup> Former senior U.S. intelligence officer, interview by author.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben Gurion* (in Hebrew), Vol. 3 (Tel Aviv: Zmora Bitan, 1987), 1393.

<sup>33</sup> Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, p. 510.

<sup>34</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, Memorandum for the President, “Subject: The Diffusion of Nuclear Weapons with and Without a Test Ban Agreement,” July 1, 1962, Nonproliferation Collection, National Security Archives, Washington D.C. (hereafter referred to as NSA).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Bunn, *Arms Control by Committee*, p. 66.

<sup>38</sup> *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1963* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1964), 280; also, *The New York Times*, March 23, 1963.

<sup>39</sup> “The Diffusion of Nuclear Weapons With and Without a Test Ban Agreement.”

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Avner Cohen, “Kennedy, Ben Gurion and the Battle Over Dimona: April-June 1963,” in *Eyunim Bitumat Yisrael*, Vol. 6 (1966), pp. 110-146 (in Hebrew). Sherman Kent, “Consequences of Israeli Acquisition of Nuclear Capability,” CIA Office of National Estimates, Memorandum for the Director, March 6, 1963, NSF, Country File: Israel, box 118, JFKL.

<sup>42</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963* (hereafter FRUS), Vol. 18, *Near East, 1962-1963* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1995), pp. 432-33, 435.

<sup>43</sup> FRUS, Vol. 18, p. 435.

<sup>44</sup> Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (forthcoming), Chapter 7.

<sup>45</sup> See Avner Cohen, “Israel’s Nuclear History: The Untold Kennedy-Eshkol Dimona Correspondence,” *The Journal of Israeli History* 16 (Summer 1995), pp. 159-194; Zaki Shalom, “Kennedy, Ben Gurion and the Dimona Project 1960-63,” *Israel Studies* 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 3-33.

<sup>46</sup> The point was one of the themes the American side prepared for the first Kennedy-Khrushchev summit meeting in Vienna on June 3-4, 1961. A position paper for the summit states the following:

Nuclear Proliferation. Prime among these problems is the threat of nuclear proliferation. Neither of our countries is anxious to see other nations acquire nuclear weapons. You express concern about West Germany; we would regard a nuclear armed China with apprehension. That is one reason that U.S. attaches such importance to the test suspension negotiations. Whether these negotiations fail or succeed our two countries will still be faced with the problem. (President’s Meeting with Khrushchev, “Position Paper: Progress towards a Viable World Order,” May 26, 1961, NSA).

<sup>47</sup> “Briefing for Gilpatric Committee on Nuclear Non-Proliferation,” December 1, 1964, NSF, box 4, LBJL.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> For details on this issue, see Seaborg, *Kennedy*,

*Khrushchev, and the Test Ban.*

<sup>50</sup> Memorandum, Foster to President Kennedy, "Political Implications of a Nuclear Test Ban," July 12, 1963, 2, NSF, box 255-65 (ACDA), JFKL.

<sup>51</sup> National Security Council, "Record of Actions: 2468 Instructions Proposed for Honorable W. Averell Harriman," July 9, 1963, prepared for 515th NSC Meeting, NSF, box 255-265, JFKL.

<sup>52</sup> "Summary Record of the National Security Council Meeting, July 9, 1963: Harriman Instructions for Mission to Moscow," 3, NSF, box 255-65, JFKL.

<sup>53</sup> Memorandum, Carl Kaysen to President Kennedy, July 9, 1963, NSF, box 265, JFKL. In this memo Kaysen, the Deputy National Security Advisor notes that "neither China nor MLF was covered in this instruction. It seemed better to leave this matter for your talk with Harriman tomorrow morning."

<sup>54</sup> Carl Kaysen was Harriman's deputy on this trip to Moscow, and he was not informed of the Israeli developments. The Israeli issue was held very close in the White House, essentially limited to three senior staff members: Bundy, Komer, and Feldman (Carl Kaysen, interview by author, August 3, 1995). However, Harriman signed on the cables to Israel concerning the Dimona issue.

<sup>55</sup> Kaysen, interview.

<sup>56</sup> Memorandum for the Secretary of State, "Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the MLF," June 15, 1964, NSA.

<sup>57</sup> FRUS, Vol. 18, 691-692.

<sup>58</sup> For details, see Cohen, "Israel's Nuclear History," pp. 159-194.

<sup>59</sup> ACDA, "Draft U.S. Position Paper: Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," August 14, 1964, NSF boxes 12-13, LBJL.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.

<sup>67</sup> Address of the President, October 18, 1964, Office of the White House Press Secretary.

<sup>68</sup> "The Bomb: Special Report," *Newsweek*, August 9, 1965, pp. 52-57. Indeed, on October 24, the chairman of India's Atomic Energy Commission stated that India might be compelled to manufacture nuclear weapons unless some important and tangible steps are made towards general disarmament.

<sup>69</sup> "A Report to the President by the Committee on Nuclear Proliferation," January 21, 1965, NSF box 5, LBJL. The report appears now also in FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XI, pp. 64-71.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>74</sup> FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol XI, p. 67.

<sup>75</sup> "Briefing For Gilpatric Committee on Nuclear non-Proliferation," December 1, 1964, 1, NSF box 4, LBJL.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> "Background Paper on National Attitudes Towards Adherence to a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and to a Non-Proliferation Agreement," December 12, 1964, 4, NSF, box 5, LBJL.

<sup>78</sup> "A Report to the President by the Committee on Nuclear Proliferation," January 21, 1965, 7, NSF box 5, LBJL.

<sup>79</sup> "The Bomb: A Special Report," p. 54.

<sup>80</sup> Harris poll cited in "The Bomb: From Hiroshima to...", *Newsweek*, August 9, 1965, p. 55.

<sup>81</sup> George Bunn suggested to me the following speculative explanation why Johnson did not respond to the Gilpatric report. LBJ thought Gilpatric had leaked the report to Robert Kennedy who used it in his Senate speech and later also in his presidential campaign. LBJ, of course, viewed Robert Kennedy as a rival for the 1968 Democratic primaries. As a result, LBJ thought of the report as domestically tainted. This politicization of the report may explain why LBJ ignored it for a while, and his decision to give the green light to the negotiators. Spurgeon Keeny, who served at the time at the NSC and worked on matters related to the NPT, suggested another explanation to me. In 1964-65, Secretary Rusk had reservations about the NPT, and he expressed his doubts in his testimony before the Gilpatric task force. President Johnson was not ready to overrule his own secretary of state. This changed in the summer of 1966, when both Congress and the Pentagon (McNamara) expressed support for the treaty. Conversation with Spurgeon M. Keeny, January 25, 1998.

<sup>82</sup> Memorandum for the Secretary of State, "Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the MLF," June 15, 1964, Non-Proliferation collection of the National Security Archives.

<sup>83</sup> See Glenn T. Seaborg (with Benjamin S. Loeb), *Stemming the Tide: Arms Control in the Johnson Years* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1987), Chapters 10 and 12.

<sup>84</sup> On the MLF's demise, see Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, pp. 492-498.

<sup>85</sup> Seaborg, *Stemming the Tide*, p. 180.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Conversations with George Bunn, ACDA Counsel in 1966-68 and a principal negotiator of the NPT; also, conversations with Spurgeon M. Keeny, NSC senior aide who worked on matters related to the NPT, May and August 1995 and January 25, 1998. See, also Bunn, *Arms Control by Committee*, pp. 75-80.

<sup>88</sup> Bunn, pp. 72-82.

<sup>89</sup> Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (forthcoming), Chapter 10.

<sup>90</sup> "Visit of Levi Eshkol Prime Minister of Israel January 7-8, 1968: The Nuclear Issue and Sophisticated Weapons," Record Group 59, CFPF, 1967-69, Box 2649 AE, National Archives.

<sup>91</sup> Interviews with a former senior official who was directly involved on this matter. Former CIA director, Richard Helms, confirmed the essence of this allegation. Telephone interviews with Richard Helms, October 1997.

<sup>92</sup> Interviews with Myron Kratzer (AEC), Michael Sterner and Joseph Sisco (State Department), and

Robert Komer and Spurgeon Keeny (NSC), Washington DC. 1993-1995.

<sup>93</sup> Department of State, "Background Paper on National Attitudes Towards Adherence to A Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and to a Non-proliferation Agreement," December 12, 1964, NSF, box 4, LBJL.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>97</sup> Memo, Saunders to W. Rostow, "The President Stakes in the Middle East," May 16, 1967, NSF box 7, LBJL.

<sup>98</sup> "Visit of Levi Eshkol Prime Minister of Israel January 7-8, 1968: The Nuclear Issue and Sophisticated Weapons," Record Group 59, CFPF, 1967-69, Box 2649 AE, National Archives.

<sup>99</sup> Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (forthcoming); Avner Cohen, "Cairo, Dimona and the June 1967 War," *Middle East Journal* 50 (Spring 1996), pp. 190-210.

<sup>100</sup> Secretary Dean Rusk and Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Warnke wanted to use the sale of the F-4s as a way to press Israel to sign the NPT. During these November 1968 negotiations between Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin and Paul Warnke, the nuclear issue and the NPT played a very important role. But Israel refused to accept the any linkage, and was reluctant to discuss the nuclear issue beyond its traditional policy line ("Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East"). Based on the declassified minutes of those negotiations it was a real confrontation, but Warnke blinked first and backed off, on instructions from the White House.