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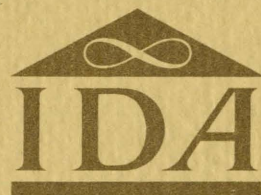
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Study
Memorandum
Number 4



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A PROPOSAL FOR A BAN
ON THE USE OF
NUCLEAR WEAPONS

By M. H. Halperin

Washington, D. C.

October 6, 1961

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Study Memorandum No. 4

A PROPOSAL FOR A BAN ON THE USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

By M. H. Halperin

Prepared for IDA in support of a study submitted to the Department of State under contract No. SCC 28270, dated February 24, 1961.

The judgments expressed in this Study Memorandum are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute for Defense Analyses or of any agency of the United States Government.

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October 6, 1961

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FOREWORD

This paper was prepared for Project VULCAN, a study of Arms Control and a Stable Military Environment, which was made by the Special Studies Group of IDA for the Department of State under contract No. SCC 28270, dated 24 February 1961. Dr. J. I. Coffey was the Project Leader.

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Judgments expressed are of course the author's and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute for Defense Analyses or of any agency of the United States Government.

JAMES E. KING, JR.
Associate Director of Research

SUMMARY

The basic purpose of the proposal to ban the use of nuclear weapons is to reduce the likelihood that they will be used in any war, and particularly in a local war. Such a ban would not seek to reduce the capability of the major powers to use nuclear weapons in a local war or a strategic war. Rather, it would seek to reinforce their present disposition not to use these weapons in a local war. A ban on the use of nuclear weapons would also help to slow the spread of such weapons to non-nuclear powers.

Neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union has ever used nuclear weapons in a local war. This fact as well as analysis of the possible uses of nuclear weapons suggests their lack of utility to either side. Both sides probably appreciate the contribution non-use makes to stability at the local war level. There is now a tacit and informal agreement not to use nuclear weapons.

There is a net advantage to the United States to transform this tacit understanding into a formal agreement. A formal treaty would strengthen present practice by spelling out the risk for the decision-maker. It would increase confidence on both sides that nuclear war was neither imminent nor inevitable. This confidence could help to dampen the pre-emptive urge.

The real worth of an agreement to ban the use of nuclear weapons would depend to a very great extent on the nature of the arms control measures and unilateral steps taken concurrently with it.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There are a number of ways in which one can study the problems of arms control. One of these is to analyze particular arms control proposals and to explore their implications. Even in trying to examine a particular arms control proposal there are several different ways in which one can approach the problem. One can posit a particular proposal in some detail and then attempt to explore its implications; alternatively, one can state a particular problem (for example, the Nth country problem) and then seek to evaluate proposals which deal with it. Finally one can look at arms control proposals in relation to areas, for example NATO, space, or the control of missiles. This paper will attempt to explore a particular arms control proposal, specifically the implications and problems in the adoption of a proposal banning the use of nuclear weapons.¹ Even this particular proposal might be

¹This proposal is frequently stated as "the non-first use" of nuclear weapons." The purpose of stating it this way seems to be to affirm the point that if one side uses nuclear weapons, the other is free to do so; however, this point seems obvious and there are certain unfortunate implications in stating it explicitly. It is certainly always true that if one side breaks an agreement, the other is also free to, and in fact is likely to do so. But to state it this way keeps sharply in mind the possibility of violation and, in fact, seems

adopted in a number of different ways ranging from an informal commitment of each side to a formal negotiated international treaty.² The best way of establishing this arms control rule will be discussed below.

This approach, of stating a particular proposal and then exploring its implications, seems to be particularly valuable when the proposal has been discussed and negotiated between the two sides. For example, in studying the possibility of a ban on nuclear testing, it seems most desirable to consider the implications of the proposals introduced by the two sides at Geneva, rather than some "ideal" nuclear test ban. The proposal for a ban on the use of nuclear weapons has been made frequently by the Soviet Union, and it is important to study its implications rather than (or in addition to) the implications of some alternate proposals to meet the same goals.

In suggesting that the United States adopt a particular arms control proposal and seek to implement it, it is important to make clear first what the goals of the proposal are; then to explore its other implications, and in particular, the costs involved in its adoption, and to suggest what complementary steps might reduce its costs and enhance its value; finally, to indicate in what way the United States should go about seeking to establish the particular arms control rule. This paper will seek to deal with each of these in turn.

to sanction the breaking of the agreement. For this reason, the proposal is here discussed as the non-use of nuclear weapons, although in effect the two proposals are the same.

²The United States might make a unilateral commitment not to use nuclear weapons. In this case its commitment would have to be not to introduce nuclear weapons (i.e., no first use).

CHAPTER II

OBJECTIVES

A major purpose of the proposal to ban the use of nuclear weapons is to reduce the likelihood that nuclear weapons will be used in war, and particularly in local war. It is not at all clear that even the formal adoption of this proposal by the United States and the Soviet Union would substantially reduce the likelihood that nuclear weapons would be used in a local war. Unlike an agreement which eliminates capability and provides an inspection system which indicates that the capability has been eliminated, the adoption of this proposal would not have any effect on the capability of the two sides to use nuclear weapons in a local war. If it is to have effect, then, it must affect their intentions and expectations.

There is a second and perhaps equally important goal which might be furthered by the adoption of a proposal against the use of nuclear weapons. This is the slowing down or halting of the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries. How this proposal might affect the spread of nuclear weapons is perhaps not as obvious as its contribution to the first goal. It nevertheless might be one of the important effects of the proposal, and it seems to be one of the important reasons for advocating it.

Finally, one must add the goal of contributing to the likelihood of additional arms control measures. To some people any limited proposal, particularly one that seems to have a high

probability of adoption if the United States advocates it, is of value because it may contribute to further arms control. The argument here is that every agreement established increases the likelihood of future agreements and that such future agreements are desirable. The argument is somewhat diluted in relation to the proposal against the non-first use of nuclear weapons, since such a scheme would not in itself call for the establishment of any prototype international inspection organization. Nevertheless, just by increasing the awareness of both sides of the possibility of arms control arrangements and perhaps by increasing their estimate of their desirability, the proposal might be a valuable step towards additional arms control measures.

I turn then to the political and military evaluation of a proposal banning the use of nuclear weapons. Attempting to evaluate the adoption of this proposal, one is faced with the recurring problem that it depends on what other political and military measures are taken. The impact of the proposal on America's military and international political posture depends on what other arms control and political and military steps are taken. Certain steps might enhance the value of the proposal, reduce the costs of adopting it, and increase the likelihood of its effectiveness. Other actions, if they are not coordinated with arms control policy, might negate the value of the proposal and increase its costs.

CHAPTER III

MILITARY EVALUATION

NUCLEAR LOCAL WAR

The question of whether the non-use of nuclear weapons in local war is to the advantage of the United States involves three separable problems.³ First, what effect would a non-use declaration have on the deterrence of local wars? Second, would it be to the tactical military advantage of the United States to introduce nuclear weapons in any or all local wars? Third, would the use of nuclear weapons increase the likelihood that a local war would become global to the detriment of American interests? The discussion of the battlefield implications of the nuclear weapons will assume symmetrical use by both sides. Following this, I will consider briefly the possibility of unilateral use by the United States, particularly against the Chinese.

For a number of years the accepted doctrine, both among the military officers and some private students of national security policy, has been that the use of nuclear weapons in a local war would be to the battlefield advantage of the United States. Very recently, the climate of opinion in official circles

³For a more extended discussion of this question, see Morton H. Halperin, "Nuclear Weapons and Limited War," The Journal of Conflict Resolution (June, 1961), pp. 146-66.

has changed with the belief that much greater emphasis must be put on conventional forces. And the consensus among private students has grown to the point where there are very few remaining advocates of the use of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, the view that nuclear weapons are to the battlefield advantage of the United States remains strong, at least in some parts of the military establishment and among some of America's allies. In addition, a number of those who oppose the use of nuclear weapons do so almost entirely on the ground that a nuclear local war could not be stable, and not because of any analysis of the battlefield implications of their use. Thus, it may be worth at least briefly reviewing the reasons why it appears that the symmetrical use of nuclear weapons on the battlefield of a local war is not to the advantage of the United States.

Perhaps the best way to proceed is to consider first those hypotheses which have been advanced which suggest that the United States and the West would gain a tactical advantage by the use of nuclear weapons. These propositions are: 1) that nuclear weapons permit the saving of manpower, 2) that they are more valuable to the defense than the offense, and 3) that the United States can develop a superior arsenal for fighting a battlefield nuclear war.

1. The assertion that the use of nuclear weapons in a limited war would result in a saving of manpower seems to be contrary to the fact.⁴ It is likely to be true that if both sides use nuclear weapons, the number of troops required to hold an area will increase rather than decrease. High attrition rates which would be inevitable with the use of nuclear weapons would put a great premium on reserves, and while it is true that units would have to be smaller and more dispersed, it does not mean that the number of units will not be a crucial variable.⁵

⁴It should also be noted that it is by no means clear that the United States is faced with a manpower disadvantage at least in every area of the world. The problem is one of willingness to reduce the comforts of the men in uniform, and perhaps to increase draft levels.

⁵In a nuclear war in which both sides used large numbers of nuclear weapons in a small area, manpower may, in fact, become irrelevant since the battle area would be completely destroyed.

2. The argument that nuclear weapons provide a strategic advantage for the defense also seems to be contrary to the fact. It is generally accepted that in conventional warfare there is a major advantage to the defensive side; something like a three-to-one ratio is generally required to launch a successful offensive action with conventional forces. Nuclear weapons, particularly if they are mobile, as they now are, might drastically alter this ratio, making it possible for forces of the same size or perhaps even smaller to make major offensive breakthroughs. It is generally argued that nuclear weapons prevent the massing of troops necessary for offensive action. However, while the massing is necessary for conventional offensive action, it is by no means clear that with the use of nuclear weapons this would in fact be the case.⁶

It should also be noted that, regardless of how the introduction of nuclear weapons affects the offense-defense equilibrium, it is by no means clear that the United States will always be on the defensive in a local war. In some situations it may be seeking to recover ground lost in the opening days of a local war, and in some situations it may be seeking to fight a guerrilla group in which case there may be no offense or defense at all.

3. Finally, there is the argument that the United States has the capacity to develop a tactical nuclear arsenal superior to that of the Soviet Union. In part, this argument represents a lag from the time when the United States in fact had a tactical nuclear capability superior to the Soviets. But there is no reason to suppose that the Communists cannot put resources into the relatively narrow area of the development of nuclear weapons sufficient to equal the arsenal of the United States. In fact, even without further testing, both sides probably now appear to have arsenals of tactical nuclear weapons sufficient for all conceivable local-war situations.⁷

⁶In contrast to the discussion of tactical problems involving conventional forces, there are two difficulties in discussing the tactical use of nuclear weapons. First and foremost, nobody has ever fought a tactical nuclear battle. In addition to that there is no clear consensus as to what a tactical nuclear battlefield might look like. For a discussion of the alternative conceptions of a nuclear battlefield, see "Nuclear Weapons and Limited War," op. cit.

⁷See Donald G. Brennan and Morton H. Halperin, "Policy Considerations of a Nuclear Test Ban," in Brennan (ed.), Arms Control, Disarmament, and National Security (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1961), pp. 253-57.

It is more likely that the United States, because of its larger GNP and its larger research and development budget, could develop a superior arsenal to the Soviets in the broad range of conventional weapons. In the field of logistics as well, it appears that the United States would gain a net strategic advantage if nuclear weapons were not used. Although there may be some exceptions,⁸ American supply lines, as they involve long distances and depend on ports and airfields, are more likely to be subject to destruction by the use of nuclear weapons than are the interior lines of the Soviet Union and Communist China.

Thus, it appears that focusing simply on the outcome of the battlefield military engagement does not make it clear that the United States would gain by the use of tactical nuclear weapons. And in fact, a general consideration of the problem suggests that the United States is likely to suffer a net loss if both sides symmetrically use nuclear weapons. Which side gains or loses is likely to depend on the particular aspects of a given situation.

THE EFFECT ON STABILITY

It seems clear that the use of nuclear weapons in a local war increases the likelihood that the war will become a general war. This is true partly because it erases one of the major boundaries between a local war and a general nuclear war, and partly because it increases the likelihood that the war would trigger a pre-emptive strike. Neither side has fought a local war using nuclear weapons and thus both would have to ask themselves the question whether this means that general war had become so inevitable that it was now necessary to pre-empt.⁹ It should be clear that I am not asserting that it is impossible to fight a limited nuclear war. I am merely saying that the use of nuclear weapons in a limited war will generate strong pressures which would make it less likely that the war would stay limited. The very uncertainty as to what nuclear limited war would be like,

⁸For example, in parts of South and Southeast Asia, and in Latin America.

⁹For a more extended discussion of this problem, see Morton H. Halperin, "Arms Control and Inadvertent General War," prepared for Project VULCAN, and "The Limiting Process" (Mimeo), Harvard Center for International Affairs, 1961.

what its implication would be, increases the chances that the war would get out of hand and expand to general war. Thus, any side contemplating the use of nuclear weapons for battlefield reasons of the kinds discussed above must consider the possibility that the use of nuclear weapons will trigger a general war. Along with some of the points discussed above, as well as the notion that nuclear limited war is likely to lead to great destruction, the instability of nuclear limited war suggests that the United States and the Soviet Union have a mutual interest in avoiding the use of nuclear weapons. The uncertainty about the battlefield implications of nuclear weapons plus the certainty that they will heighten the danger of general war may lead each side to believe that it is in its interest to refrain from their use. In this situation, one of the strongest motives for the use of nuclear weapons might be the fear that the other side was about to initiate their use. As is argued below, this may be one of the important reasons why this arms control proposal is of value.

THE EFFECT ON THE DETERRENCE OF LOCAL AGGRESSION

The question of what deters and what does not deter is a very complex and controversial one involving a number of psychological and political-military questions. Here we are concerned only with what is most likely to deter local military aggression. The problem is complicated by the fact that one must consider the deterring of a number of different potential adversaries: the Russians, the Chinese, and local Communist forces; and deterring them from a number of different kinds of actions: overt aggression, guerrilla warfare, coups, subversion, etc. For many of these situations, all forms of deterrence, including the threat to use nuclear weapons, are likely to be ineffective. One does not, for example, deter changes in the loyalty of local military groups by American threats to use, or American promises not to use, nuclear weapons. Thus, for a large number of the problems of local defense, the threat of the use or non-use of nuclear weapons is irrelevant. However, in the case of overt military aggression, the nuclear deterrent may be an important variable.

If one believes that the threat of overt military aggression is a serious one, then it is important to ask whether the threat to intervene with nuclear weapons is a more effective deterrent than the threat to intervene with conventional forces. There are two aspects to the question of the effectiveness of the deterrent. The first is, does the enemy believe it; and the second is, how

serious does he think it will be if you carry out your deterrent threat. The threat of massive retaliation, if credible, is effective in the sense that, if the other side really believes that one will retaliate massively, it does not take the action. On the other hand, a threat, for example, to intervene conventionally may be credible and not effective because the other side decides nevertheless to go ahead with the action. The threat to use nuclear weapons in a local area will in one sense increase the cost to the enemy of the action. It will increase the likelihood that the local war will become general war and will increase the expected physical destruction which the enemy will suffer. On the other hand, precisely because it increases the shared costs and shared risks of general war, the threat to intervene with nuclear weapons may reduce the credibility of the threat. That is, if the enemy comes to believe that the only way in which one can intervene is by using nuclear weapons, then he may believe that it is less likely that one will intervene. On the other hand, if both have accepted the rule that nuclear weapons will not be used, then intervention may appear to present less risk of triggering general war and hence may be more likely. Given the caution which even the Chinese Communists have shown in initiating overt warfare involving the United States, it appears that the credibility of the declaration to intervene with U.S. forces is more important than the nature of the intervention. It is more important to convince the Communists that the United States will intervene in a local war rather than to increase the nature of the cost if the intervention is carried out. For this reason, it seems likely that the threat to use nuclear weapons may decrease the deterrence threat, and a threat to intervene conventionally (since, as was argued, it can be made more credible), is more likely to deter overt Communist aggression.

There are several exceptions to the general points made above which need to be made explicit. As was pointed out, there are likely to be a number of areas in the world which the United States is simply incapable of defending against determined Communist aggression. In some of these situations the United States may want to fight simply to demonstrate its determination to fight in other areas and to increase the shared risk of general war as a way of deterring aggression. In this kind of situation, it may be of some value to explode a nuclear weapon as a way of demonstrating seriousness and resolve even if the West cannot win the local battle. On the other hand, the use of nuclear weapons in peripheral areas of this kind may appear to be too dangerous and the West may be more likely to risk intervention if it can do so conventionally with the expectation that the war

will in fact remain conventional. However, there will be a number of areas where this whole discussion is in some sense irrelevant since the United States will decide not to intervene in a local war.

Secondly, there is the problem of whether or not all uses of nuclear weapons would be symmetrical, that is, whether the United States could use nuclear weapons against the Chinese or against local Communist forces without the Soviets supplying our battlefield enemies with the equivalent nuclear forces. The Chinese are likely to have at least a small atomic arsenal within a few years, but there will remain the questions of the Soviets adding to the arsenal and the Russians or Chinese supplying nuclear weapons to other Communist forces. It seems likely that the pressures on the Russians would be extremely great (and perhaps irresistible) to supply nuclear weapons, particularly to the Chinese, or to send a "volunteer" nuclear corps if the United States introduced these weapons on the battlefield. Whether or not nuclear weapons were shared quickly enough to be used on the immediate battlefield, the pressures on the Soviets for the sharing of nuclear weapons in the longer run would probably increase. Alternatively, the battlefield use of nuclear weapons by the United States might bring the Soviet Union into the war--compelled to intervene because its allies did not have the technical capability to use nuclear weapons. Such intervention could bring the world dangerously close to general war. It would seem rather risky and somewhat foolhardy to count on American unilateral use of nuclear weapons in any East-West encounter; increasing the expectation that nuclear weapons would not be used would reduce the pressure on the Soviet Union to share nuclear weapons with the Chinese or others of its allies, particularly during a tense battlefield crisis.

Finally, there is the question as to whether or not, in some areas of the world, the use of tactical nuclear weapons is not to the battlefield advantage of the United States. Before discussing this point very briefly, it should be noted that the other objections to the use of nuclear weapons would not be erased. In fact, they might be strengthened by the effective use of tactical nuclear weapons by the United States. In addition to increasing the danger of inadvertent general war, there would be the costs involved in the great destruction caused by nuclear weapons and the United States would still suffer the political consequences of being the initiator of the

use of nuclear weapons.¹⁰ Thus, it may be true that, even in situations where the United States would gain a tactical military advantage by the use of nuclear weapons, it should refrain from doing so because of other broader political and military considerations. No answer can, of course, be given to the question of whether or not the use of tactical nuclear weapons is to the advantage of the United States in a particular situation and particular geographic area without a detailed study of the situation which was alleged to give this advantage to the United States. Perhaps the situation most often cited as falling in this category is that of the defense of Formosa. But it is assumed that nuclear weapons would be used by both sides only in a very limited way dictated by the United States or used only by the United States. Given any general local use of nuclear weapons, Formosa is likely to be put out of commission very rapidly. Here again it would probably be foolhardy for the United States to initiate the use of nuclear weapons in the Formosa Straits on the assumptions that the Chinese will not be supplied with nuclear weapons by the Russians, or that, if they get nuclear weapons, they will use them with extreme caution and circumspection and against only naval targets.¹¹

Having argued that the non-use of nuclear weapons in local wars would be to the political and military advantage of the United States (as well as sufficiently to the advantage of the Soviet Union) to suggest that there is some possibility of both sides observing such restraint, I turn now to the question of whether the proposed agreement will in fact increase the likelihood that nuclear weapons will not be used in a local war. It should first be noted that there exists now a powerful informal rule against the use of nuclear weapons. In none of the encounters between East and West since the Second World War has either side used nuclear weapons; in fact, one suspects that neither side has seldom, if ever, come close to the

¹⁰For a discussion of these consequences, see "Nuclear Weapons and Limited War," op. cit.

¹¹Certainly this brief paragraph is not meant to be a definitive discussion of the possibility of using tactical nuclear weapons in the defense of Formosa. But it does reflect my extreme skepticism that one can devise a means of using tactical nuclear weapons at any particular location which gives enough assurance of success to offset the political and military costs which would come from the first use of nuclear weapons.

decision to initiate the use of nuclear weapons. Will this proposal enhance the existing rule and contribute to its stability, thus making it even less likely that nuclear weapons will be used in future limited wars? This is the real question. The answer seems to be yes. An agreement outlawing the use of nuclear weapons will in fact contribute to the likelihood that they will not be used. But the answer goes beyond the simple hope that nations will observe the agreements which they sign.

The establishment of an agreement, particularly a formal one, creates an additional cost if the rule is violated. Not only must each side calculate its costs and gains in using nuclear weapons, but it also must estimate the costs and gains in breaking an agreement in terms of establishing future agreements and in terms of its position in the eyes of its adversary, neutrals, and its allies. This may not be an overriding consideration but, in a close decision, it may be marginally crucial at least for the West. In addition, the proposal to break a treaty will probably force a more calculated decision. It will, even more than at present, de-emphasize the strictly military aspects of the decision and elevate the role of political decision-makers. In addition, an agreement will reduce the likelihood of nuclear weapons being used in a local war because it will help dampen the pre-emptive urge which even in a local encounter is one of the strongest motives for the use of nuclear weapons. Since the side which uses nuclear weapons first is likely to gain an important advantage, one of the motives for use is the fear that the other side is about to use the weapons. If one becomes convinced that the nuclearization of the war is inevitable, then there is much to be gained on the battlefield by being the first to use the weapons.¹² Thus, an agreement which reduced each side's expectation that nuclear weapons would be used by the other, an agreement by which each side signalled to the other that it did not intend to use nuclear weapons, might be important in quelling the pre-emptive urge to use nuclear weapons. It might be valuable in discrediting the arguments of those who urge that nuclear weapons be used in order to anticipate their use by the other side.

An agreement on the non-use of nuclear weapons may make an important contribution to increasing the likelihood that nuclear

¹²Although the political costs of initiating the use of nuclear weapons are likely to be great and may to some extent counteract this tendency.

weapons will not be used in a local war. This will be particularly true if it is part of a combination of arms control proposals and unilateral actions aimed at reducing the likelihood of a nuclear limited war.¹³ A declaration against the use of nuclear weapons may be a necessary component of such a program, partly because the program otherwise will seem to be lacking its capstone, if the United States refused to pledge that it will never initiate the use of nuclear weapons and did not seek such a pledge from the Soviets. It may also be true that, since the Soviets have continuously been interested in securing the adoption of a proposal against the first use of nuclear weapons, they may well insist upon it or find it an attractive part of a package proposal on nuclear weapons.

THE EFFECT ON THE INITIATION OF GENERAL WAR

As was implied above, the major military effects of a declaration against the use of nuclear weapons will be in the local war area. It does not seem likely that such agreements will have much of an effect on the decision to initiate general war. If one side decides that it needs to initiate general war, it is not likely to be deterred by the feeling that it will break the arms control agreement. In the aftermath of a general war between the United States and the Soviet Union, nobody is likely to remember or to care about the violation of that particular agreement. In addition, the pre-emptive urges which might lead to such a war are not likely to be quelled in this case by a pledge against the use of nuclear weapons. If general war comes quickly, nuclear weapons might inevitably be used unless much more drastic arms control measures were in effect.

The main effect which this agreement might have on general war is to reduce the likelihood of its occurring inadvertently during a nuclear limited war. Any limited war might trigger inadvertent general war, but a nuclear one is much more likely

¹³Such a package is sketched briefly below. An alternative is elaborated in Thornton Read, A Proposal to Neutralize Nuclear Weapons, Policy Memorandum No. 22, Princeton: Princeton Center of International Studies, 1961.

to do so. Thus, any agreement which reduces the likelihood that nuclear weapons will be used in a limited war reduces the danger of inadvertent general war.¹⁴

¹⁴For an extended discussion of inadvertent general war and nuclear limited war as a trigger, see "Arms Control and Inadvertent General War," op. cit.

CHAPTER IV

POLITICAL EVALUATION

As was suggested above, a major political objective of an agreement outlawing the use of nuclear weapons is to halt the spread of nuclear weapons to additional countries. I will first consider very briefly whether this is a valuable objective, and whether or not this proposal might contribute to accomplishing it, and then will go on to consider some of the other possible effects of an agreement banning the use of nuclear weapons.

Although a few commentators have attempted to make a contrary argument,¹⁵ most students of the problem have agreed that it would be worthwhile to try now to halt the spread of nuclear weapons to additional countries. The major argument is that the spread of nuclear weapons will significantly increase the possibility of an inadvertent general war because it will increase the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons in local wars and in the long run will complicate the problems of deterring general war.

Small powers which have nuclear weapons might be more likely to use them than either of the two major powers. They

¹⁵For the best example, see Fred C. Iklé, "Nth Countries and Disarmament," The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist XVI (December, 1960), pp. 391-94.

may, for example, use them in local areas, non-East-West conflicts, but in a way which may cause the conflict to grow into general war. In addition, an irresponsible dictator could do a good deal of damage with even a few nuclear weapons if he were willing to use them in a cold-blooded way, and if he were willing to risk great damage to his own country. The possibility of a series of blackmail attempts of this kind is not at all a pleasant one to contemplate. Finally, the spread of nuclear weapons to additional countries is dangerous because it may give them a false sense of security and deter them from developing adequate conventional forces to deal with their main military problems.

Assuming that it would be in the interests of the United States to halt the spread of nuclear weapons to Nth countries, the question is: How does an agreement banning the first use of nuclear weapons contribute to this end? Perhaps the first thing to note is that even if it does not, such an agreement might neutralize some of the main dangers stemming from Nth country possession of nuclear weapons. If Nth powers could be induced to join or support an agreement against the use of nuclear weapons, there would be strong moral and political pressures on them not to use such weapons in local encounters and especially not to engage in forms of nuclear blackmail. And insofar as the two major powers were prepared to enforce jointly an agreement against the non-use of nuclear weapons, they would have a powerful check on irresponsible use of nuclear weapons by Nth countries. Partly for just this reason, an agreement against the use of nuclear weapons may contribute to halting the diffusion of nuclear capabilities. If the small powers become convinced that the major powers will not permit them to use nuclear weapons, if they recognize that they will be forced to sign and observe an agreement banning the use of both the weapons and the threat of the use, they may have much less incentive to acquire a nuclear capability. In addition, the signing of an agreement against the use of nuclear weapons and other measures aimed at strengthening the likelihood that the other major powers will not depend on nuclear forces for their defense may be an important signal to the smaller powers that nuclear capabilities are not an effective method of defense.

There is a contrary trend, however, which suggests that, at least under certain circumstances, a U.S.-U.S.S.R. agreement not to use nuclear weapons might in fact trigger the diffusion of nuclear weapons to other countries. A number of countries throughout the world depend on American military forces for their

security. A number of these, particularly European countries such as Germany, feel that the only capability with which the United States can adequately defend them is the American nuclear force. The sudden stripping away of the nuclear defense may make them feel naked and create strong pressures for them to attempt to acquire nuclear weapons. Only if America's allies are convinced that they can be defended with conventional forces can the significant costs which would come from American renunciation of the use of nuclear weapons be offset.

These costs would be of two kinds. First, there would be the feeling on the part of the allies that they had been deserted by the United States. Since they probably would not, under the circumstances, concur in the agreement, the United States would have made a unilateral agreement with the Soviet Union contrary to their wishes. In addition, the likely reaction of the West European powers may be to attempt to create independent or international, but non-NATO, nuclear forces, for their defense. Ideally, the signing of the agreement should trigger or be accompanied (or perhaps preceded) by the creation of larger and more adequate conventional forces. But until the European powers and other U.S. allies become convinced that conventional forces can prove adequate for their defense against a conventional attack, the reaction to a non-use agreement is likely to be towards a lessened conventional force effort in order to devote additional resources to the development of independent nuclear capabilities.

The difficulties involved in this problem are hard to overestimate. The Europeans, particularly the Germans and the French, have become convinced over a number of years, partly as a result of America's actions and American analysis, that the use of nuclear weapons is a way of avoiding the use or need of large conventional forces, and is an effective way of defending them. This has become so engrained in their military and strategic thinking that it will be very difficult to alter. To some extent, the problem is an intellectual one. It can be solved in part by exposing the Europeans to the kind of analysis of the value and problems of the use of nuclear weapons which has been carried on in the United States. But the problem is probably much more political than intellectual--the problem of convincing the Europeans that we are prepared to defend them, that the abandonment of nuclear weapons is an action designed to enhance their security and not to detract from it for some ulterior American purpose. If this can be done, an agreement banning the use of nuclear weapons might be an important symbol of the agreement

of the West to improve its conventional forces and might be a valuable stimulant to overcoming the opposition of other groups within the allied countries. In its absence a U.S.-U.S.S.R. agreement against the use of nuclear weapons may well trigger the diffusion of nuclear weapons, rather than bringing it to a halt.

Apart from the effect on the decision of allied nations and neutrals to acquire or not to acquire a nuclear capability, there will be other important political effects of an agreement banning the use of nuclear weapons. In relation to the Soviet Union, the negotiating of such an agreement may (or may not) open the way to further arms control. Since the Soviets have traditionally been interested in this agreement it may be possible to couple it with an arms control agreement of interest to the United States. This possibility should not be exaggerated. The Soviets might well refuse to sign any agreement except one which embodied their plan for general and complete disarmament. American willingness to sign the agreement at this time, however, followed by many years of refusal even seriously to consider it, may give another message to the Soviets. It may suggest to them, and perhaps particularly to the Chinese, an increased American fear of nuclear war and hence a decreased American willingness to intervene in local area warfare. The Communists may view an American proposal of such an agreement, whether formal or informal, as a signal that the United States was retrenching, was preparing to withdraw its commitments to overseas areas. Since it may be true that the fear that the United States would use nuclear weapons has in fact deterred the Chinese, in particular, from launching overt military aggression in areas along their border, the signing of an agreement banning the use of nuclear weapons by the United States and the Soviet Union might be a signal for renewed Chinese aggression. The Soviets, less fearful that the local aggression would trigger a nuclear general war because the use of nuclear weapons had become less likely, may be more willing to sanction overseas aggression by the Chinese. Here again, the crucial variable may be what additional steps the United States takes.

As has already been suggested, America's allies are likely to look upon this agreement with serious misgivings. If it is an informal bilateral agreement, it may raise the old fears of a direct accord between the two super powers at the expense of their allies.

Apart from the effect on their decision whether or not to build nuclear weapons, neutralist nations are likely to respond favorably to an American initiative to ban the use of nuclear weapons. Probably without carefully considering the strategic implications, most neutrals have been pressing for such an agreement and would probably welcome an American initiative in this field.

It is difficult to draw a balance sheet of the political and military effects of a ban on the use of nuclear weapons. It depends very much on what else is done. Possible complementary steps will be discussed below, but it should be noted that the proposal in any case should reduce the likelihood of a nuclear limited war and hence the danger of inadvertent general war. There will inevitably be costs associated with the reaction of America's allies and gains, if slight, in terms of the propaganda battle in the uncommitted nations. However, the balancing of the costs and gains can only be done if one considers concurrent unilateral and arms control measures.

CHAPTER V

CONCURRENT ACTION

As was suggested above, the renunciation by the United States and the Soviet Union of the use of nuclear weapons would have a marginal, if perhaps crucial, effect on whether or not nuclear weapons would be used in a local war, but it might not contribute to halting the diffusion of nuclear weapons to additional countries. The actual impact of the agreement will depend on what is done concurrently and how the agreement is proposed, negotiated, and implemented. Concurrent action in three fields-- arms control, unilateral military policy, and diplomacy--will be discussed.

With the Soviet resumption of nuclear testing in September, 1961, there is little likelihood of a test ban in the near future, so I turn to other arms control measures.

A comprehensive program to control nuclear weapons might include a cut-off of nuclear production, reduction of stockpiles, confining nuclear weapons to the territory of the United States and the Soviet Union, and an agreement not to share fissionable material or nuclear know-how with other countries. Without seeking to analyze any of these extensively, I would argue that they all appear to be in the interest of the United States and might as a unit effectively halt the spread of nuclear weapons and significantly reduce the likelihood of their use in a local war. Each of these proposals should be subjected to an extensive analysis before it can be determined if it in fact would contribute

to American security. Some of these might, of course, be easier to negotiate than others--or all might be beyond the realm of possibility.

Some of these steps might be taken unilaterally either with the aim of inducing reciprocation or because they are valuable in themselves independent of the Russian response. There is already in effect a tacit agreement against the sharing of nuclear technology which might well remain in force even if not translated into a formal agreement. An unsuccessful attempt, however, to negotiate a formal agreement might corrode the tacit understanding and lead to nuclear sharing. The cut-off of production and the removal of nuclear weapons, at least from forward areas, deserve serious consideration as a unilateral step.

The removal of nuclear weapons from front line troops could be done in a way which would not impair the ability of the U.S. to wage a nuclear limited war, but which would improve the chances of a local war remaining non-nuclear. Involved here is the question of how to develop dual-purpose forces. The Army and many analysts have suggested forces that can fight equally well with or without nuclear weapons as the "ideal" solution. There are major problems, however, in actually sending a force into combat equipped to fight both conventionally and with nuclear weapons. If such a force were supplied with nuclear weapons, it might ultimately use them under the strains of the battle without authority to do so. Two alternatives are possible. One is to have stand-by forces equipped with nuclear weapons should the United States engage in a conventional limited war; the other is to plan on restricting the use of nuclear weapons to supporting units outside the battlefield area, that is, by tactical air forces and by short-range missiles. The major problem in such use is that it may lead to an expansion of the war into areas from which the nuclear weapons are coming. This problem might be overcome in part by flying planes carrying nuclear weapons from aircraft carriers. The United States has adopted the policy of seeking to equip its troops to fight both with tactical nuclear weapons and without--this seems to be the worst alternative.

Thus, I would argue that the removal of nuclear weapons from front line troops enhances American security independent of any agreement with the Soviet Union. This does not mean that the United States should necessarily carry out the step unilaterally. The Russians seem to be seriously interested in keeping atomic weapons out of German hands and it may be possible to get some concession from them--perhaps area inspection--as part of an

agreement which kept nuclear weapons out of Germany. Much of the unilateral benefit could be gained by moving nuclear weapons off the front lines, but not necessarily removing them from Germany.

A unilateral renunciation of production might generate some pressure on the Russians to conform. But even by itself it would be a further signal of America's interest in neutralizing nuclear weapons and its desire to avoid the use of nuclear weapons if possible. Whether in the long run the United States could afford to abstain unilaterally from production depends on a number of technical (and classified) factors including developments in anti-missile technology.

One additional unilateral military step needs to be discussed. That is the strengthening of conventional forces. However, one point needs to be emphasized. From the standpoint of actually fighting a local war, even with present conventional force levels, the United States would be better off if both sides refrain from using nuclear weapons. Allied conventional forces are now too small (and are poorly equipped) partly as a result of the belief that nuclear weapons are a substitute for manpower; but, as was argued above, with any given ratio of forces, the United States does not gain (and probably loses) if both sides introduce nuclear weapons on the battlefield. Having said this, it is important to stress nonetheless the advisability, both from a military and political point of view, of strengthening American and allied conventional forces. Not only would this be an additional signal reinforcing a pledge of non-use of nuclear weapons, but it would also be important in reassuring our allies that the non-use pledge did not imply that we were not prepared to defend them.

The strengthening of American conventional forces should be accompanied by a strong diplomatic and propaganda effort stressing America's determination to halt the spread of nuclear weapons and outlaw their use, and at the same time stressing equally its determination to stand by its commitments to defend its allies. An effort should also be made to make clear to our allies that it would increase America's capacity to intervene in local war as well as the capacity to do so without touching off a general war.

Even without other formal arms control steps, an agreement on non-use of nuclear weapons coupled with the unilateral steps sketched above might be sufficient to halt the spread of nuclear weapons and might reduce substantially the likelihood of a nuclear local war.

