

## CHAPTER 3

### NONPROLIFERATION: STRATEGIES FOR WINNING, LOSING, AND COPING

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Nonproliferation.

It is difficult to engage in a serious debate over nonproliferation. In fact, most people, even officials from nations that proliferate, claim they support it. They might disagree about whether or not a specific case (i.e., their nation's activities) constitutes a serious proliferation threat but will insist that any effort to achieve nonproliferation is a good thing. There are, of course, those who might take exception to these views, particularly academics who contend that proliferation might actually be good, but this view is generally dismissed by practitioners as being, well, academic.

This chapter will take on this set of views directly. It will challenge the notion that any initiative aimed at nonproliferation is good *per se* but will do so without arguing that proliferation itself is good. It will do so by distinguishing between winning, losing, and coping at nonproliferation and by arguing that only winning strategies are capable of securing nonproliferation success.

Winning.

Not all national nonproliferation initiatives are created equal. Some actually help curb strategic weapons proliferation or roll it back where it once existed. Others fail to achieve their goals, and others still actually compound the proliferation problems they were intended to curb.

Successes, though, do occur. Here, recent U.S. efforts to get Ukraine to surrender its nuclear arsenal and to have South Africa and Argentina terminate their indigenous rocket programs are good examples.

These successes were no accident. Attributes common to each included (1) setting high goals (nothing less than the abandonment and renunciation of the proliferation activity targeted), (2) early planning, and (3) leveraging U.S. and allied economic, political, and military strengths against the enduring weaknesses of the parties proliferating.

In none of these cases was any proliferation activity or project grandfathered. Instead, South Africa was asked to terminate its rocket program. Argentina destroyed the key components of Condor II along with the program's related manufacturing equipment and the United States asked that Ukraine surrender all of its nuclear weapons.

Early planning also was clearly present. With Ukraine, the Bush administration began analyzing what might be done with the world's third largest nuclear arsenal months before the Ukraine even voted for its own national independence. Just as important, the United States initiated and completed talks with Russian and Ukrainian officials on denuclearization before Ukraine's military ever gained full control over the former Soviet Union's weapons systems.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of South Africa's civilian rocket program, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) commissioned a RAND Corporation study on the unprofitability and proliferation risks of such a space launch program 2 years before the South African project became known to American intelligence. Because RAND began briefing its study well before the United States sanctioned South Africa, this analysis was not only able to shape America's response to South Africa's rocket program (which was at the time little more than a paper study), but South African policy as well.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, with the Condor II program, Washington acted on the very earliest intelligence reports in 1983, well before it had irrefutable proof—e.g., photographs or rocket tests of the program. The U.S. military understood that if Argentina successfully cooperated with Egypt and Iraq that Israel, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members, and allied expeditionary forces would all be threatened with a missile they had no effective defenses against. Efforts to block the Condor II project commenced almost immediately. The United States worked with Germany and France to cut off the supply of key components. Others conducted covert operations against the project's European organizers. Beyond this, the U.S. Customs agents caught Egyptians trying to spirit illicit missile components for the Condor II program out of the United States. High-level U.S. officials confronted Egyptian President Mubarak with this information and got him to promise to end Egyptian participation in the project in 1989.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, in all of these cases, the United States and its friends leveraged their comparative economic, political and military strengths against the key weaknesses of targeted proliferators.

In Ukraine's case, the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nations exploited Ukraine's eagerness to receive U.S. and Western financial and political support as a hedge against Russian political and economic intimidation. The United States and Russia also made it clear that Ukraine lacked the wherewithal to make their strategic nuclear forces anything more than a provocative, vulnerable target. As such, Ukraine willingly bargained for generous Western aid and indirect security assurances in exchange for giving its weapons up for dismantlement. Both the transmission of Western aid and information on Ukrainian force's vulnerability were actively orchestrated by the United States.<sup>4</sup>

With Argentina's Condor II rocket program, the United States leveraged its ability to supply Menem's democratic,

civilian government with what it needed to strengthen its rule in exchange for the program's termination. First, Menem was anxious to gain respectability after Argentina's military dictatorship, the Falklands fiasco, and the Alfonsín government's embarrassing obsequiousness before the Argentine military. What Menem needed was to show the Argentine military (who had secretly launched the Condor II missile effort with Iraq) that his civilian government was their only hope to reestablish needed military-to-military contacts with the United States and critical U.S. A-4 aircraft and parts. He also was keen to gain access to Western financial markets in order to privatize Argentina's faltering economy. The Bush administration sided with Menem and supplied him with what he needed (including detailed intelligence on the Condor II program, which his own military had kept from him). The leverage worked.

Finally, in South Africa, both whites and blacks mistakenly assumed that the government could make money launching other countries' satellites if it developed an intercontinental-ballistic-missile-capable rocket of its own. Cash-strapped to upgrade the black majority's living standards and eager to expand markets for its arms and aero industries, South Africa could hardly afford the missile technology sanctions that the United States had imposed. Rather than lift the sanctions for South Africa's importation of Israeli rocket technology though, U.S. officials presented their own analysis (prepared by RAND several years before) of how South Africa would lose money if it persisted in the project. More important, the U.S. officials encouraged the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—an organization from which South Africa would soon have to borrow billions of dollars—to reinforce this point, by threatening to reduce its extensions of credits if Pretoria persisted in funding the rocket program. Finally, U.S. officials suggested that Pretoria try to finance the project privately. Cornered, South Africa officials took up this challenge and after a year of fruitless efforts to find private financial backers, killed the project.<sup>5</sup>

Losing.

In contrast to these successes—which entailed high goals, early planning, and effective leverage—national nonproliferation policy failures are far less considered. Indeed, they can be so ill-conceived that they can actually compound the proliferation threats they are supposed to curb. Here, perhaps the best example is Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace Program. Launched in 1953, the program was designed to help cap Soviet nuclear weapons material production and steer other nations from ever acquiring enough weapons to wipe out 100 or more U.S. military industrial centers. Unfortunately, the threat Atoms for Peace was designed to address rested on an antiquated World War II premise that what the United States needed most to prevail in war was its military-industrial mobilization base. Preoccupied with this obsolete World War II concern, the Atoms for Peace Program failed to consider the relative vulnerability of our defenseless air-atomic forces or to anticipate the kinds of catalytic and accidental wars that would become more likely if other nations merely acquired a handful of nuclear weapons.<sup>6</sup>

Egregiously focused on the past, the program's nuclear safeguards goals were also set dangerously low (their key objective was to prevent the diversion of *large* stockpiles of nuclear material, stockpiles large enough to field forces that could decimate 100 American cities). More important, rather than leverage smaller nations' interest in receiving nuclear aid to secure truly effective nuclear safeguards, the program was too casual about what it shared (marketing not just nuclear science, but plutonium production technology and equipment). It also was inattentive as to whom it shared this technology with (not just with major European military allies, but too with smaller countries who were far less certain about their security, e.g., India, Pakistan, Algeria, Israel, Libya, South Korea, Taiwan, Iran and Iraq).<sup>7</sup>

Although this example is extreme (along with Eisenhower's Space for Peace Program, which followed Atoms for Peace), it is not without recent corollaries. Consider America's current nonproliferation efforts with China, Russia, North Korea, and India. Here again, billions in space and nuclear cooperation have been offered (to the very government-sponsored entities U.S. intelligence has identified as the worst proliferators), all in exchange for promises of better behavior. Past proliferation activities (e.g., the Indian and North Korean "peaceful" nuclear programs, questionable Chinese and Russian nuclear and rocket exports, etc.) are grandfathered, and in each case, the United States and its friends have pleaded with each proliferator to join or adhere to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, or the Military Fissile Production Cut Off, only to discover that the value of such pledges is, at best, nominal.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, in contrast to winning strategies against proliferators, the first attribute of failing is the poverty of one's goals. Indeed, implementing failing strategies against proliferation only produces more disappointment or defeat: Bad proliferation behavior is grandfathered or rewarded with strategic technological transfers for new nonproliferation pledges that are rarely, if ever, upheld .

Second, unlike winning, losing strategies consistently fail to gauge or anticipate the threats they are designed to address. Instead, they almost always react to compelling evidence of proliferation activity well after it has occurred. This is true whether it concerns the production of nuclear weapons material in North Korea and Iraq, the development of missiles (e.g., Chinese and North Korean help to Pakistan's rocket programs and Russian, North Korean and Chinese missile assistance to Iran), or the clear violation of previous nonproliferation promises (as with Russia on missile assistance to Iran, Chinese nuclear and

missile pledges concerning Pakistan, or North Korean nuclear pledges under the NPT).

Finally, losing strategies, unlike winning ones, fecklessly pit U.S. and allied weaknesses against proliferators' enduring strengths.<sup>9</sup> The United States and its friends might threaten to sanction proliferators for violating their nonproliferation pledges, but they are unlikely to follow through. Indeed, commercial, liberal democracies are more inclined to make money and friends than to jeopardize either by imposing penalties against others. Proliferators, unfortunately, know this and are all too willing make demands against the United States and its friends for money (IMF and other international loans—as with Russia and India), strategic technology (advanced computers, satellite launches, nuclear cooperation—as with Russia, India, North Korea, China and, in the 1970s, Iran and Iraq), relief from current sanctions (e.g., Iran, Iraq, India, and Pakistan today), or greater political consideration (North Korea, India, and Pakistan).

Winning strategies, in contrast, get those supporting nonproliferation to leverage their comparative strengths—e.g., their financial prowess, superior ability to project military force, the attractive qualities of their liberal democratic forms of government and market economy, etc.—against proliferators' enduring weaknesses—e.g., deficiencies in hard currency reserves and popular domestic support, dysfunctional economic systems, lack of strong alliance partners, etc).

Coping.

Given the popularity of losing and the rarity of winning against proliferation, a series of efforts called counterproliferation has been developed within the DoD to help cope.<sup>10</sup> The presumption of this approach is that despite our best efforts, nonproliferation will fail to curb the proliferation activities of the most determined proliferators. Although counterproliferation is willing to countenance

efforts to delay and dissuade proliferators through export controls, sanctions, and diplomacy, its main focus is on militarily deterring, preempting, and defending against proliferators and their threats to use chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them.<sup>11</sup>

Putting aside the considerable financial, political, and legal challenges that counterproliferation's promotion has faced,<sup>12</sup> this approach has several clear advantages over losing. First, if its goal is low—limiting the damage that our military forces might suffer from what strategic arms proliferation that has already occurred—it is nonetheless a necessary and useful military mission that complements what the military already does. Certainly, the United States and its allies must be prepared militarily to cope with a number of nations that have acquired chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons and long-range missiles (e.g., Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya, and others) with active and passive defenses and, in war, with the ability to strike offensively at threatening weapons facilities and arsenals.

The notion that the United States could engage preemptively to eliminate proliferation threats, however, is morally and politically complicated and, in most key cases, unlikely.<sup>13</sup> Increased use of deep tunneling equipment by North Korea, Libya, and Iran all but eliminates the surgical raid option of the sort conducted by Israel in 1981 against Iraq. And U.S. concerns about the military fallout resulting from striking such militarily prepared proliferators as North Korea suggest how difficult preemptive strikes against the hardest cases would be. Still, unlike strategies for losing, counterproliferation and other coping strategies do have the advantage of allowing extensive periods for planning. Indeed, planning can begin just as soon as senior officials anticipate possible proliferation threats—months, years, or even decades before they are realized.

Finally, unlike losing strategies, which leverage our comparative weaknesses against proliferators' comparative strengths, counterproliferation attempts to leverage



America's superior ability to project conventional force overseas. Unfortunately, this strength is pitted against something even stronger—the willingness of proliferators to threaten to use strategic arms against U.S. or allied forces. By definition these strategic weapons—which include missiles, nuclear, biological and chemical weapons<sup>14</sup>—are ones against which neither the United States nor its allies have adequate military countermeasures.<sup>15</sup> As such, counterproliferation may be a necessary strategy to limit the damage proliferation might inflict, but it can hardly serve as a winning strategy.

### Applications.

One, of course, could disagree about whether a given nonproliferation policy or initiative was a winning, losing, or coping strategy.<sup>16</sup> Some might argue, for example, that America's current effort to stop Russia from transferring rocket technology to Iran is a winning strategy. Certainly, its stated aim seems high: A complete cutoff of Russia rocket assistance to the *Shehab-4* missile. Nor does the initiative appear to be anchored in the past—the *Shehab-4* itself is still 1 or more years away from completion. In talks with the Russians, moreover, U.S. diplomats have been able to negotiate from the strength that comes from knowing how critical American economic assistance is to Russia's desperately cash-strapped economy and space programs.

Yet, for all this, a much stronger case can be made that America's strategy cannot possibly win. First, this approach has already essentially grandfathered Russia's help to Iran's *Shehab-3* missile program. This missile was flight tested in July 1998 even though Washington was first confronted with Israeli intelligence about the project in February 1997. Second, although the White House threatened to sanction Russia's help to Iran, it only imposed limited trade sanctions (i.e., only against Russian missile entities that the United States has no commercial ties to). Moreover, such reluctant sanctions, which exempted

Strategy	Approach	Goal	Timing	Leverage
Winning	Competitive strategies	Swift, complete elimination of proliferation activity or dismantlement of proliferated systems	Anticipate proliferation threats early as possible; before compelling proof	Our military, political, economic, and cultural strengths against proliferators' comparative weaknesses in these areas
Losing	Traditional nonproliferation	Get proliferator to pledge better future behavior in exchange for increased access to strategic technology; failing this, threaten sanctions	React to indisputable evidence of proliferation activity	Our weak desire to sanction against proliferators' strong inclination to make us pay for their pledging to improve their proliferating behavior
Coping	Counterproliferation	Limit damage or harm nonproliferation failure might otherwise pose to U.S. forces	Plan to act to cope with nonproliferation failure	Our strong force projection capabilities against proliferators' equal or stronger will to threaten to use weapons capable of mass destruction against them

Figure 1. Nonproliferation Strategies.

Russia's Space Agency (an entity that has helped Iran and that still receives U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration [NASA] money and space cooperation), were only imposed after (1) Washington had successfully backed a \$22 billion IMF bailout for Russia, (2) the *Shehab-3* had been flight tested and Russia was caught red-handed helping the project, and (3) Congress was about to pass mandatory sanctions legislation. The message all this conveys, then, is quite different than impending success: The White House might say it is working to block completion of the *Shehab-4*, but its efforts are unlikely to succeed. In fact, U.S. officials have already surrendered any serious attempt to use the financial leverage they had against Russia and were only likely to talk about pledges

the Russians had already violated, and the Russians knew it.<sup>17</sup>

Who is right? Those that claim the U.S. strategy against Russian missile proliferation to Iran is a loser, or those that insist it is a winning strategy? Honest minds can differ. What should not be in dispute, however, is that there are significant, recognizable criteria for winning, losing, and coping. Does America's current nonproliferation initiative regarding Russia set its sights too low? Is it too reactive to the problem (e.g., an *ad hoc* response to press and Congressional pressures) or truly anticipatory; the result of long-range planning? Does America's current approach leverage America's enduring comparative strengths against those proliferating in Russia or ignore or squander such leverage? Will America's current strategy allow it to dominate Russian proliferators' likely countermoves? Finally, and most important, if there is some case to be made that America's strategy is merely coping or actually losing, what can be done to make this strategy accord more toward the criteria for winning?

Conclusion.

The last question, of course, is the most important. Certainly, policymakers and analysts should no longer assume that any nonproliferation initiative is sufficient or that good intentions are good enough. To win against proliferators, we must have strategies that meet recognizable, winning criteria. And just as clearly, officials must be able to recognize when they are only coping or actually losing against specific proliferators. It may be difficult to get enough analysts and policymakers to agree on such matters in a timely fashion. But not trying is a sure prescription for both political and analytic failure.

## CHAPTER 3 - ENDNOTES

1. See Brian Chow, *Emerging National Space Launch Programs: Economics and Safeguards*, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, April 1992.

2. See Henry Sokolski, "South Africa Rethinks Space Goals," *Space News*, July 26, 1993, p. 15.

3. See Rodney W. Jones and Mark G. McDonough, *Tracking Nuclear Proliferation: A Guide in Maps and Charts* 1998, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1998, p. 225; Richard H. Speier, "The Missile Technology Regime: Case Study of a Multilateral Negotiation," Washington, DC: USKP, grant SG-31-95, November 1995.

4. See Mitchell Reiss, *Bridled Ambition: Why Countries Constrain Their Nuclear Capabilities*, Washington, DC: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1995, pp. 89-129.

5. See Wyn Q. Bowen, "U.S. Policy on Ballistic Missile Proliferation: the MTCR's First Decade (1987-1997)," *The Nonproliferation Review*, Fall 1997, p. 29; Henry Sokolski, "Ending South Africa's Rocket Program: A Nonproliferation Success," Washington, DC: Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, 1996.

6. See Joseph F. Pilat, *et al.*, *Atoms for Peace: An Analysis After Thirty Years*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1985, pp. 17-50 and 131-141; Henry Sokolski, "Atoms for Peace: A Nonproliferation Primer?," *Arms Control*, September 1980, pp. 199-230.

7. See Albert Wohlstetter, *et al.*, *Swords From Plowshares*, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1976, pp. x-xi, 48, 63, 86, and the citations in endnote 6 above.

8. For a generalized discussion of these points, see Victor Gilinsky, *Nuclear Blackmail: The 1994 U.S.-DPRK Agreed Framework on North Korea's Nuclear Program*, Stanford, CA: The Hoover Institution, 1997; Scott Parrish, *The Russian Connection*, Washington, DC: The American Jewish Committee, 1998; Roberta Wohlstetter, "U.S. Peaceful Aid and the Indian Bomb," in *Nuclear Policies: Fuel Without the Bomb*, Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1978, pp. 57-72; Henry Sokolski, "Nonproliferation: Faking It and Making It," *The National Interest*, Spring 1998, pp. 67-74; and "A Tale of Three Firms," *The Weekly Standard*, February 24, 1997.

9. See David J. Andre, "Competitive Strategies: An Approach Against Proliferation in Henry Sokolski, ed., *Fighting Proliferation*:

*New Concerns for the Nineties*, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, September 1996, pp. 257-276.

10. See Remarks by the Honorable Les Aspin, Secretary of Defense, delivered at the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC, December 7, 1993; and Mitchell B. Wallerstein, "The Origins and Evolution of the Defense Counterproliferation Initiative," in Peter L. Hays, ed., *Countering the Proliferation and Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1998, pp. 21-35.

11. See Remarks by the Honorable Les Aspin, Secretary of Defense, National Academy of Sciences, December 7, 1993; Robert D. Blackwill and Ashton B. Carter, "The Role of Intelligence" in Robert D. Blackwill and Albert Carnesale, eds., *New Nuclear Nations: Consequences for U.S. Policy*, New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993, pp. 234, 239-240.

12. On these points, see Chris Williams, "DoD's Counterproliferation Initiative," in Henry Sokolski, ed., *Fighting Proliferation: New Concerns for the Nineties*, pp. 249-256.

13. See Frank Gibson Goldman, *The International Legal Ramifications of United States Counter-Proliferation Strategy* Newport, RI: Center for Naval Warfare Studies, April 1997.

14. On what other high-leverage arms may also be included, see James Digby, "Precision-Guided Weapons," *Adelphi Paper* No. 118, London, UK: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1975; Henry Sokolski, "Nonapocalyptic Proliferation: A New Strategic Threat?" *Washington Quarterly*, Spring 1994, pp. 115-125; David Blair, "How to Defeat the United States: The Operational Military Effects of the Proliferation of Weapons of Precise Destruction," in Henry Sokolski, ed., *Fighting Proliferation: New Concerns for the Nineties*, pp. 75-94; Thomas G. Mahnken, "America's Next War," *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 1993, pp. 171-184; Patrick J. Garrity, "Implications of the Persian Gulf War for Regional Powers," *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 1993.

15. See Henry Sokolski, "Fighting Proliferation With Intelligence," reprinted in *Fighting Proliferation*, pp. 277-298.

16. Some nonproliferation initiatives, such as the U.S. approach to the North Korean nuclear threat, may actually go through more than one strategic phase. Thus, at first, the United States explicitly toyed with coping strategies, including counterproliferation military strikes in 1994. The White House then argues that it would leverage the North's behavior by offering it nuclear reactors, fuel oil, and eventual normalization of relations in exchange for Pyongyang's promise

eventually to come back into compliance with the NPT. Once it became clear that the North did not need the reactors or good relations with the United States as much as the United States needed to keep North Korea from resuming production of weapons plutonium, though, Congress began to openly criticize the deal for being a losing approach that would allow the North to leverage concessions from the United States.

17. As for coping, no one has yet argued this, but the case could be made that the U.S. effort is only designed to delay the *Shehab-4* until the United States deploys effective missile defenses. The problem with this argument, though, is that it is excessively theoretical. In fact, the current White House would hardly be comfortable claiming that its strategy is not intended to win and, even if it did argue that its strategy was only designed to cope, its critics would contest that it had an aggressive schedule for deploying missile defenses.