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This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by [redacted], Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Peaceful Explosions and Regional Zones Pose
Nuclear Proliferation Problems

A second session will be held in Geneva beginning next week of the committee preparing for next year's Non-proliferation Treaty Review Conference. The US views the Conference as a means of attracting more adherents to the NPT and otherwise strengthening the treaty. Some of the problems confronting advocates of the NPT are examined in the following report.

The Indian nuclear explosion of May 18 continues to have repercussions on the worldwide debate over nuclear proliferation. The failure of the US and the USSR, in particular, to condemn the Indian action has raised doubts among many countries about the commitment of the major powers to nuclear non-proliferation. Many now perceive no disadvantage to keeping the nuclear option open [REDACTED]

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India's defense of its test as a peaceful nuclear explosion has provided those countries seeking to protect their nuclear development options with an increasingly attractive pretext for non-accession to the NPT. Although it is doubtful that these countries view the peaceful explosion option as anything but a camouflage for their own nuclear intentions, the attention the concept has attracted has resulted in increased discussion of the responsibility of the nuclear countries to provide non-weapons technology to non-nuclear states. The ensuing discussion has called into question the future of the nonproliferation structure established by the 1968 Treaty.

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Confidence in the NPT itself as an instrument to prevent nuclear proliferation is diminishing and other arrangements, similar to the 1967 Latin American Nuclear Free Zone, are being proposed as adequate substitutes. Increased interest in the concept of nuclear free zones has led the Iranians to revive their proposal to establish a nuclear free zone in the Middle East. While the geographical limits of the zone have deliberately been left undefined, the Pakistanis have already made known their intention to submit a proposal for a South East Asian nuclear free zone to the United Nations if the Indian subcontinent is excluded from the Iranian proposal.

At the CCD session earlier this year, the Nigerian delegate suggested reconsideration of the 1964 Declaration of the Organization of African Unity regarding a nuclear free zone for Africa. Most recently the Romanians, in their speech at the Conference last week, promoted the concept of nuclear free zones and declared that such regional regimes should encourage peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

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The countries affected by these regional arrangements are also claiming new rights for parties to such nuclear-free zones. [redacted]

[redacted] OPANAL (the organization responsible for administering the Latin American Nuclear Free Zone) has suggested that parties to regional arrangements should enjoy the same benefits as NPT parties. While the NPT has long been condemned by its critics as perpetuating discriminatory arrangements in favor of the nuclear powers, incentives for accession to the NPT itself would be severely diminished if the OPANAL interpretation becomes widely accepted.

The US has consistently maintained that four conditions must be met if a nuclear free zone is to be recognized:

--the initiative should be taken by the states in the region concerned;

--the zone should preferably include all states in the area whose participation is deemed important;

--the creation of a zone should not disturb necessary security arrangements; and

--provision should be made for adequate verification.

The actual establishment of a nuclear free zone and the interpretation of what this entails are up to the countries in the region itself, however, and it is thus possible that there would be provision for conducting peaceful nuclear explosions. Under the terms of the NPT, non-nuclear weapon states are prohibited from conducting peaceful nuclear explosions, although the US, UK, and USSR are obligated to provide the benefits of such technology to non-nuclear states when such benefits are proven.

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Apart from these considerations, there has been a general erosion of support for the NPT within recent months. A number of countries formally committed to NPT accession are now clearly dragging their feet on actual ratification.

In Western Europe, a principal hold-out is Italy which has consistently professed its intention to ratify both the NPT and the separate agreement under the NPT providing for IAEA verification of EURATOM safeguards. Parliamentary action on both agreements has been stalled for months, apparently because of high-level opposition within the foreign ministry to NPT accession. The related safeguards agreement can come into force only when all EURATOM members (except France, which will not sign the NPT) have ratified it.

In Asia, there are increasing indications that the South Koreans are reconsidering their options with regard to the NPT, particularly in light of Korea's intention to expand its nuclear power capabilities significantly during the next decade. Another NPT holdout, Japan, has also not moved toward NPT ratification within recent months.



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