

# Nuclear proliferation

## treaty under threat

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Australia remains attached to disarmament diplomacy, but we need to think realistically about what happens when it fails to work. There is now a serious threat of a break-out from the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). North Korea defied the ‘international community’ by proceeding with a clandestine nuclear weapons program while still a member of the NPT. North Korea then kicked out inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and left the NPT. North Korea, having flouted the Treaty, and flaunted its nuclear weapons program, now says it is legally entitled to leave the NPT and so should not be held accountable for what it did when it was a party to the Treaty.

Yet the Security Council has not even met on the issue.<sup>1</sup> So much for the so-called ‘international community’ in which so many Australians evince a touching faith. Worse, North Korea’s successful defiance is highly encouraging to other would-be clandestine proliferators, notably Iran. What would it mean for us if the ‘NPT regime’ was seen to be breaking down? We can hardly fail to notice, for example, that in Japan it is no longer taboo to talk about nuclear weapons. That is a consequence of the Japanese public’s growing fear of North Korea’s nuclear ambitions and its missile program.<sup>2</sup>

North Korea’s Nodong missiles, whose numbers grew from zero to some two hundred on President Clinton’s watch, need not be accurate in order to create panic in Japan—especially if they were thought to have chemical or biological warheads. And it seems unwise to assume that Pyongyang is incapable of putting a nuclear warhead on a missile.

Moreover, some in Seoul make no secret of the fact that they would like to inherit the North’s nuclear program, once the peninsula is reunified, and point it at Japan. If that were to come to pass, how long would Japan be willing to continue to shelter under the US ‘nuclear umbrella’?

In Australia, clear thinking in this matter is not helped by our history of naïveté in relation to nuclear arms control. Indeed, most of those responsible for Australia’s disarmament diplomacy misread the history of the Cold War.<sup>3</sup> They never understood that most of the nuclear arms control agreements—products of US strategic paralysis following the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal that

destroyed the Nixon presidency—played greatly into Moscow’s hands. Indeed, throughout the Cold War, the USSR sought to paint American nuclear weapons as the main source of danger. That was because the abolition of nuclear weapons would have left Moscow with unchallenged hegemony over Eurasia as a consequence of its overwhelming conventional power.

True, the ‘NPT regime’ is something of an exception to this sorry tale of arms control during the Cold War. Indeed, the NPT did help stability because it helped convince the aggressors of World War II, Germany and Japan, that they did not need nuclear weapons for their security.

Then the winning of the Cold War restored equilibrium to the western end of Eurasia. It is now unthinkable that Germany, reunited under eastwardly expanding NATO and EU umbrellas, would be likely to seek security in nuclear weapons. That is basically because the collapse of the USSR made great power war unthinkable in Europe. But Japan lives in a much more dangerous region, where indigenous strategic conflict was not resolved with the end of the Cold War. Indeed, North Korea has become more dangerous.<sup>4</sup>

Currently, the United States is keen to reassure Australia that Japan will remain its strategic dependant—not least in order to maintain Australian confidence in the US nuclear deterrent. But that should not relieve us of the need to do some hard thinking about our security.

### The disarmament mantra: A garlic necklace to ward off vampires?

We won’t get far by repeating the mantra, so popular with much of the Australian Left, that because nuclear weapons are the source of danger, all problems would be resolved if they were abolished. Nuclear weapons exist and cannot be ‘disinvented’. Moreover, the seven declared nuclear weapons states—US, Russia, China, Britain, France, India and Pakistan—have no intention of giving up these weapons, whatever they may say.

Nuclear weapons may not be usable in anger, but they remain the ultima ratio of states—the final answer. Moreover, the five states that were declared nuclear weapons states before India and Pakistan tested in 1998

are also permanent members of the UN Security Council.<sup>5</sup> When the P-5 close ranks in order to protect their shared interests, there is no power on earth that can make them do anything they do not want to do.

In any case, does Australia really want America to abandon its nuclear weapons? As the old Chinese saying goes, 'be careful what you wish for'.

The essential bargain of the NPT, which entered into force in 1970, was that states that did not possess nuclear weapons would choose to give up any nuclear ambitions. In return, the non-nuclear states would be given help with their civilian nuclear programs, which were to be monitored by the IAEA. The five nuclear weapons states also pledged themselves to move towards total nuclear disarmament.

True, the spread of nuclear weapons has been much slower than was expected in 1968. Currently, all but four countries (India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea) are formally committed to the NPT. But who can say how much the NPT itself was responsible for the unexpectedly slow pace of proliferation during the Cold War?

## 'Superpower collusion' during the Cold War

An alternative explanation is that the spread of nuclear weapons was slow because this was one of the few interests genuinely shared by the Cold War superpowers. They were able and willing to enforce discipline within their blocs—and, in America's case, to provide nuclear protection to West Germany and Japan.

'Superpower collusion' took off after Khrushchev gave China help with its missile and nuclear programs, and this policy backfired when China tested a nuclear weapon in 1964.<sup>6</sup> That meant that nuclear weapons were no longer the preserve of the strong. Indeed, at different times, both superpowers contemplated taking out the Chinese nuclear facilities, and then thought better of it. Their shared superpower interests thus led to the NPT.<sup>7</sup>

As long as the Cold War lasted, none of the Soviet satellites dared to harbour nuclear ambitions. (In any case, their military and intelligence apparatus were thoroughly penetrated by Moscow.) The United States also cracked down on would-be proliferators among its allies, such as South Korea and Taiwan.<sup>8</sup>

## Post Cold War optimism

In the early 1990s, optimism about the 'NPT regime increased as many undeclared' nuclear weapons states abandoned their nuclear ambitions. These included the former members of the Soviet Union that had been 'born nuclear' (Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan). In addition, South Africa was persuaded to give up its nuclear weapons, which were irrelevant to its needs anyway after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the white minority government. Brazil and Argentina were also persuaded against 'going nuclear'. The NPT did help in giving these states the confidence that they could get rid of their nuclear weapons. That was because the NPT held out some rewards,

and encouraged these states to examine whether proliferation would really increase their security. But optimism about proliferation started to fade in 1998, when India and Pakistan engaged in tit-for-tat nuclear tests.

## Optimism fades: India and Pakistan test

In fact, India had staged a so-called 'peaceful nuclear explosion' in 1974, and many Indians had long railed against 'nuclear apartheid'—why should authoritarian China be 'entitled' to nuclear weapons, while democratic India was not? So India and Pakistan refused to sign the NPT. And their nuclear tests in 1998 heralded the end of optimism about the non-proliferation regime.

Those states that have opted for nuclear weapons have done so for a variety of reasons—power, status and security. Of these, the most important is security. India was deprived of any prospect of great power protection when the Soviet Union collapsed. Then India was faced with a 'rising' China that was arming India's arch-enemy Pakistan with missile and nuclear technology.<sup>9</sup>

Now even those who believed (rightly, in my view) that the existence of nuclear weapons did much to keep the peace during the Cold War—because it made head to head confrontation simply too dangerous—now had cause to worry. The two superpowers had had no previous history of conflict. To the contrary, they had been allies in the two world wars. Moreover, they had no territorial dispute, and were geographically distant.<sup>10</sup> (The roots of their struggle lay in the fact that the outcome of the World War II had left the USSR in a near-hegemonial position in Europe, and the United States came to realise that Soviet assertions of hegemony over Eurasia represented an intolerable threat to America's own security.) Yet the fact that nuclear weapons had done so much to help the Cold War from turning hot did not mean that we could assume that nuclear weapons were a 'good thing' in all hands and in all circumstances.

That's what made the Indian and Pakistan 'tit for tat' tests so worrying. These were states that had been established on the basis of religious differences, in bloody circumstances. They had a territorial dispute over Kashmir, and had fought three wars. Indeed, Pakistan, as the weaker party, had a history of pre-emption. Moreover, they shared a long border. Indeed, in 1971 India (with Soviet backing) had exploited Pakistan's crackdown in East Pakistan to achieve the dismemberment of its rival when East Pakistan was detached (as Bangladesh.)

Perhaps there is some consolation to be sought in the fact that both India and Pakistan are democracies, of a kind at least. But the risk on the subcontinent is of accidental exchange, which was the great concern during the crisis in the (northern) summer of 2002. There is also the risk that Musharraf could fall, and be replaced by an Islamist regime. And whatever shreds of hope are to be found in the 'democracy' argument, few observers think that it is a 'good thing' to have nuclear weapons in the hands of 'rogue'

regimes that terrorise their own people and threaten their neighbours—such as Saddam Hussein’s Iraq.

## **Iraq: Saddam’s fatal error**

By the early 1990s Iraq had a nuclear weapons program that was not detected by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).<sup>11</sup> There is no point in blaming the IAEA for this, because the Agency had been given no mandate to discover and frustrate secret weapons programs.

Eventually, in early 2003 the United States disarmed Iraq by invading it and removing the regime—though the trigger for that invasion was not so much anything happening in Iraq itself, but rather the terrorist attack on the United States in September 2001.<sup>12</sup> For America, 9/11 raised the intolerable threat that Iraq might link up with terrorist groups such as al Qa’eda.

But other rogue states had already learned the ‘wrong’ lesson—that Saddam’s fatal error had been to invade Kuwait before he possessed a credible nuclear deterrent. It was soon apparent that the lesson had been well learned in Pyongyang—if you wish to defy Uncle Sam, get a nuclear weapon.

## **Iran: Learning From Saddam’s mistakes?**

Iran also seems to have taken the lesson to heart. It’s hard to believe that Iran, with the world’s third largest oil reserves, as well as the second largest reserves of gas, needs nuclear energy for civilian purposes. Ever since the IAEA came to suspect that Iran had an illegal uranium enrichment plant, Iran has played fast and loose with the ‘international community’. Now Iran says it will sign the ‘additional protocol’ demanded by the IAEA, but only in relation to its declared nuclear sites. IAEA inspectors will not be given unfettered access.<sup>13</sup> That tells us all we need to know.

A glance at the map shows why Iran might think it needs a nuclear weapon.<sup>14</sup> Israel, an undeclared nuclear weapons state, is a sworn enemy. (How could it be otherwise, when Iran sponsors terrorist groups such as Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad and Hamas?) Moreover, Iran has borders with fifteen other states, none of which it can call a friend. And to Iran’s southeast lies less than friendly but nuclear-armed Pakistan, which has close links with fellow Sunnis in Saudi Arabia. Concerns about political stability in Pakistan must register in Tehran.

And now the United States has invaded both Afghanistan and Iraq, and installed pro-American governments there. Even the so-called moderates in Iran, where political power is contested, now seem to believe that nuclear weapons will enhance their security. They are unlikely to reflect on the fact that if Iran ‘goes nuclear’, others will follow—and that may not enhance Iran’s security in the longer run.

The United States is making no secret of its alarm at these developments, and urged the Europeans to take a tough line when the IAEA board met on 20 November. One reason of course for US alarm is that an Iran armed

with nuclear weapons could exclude Western navies from the Gulf, and thus plant its foot on much of the West’s oil pipeline.

## **Who’s next?**

Candidates for proliferation include Saudi Arabia, which has long helped to finance Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program. Yet as long as Pakistan retains control of the nuclear weapons it might station on Saudi soil, Riyadh can claim that it remains in compliance with the NPT.<sup>15</sup> Other possible candidates are Libya, Syria, Algeria, Turkey and Egypt. There are even new question marks about Brazil.<sup>16</sup>

## **What about Japan?**

Currently, there is no shortage of alarmist reports about Japan.<sup>17</sup> Much attention is focused on Shintaro Ishihara, the populist Governor of Tokyo. For the last thirty years, Ishihara has argued that Japan cannot afford to rely on America for its nuclear security, and should go it alone. Any country that relies on another, Ishihara says, risks being abandoned in a crisis.

That remains very much a minority view in Japan. Indeed, Japan’s strategic needs are best served by what it has now—extended deterrence, its own ‘virtual deterrent’ and means of delivery, and the prospect of missile defence, which is non-nuclear and defensive. Moreover, ‘going nuclear’ would be highly divisive at home.<sup>18</sup>

Still, the growing threat from North Korea has ended ‘head in the sand’ pacifism in Japan. Ishihara is not mistaken when he says that far from being a disinterested broker, China has proliferated missile technology to North Korea. The Peoples’ Liberation Army also winked when Pakistan proliferated nuclear technology to North Korea in a missiles-for-nuclear technology exchange.<sup>19</sup> Without China’s help, North Korea could hardly make a bicycle.

Moreover, the connection that Ishihara draws between distrust of allies and the imperative to go it alone is not unique to Japan. Indeed, the French strategist Pierre Gallois always argued that there can be no true alliances in the nuclear age. That’s because the smaller ally that was supposed to benefit from ‘extended deterrence’ could never be sure that it would not be abandoned by its great power protector in a crisis. Would the United States really risk New York in order to save Paris? Gallois’s fears were shared by at least some in Australia in the late 1960s.

## **Australia’s nuclear temptation in the late 1960s**

Given the strategic circumstances of the time, Australia’s attraction to a nuclear option was hardly surprising. Mao’s China, at the time in pursuit of a revolutionary foreign policy aimed equally at Moscow and Washington, tested a nuclear weapon in October 1964. A year later, China made a concerted attempt, via the Indonesian communist party, to control the succession to Sukarno. For his part, Sukarno was shouting from the rafters that he wanted nuclear weapons.<sup>20</sup> In addition, soon after Confrontation, the UK

was retreating 'East of Suez'. And by 1968, the United States was signaling retreat in Vietnam. Moreover, in the wake of China's nuclear test, there was much speculation that Japan might follow suit.<sup>21</sup>

And in John Gorton, we had a nationalist if somewhat maverick prime minister (1968–71) whose personal experience just before the fall of Singapore in 1942 led to an abiding distrust of allies.<sup>22</sup> So Australia did not say it would sign the NPT until the last minute, and then only after Japan had actually signed. But it seems likely that it was Indonesia, rather than Japan, that Gorton had in mind as a possible proliferator.

Australia's nuclear attraction faded after Gorton lost office. The mainstream conservatives believed there was little to be gained, and much to be lost, if we isolated ourselves by refusing to join the non-nuclear club. Even so, it was left to the incoming Whitlam Labor Government to sign and ratify the NPT in 1973. So it's all ancient history now.

Or is it? The nuclear attraction diminished, but never quite died. That led to some notable contradictions. For example, the former Labor Foreign Minister and subsequent Governor-General, Bill Hayden, shared Gorton's nuclear attraction and distrust of allies, even though he also subscribed to the ALP's traditional attachment to nuclear disarmament. Like Gorton, Hayden saw Indonesia as a possible proliferator. In Hayden's 1996 memoirs, he noted his worries about Indonesia's plans to build nuclear power plants in Java.<sup>23</sup> (Those plans are now on hold as a consequence of Indonesia's 1998 economic and political crisis, which saw the demise of Suharto.)

The wider contradiction, of course, was that the Labor Party sought the benefits of extended deterrence, but pursued policies of nuclear disarmament that undermined it. Moreover, that was a legacy that John Howard did not disavow. To the contrary, soon after coming to power Howard—never a slouch when it comes to outfoxing the chattering classes—seized the opportunities presented by the outgoing Labor government's establishment of the Canberra Commission. The Commission was set up as a response to the furore in Australia in the wake of the resumption of French nuclear testing in the South Pacific. So Howard seized the chance to outflank Labor from the left by extolling the virtues of nuclear disarmament. But such expediency creates hostages to fortune. Indeed, the Canberra Commission became an icon that has helped to muddle strategic thinking in Australia ever since.<sup>24</sup>

## Future options?

So what might happen in Australia today if we concluded that the nuclear attraction was growing in Japan?

Some would see that as an invitation to develop our own nuclear weapons, and remember why we kept our options open, including by retaining the nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights in Sydney.<sup>25</sup>

Others would see any nuclear option for Australia as likely to detract from our security. Nuclear weapons might be the 'isolationists' dream', but would it really be in our interest to encourage the United States to pursue its own isolationist options? That's even more of a risk now that the Cold War is over, and missile defence offers the US new possibilities for homeland defence.

Those influenced by the disarmament lobby would argue that nuclear weapons themselves were the sources of danger, and so become even more determined to get rid of them.

In considering our options, we would also have to think about the likely knock-on effects if we were to acquire our own deterrent. As noted, states are more influenced by the example of their rivals proliferating, as well as considerations of their own ability to follow suit, than they are of the need to think about the downstream consequences of their own actions.

The most likely consequence of Australia's developing nuclear weapons would be if Indonesia were to follow our example. Would we be more secure then? But the worst case we would face might be if Indonesia developed nuclear capability for reasons that had nothing to do with Australia.<sup>26</sup> We'd still be under great pressure to follow suit—even though doing so would be likely to reduce our security because of its impact on the US alliance.

These are not happy thoughts. But there seems little doubt that the 'NPT regime' is now under threat. While negotiations and six-party talks go on, North Korea is buying time with which to develop its nuclear weapons.<sup>27</sup> Iran can be expected to do the same. Having been caught in violation of its obligations to the NPT, Iran is now backtracking—in order to gain time, and drive wedges between the US on the one side, and Europe on the other.

Both China and North Korea have proliferated missile technology to Iran. It suits China, of course, to have the US distracted, not least because of the growing Iranian missile and nuclear threat to Israel. There are also suspicions that North Korea has proliferated nuclear technology to Iran.<sup>28</sup> Can that have been done without the knowledge of China's Peoples' Liberation Army, if not its political leaders? Yet China is one of the great beneficiaries of the NPT regime, which among other things, has helped reassure Japan that it does not need nuclear weapons.

One might hope that, in relation to North Korea and Iran in particular, that the five declared nuclear weapons states on the UN Security Council would combine in defence of their interests—in order to prevent the weapons of the strong from becoming the weapons of the weak. But states do not always pursue their best interests. That's why strategic history is the story of calculation and miscalculation.

And that's why we need to think through the likely consequences for us if disarmament diplomacy fails to work. ♦

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## Endnotes:

1. Mostly because South Korea, for fear of war and afraid of the costs of absorbing the North, actively discouraged it. That meant China did not even have to threaten a veto.
2. Japan's military is more focused on the longer-term threat from China, not least with a Taiwan contingency in mind.
3. See Patrick Glynn, 'Closing Pandora's Box: Arms Races, Arms Control, and the History of the Cold War', New York: Basic Books, 1992. Especially chapter 8, 'The Age of Arms Control'.
4. North Korea was 'orphaned' by the end of the Cold War because it could no longer play off China and Russia to its own benefit. Moreover, it was threatened by the economic supremacy and democratic legitimacy of South Korea. So North Korea has developed missile and nuclear capabilities as means of extortion and blackmail, and thus of regime survival.
5. That is, the five declared nuclear weapon states before the 1998 tests by India and Pakistan.
6. The Moscow–Beijing relationship, which always had its nuances, started to go downhill after the two Taiwan Strait crises of the 1950s precipitated by China. The USSR saw no interest at stake in the Taiwan Strait that justified the risk of nuclear war with the United States. China, for its part, saw that the nuclear umbrella was leaking, and went gangbusters to acquire nuclear weapons.
7. These were shared, but not identical, superpower interests. The United States chose to rely on nuclear weapons to contain the USSR. The Soviet's first preference was for complete nuclear disarmament, so they could maximise their strategic advantage in conventional power. Thus from the Soviet viewpoint, nuclear weapons plus the superpower condominium were second best.
8. South Korea had a nuclear attraction as a consequence of the fears for its security induced by the Nixon Doctrine, and the US strategic paralysis induced by Vietnam and the Watergate scandal. Taiwan had reason to fear that it would be abandoned by the US after Nixon made the opening to China in 1971, so it also had a secret nuclear weapons' program.
9. China was not really 'rising' in the sense that it had suddenly become more powerful. It would be more accurate to say that China was now enjoying much greater strategic latitude as a consequence of the collapse of the USSR, so was starting to feel its oats.
10. True, their distance looked much greater on a Mercator map projection than on a polar one. Flight times of a Soviet ICBM to the US, and vice versa, would have been about thirty minutes, with a reaction time of fifteen minutes.
11. In 1981, Israel attacked Iraq in order to destroy its nuclear weapons facility at Osirak.
12. The US and UK had been in effect at war with Iraq since 1991, for example by their enforcement of Kurdish sovereignty in northern Iraq, and the enforcement of 'no fly zones', by military means, against the wishes and interests of the government in Baghdad.
13. An Iranian diplomat said, 'it's not going to be like Iraq, with UNSCOM (arms inspectors) kicking down doors and this kind of thing'. AFP, 9 November 2003.
14. See Assad Homayoun, 'Iran and Nuclear Weapons: A Review of Imperatives and Options', 'Defense and Foreign Affairs Daily', Vol. XXI, No.53, 25 September 2003.
15. Henry Sokolski, 'Pyongyang: The Case for Nonproliferation with Teeth', 'Arms Control Today', May 2003.
16. See Daniel Koik, 'Brazil Prepares to Enrich Uranium for Reactors', 'Arms Control Today', November 2003. President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has criticized the NPT as discriminatory. It is also worth noting that Lula has been courting Cuba, where China now has a foothold at the old Soviet facility at Lourdes. Some see this as the beginning of a Brazil–China alignment pointed at the US.
17. See for example, Eugene A. Matthews, 'Japan's New Nationalism', *Foreign Affairs*, November–December 2003, pp.74–90. In my view, it's not 'rising nationalism' we should worry about, but rising insecurity and its likely consequences.
18. The 'Hiroshima Cult', the cult of the 'unique victim', has served the interests of most factions in Japanese politics. It was started as a Moscow operation, run by the Japanese Communist Party. Throughout the Cold War, of course, the USSR sought to convince others that America's nuclear weapons threatened world peace, rather than Soviet hegemonic ambitions. But the Japanese right wing soon came to see utility in the Hiroshima Cult, because it diverted attention from the enormity of what Japan had done in the 'Holy War' in China, and then in World War II.
19. See Mohan Malik, 'The Proliferation Axis: Beijing–Islamabad–Pyongyang', 'The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis', Vol. XV, No.1, Spring 2003, pp.57–101.
20. See Robert M. Cornejo, 'When Sukarno Sought the Bomb: Indonesian Nuclear Aspirations in the Mid-1960s', *The Nonproliferation Review*, Summer 2000, pp.31–43.
21. Eisaku Sato, Japan's prime minister, said in December 1964 that 'if the other fellow has nuclear weapons, it is only common sense to have them oneself. The Japanese public is not ready for this, but would have to be educated. Nuclear weapons are less costly than is generally assumed, and the Japanese scientific and industrial level is fully up to producing them'. Kase, 'The Costs and Benefits of Japan's Nuclearization', pp.58–59.
22. Gorton had been a fighter pilot, evacuated just before Singapore fell. He had been badly burned, and his face reconstructed.
23. 'Bill Hayden, An Autobiography', Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1996, p. 404.
24. Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, Report, August 1996.
25. Japan has also hedged in a number of ways, including by ensuring that its three 'anti nuclear principles' are not in the constitution, which is difficult to amend. To be noted in this context is that neutral Switzerland, despite signing the NPT in 1970, maintained a secret stockpile of uranium for 400 nuclear warheads that could have been mounted on aircraft, artillery and guided missiles' systems. This program was maintained from 1945 through 1988. Avery Goldstein, 'Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century: China, Britain, France, and the Enduring Legacy of the Nuclear Revolution', Stanford Ca: Stanford University Press, 2000, p.256. No doubt, the Swiss never forgot West Germany's strong nuclear attraction in the 1960s, and that Konrad Adenauer had gone to his deathbed still railing against the NPT.
26. Indonesia, greatly weakened since the fall of Suharto, has no great power protector. It is also now faced with two rising and rival Asian nuclear powers, India and China, which are both manifesting blue water ambition. The prospect of future clashes between Chinese and Indian warships in the South-East Asian straits cannot be of much comfort to Jakarta, not least because of its own maritime weakness. It is not unthinkable that Indonesia would one day come to believe that nuclear weapons might enhance its security.
27. Japan's concerns about this are palpable. See Masashi Nishihara, 'North Korea's Trojan Horse', 'The Washington Post', 14 August 2003. Professor Nishihara is President of Japan's National Defense Academy. US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, just before he arrived in Japan in mid-November 2003, his first visit as Defense Secretary (in the Bush administration), sought to reassure Japan that any US security assurances to North Korea would not undermine US commitments to Japan's nuclear security. While no doubt sincerely meant, these reassurances will not convince sceptical Japanese that the US will not cut a deal with North Korea if its own interests demand it, via some kind of multilateral figleaf, especially since the Bush administration does not have a viable military option against North Korea. With the occupation of Iraq going poorly, Bush's priority in relation to North Korea now is to 'kick the can' down the road until after the US presidential elections next year.
28. John Larkin and Donald Macintyre, 'Asia: Arsenal of The Axis', 'Time', 14 July 2003. According to some reports, the number of North Korean weapons experts in Iran is now so large that they have their own seaside community. Henry Sokolski, 'The Wall Street Journal', 19 August 2003.