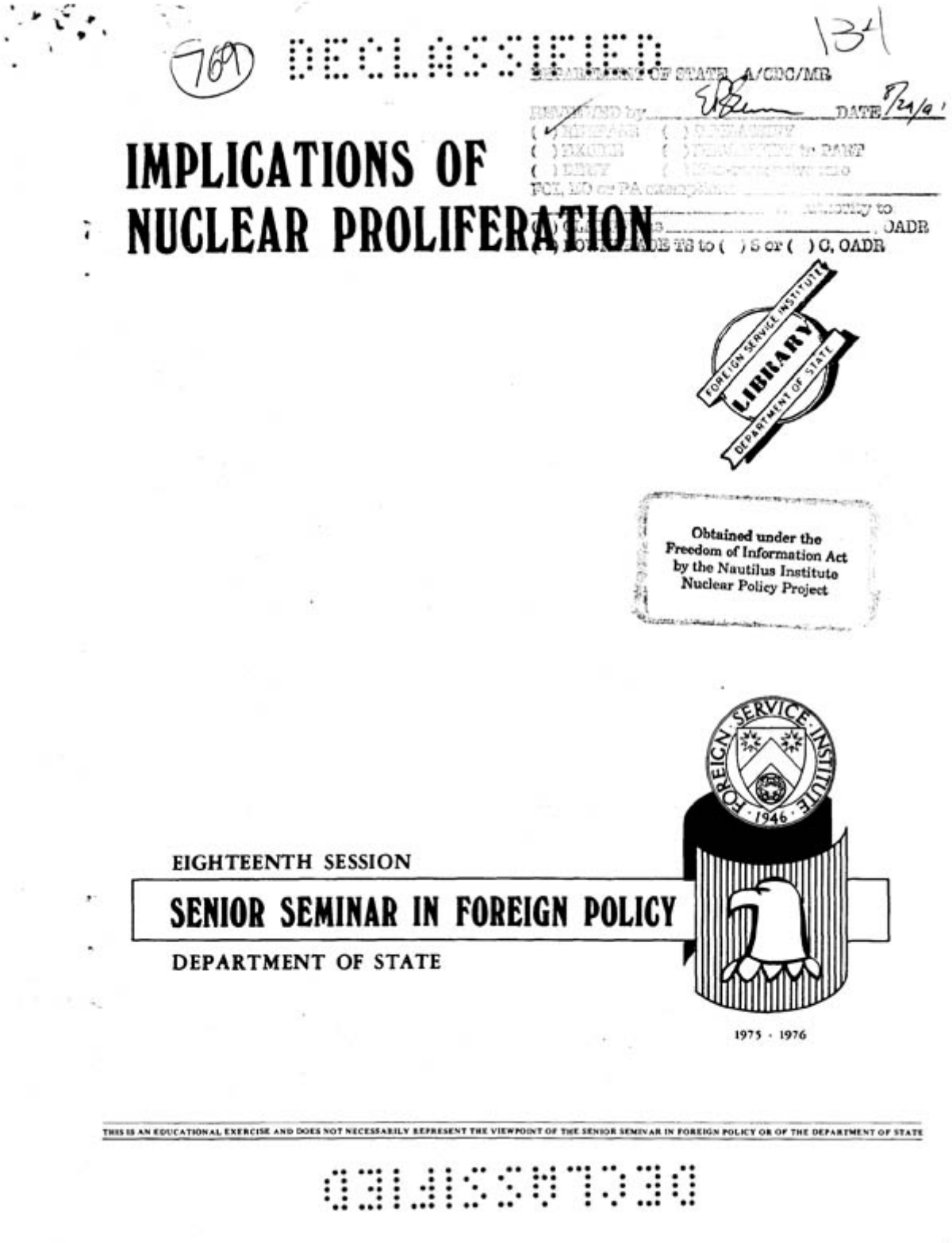
Implications of Nuclear Proliferation



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The bombing of Hiroshima during the closing stages of World War II unveiled the atomic bomb to the world. India's successful testing of a nuclear weapon in 1974 opened the door for membership by non-superpower states into the once exclusive "nuclear club" by demonstrating that such states could be capable of the material and logistical know-how to assemble and deliver a nuclear weapon. In the 1960s, the great powers of the time realized the potential threat of nuclear proliferation toward the status quo of the international state system and drafted the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and created institutions such as the International Atomic Energy Agency as possible safeguards to the dissemination of both nuclear weapons materials and technology. Recently, tensions between the West and Iran have flared over its suspected nuclear weapons program despite the use of economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation at dissuading Iranian ambitions, as well as its existential threat to the state of Israel. As a result, discussion of preemptive military strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities by the U.S. and/or Israel in order to eliminate or significantly delay Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons have arose despite the reality that total eradication of Iran's current program is not feasible.

This case study by Donald M. O'Shei examines the proliferation of nuclear weapons from first tier to second and third tier states in regards to the feasibility of acquisition of both technology, materials, and delivery capability for a weapon, as well as the political and economic cost to benefit ratio of such states developing nuclear weapons. Additionally, O'Shei offers possible solutions to the problem of proliferation including the elimination of incentives towards weapons development, as well as arguing the futility of counterforce attacks as a viable means of inhibiting or eliminating a state's nuclear ambitions.

States O'Shei:
"The dangers of a partially successful pre-emptive strike against a nuclear armed state need not be belabored. The possibilities for hiding objects the size of a nuclear device are only limited by the imagination of the players. No matter how proficient the intelligence activities that would proceed a counterforce raid, total coverage could not be expected." [page 11]

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org