

Non-Proliferation Treaty

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I now come to the question with which not only Members of Parliament but the entire country seems to be deeply concerned. Almost everybody who spoke has spoken of the non-proliferation treaty. I myself made a statement on that subject in this House on the 14th of March. That statement stands. I should like to assure the House that we shall be guided entirely by our enlightened self-interest

and the considerations of national security and, of course, adherence to our values, as Shri D.C. Sharma has pointed out.

We have already made it clear that the draft treaty in its present form does not fully conform to the principles enunciated in the General Assembly Resolution No. 2028 of the 20th session.

Mankind today is at the crossroads of nuclear peace and nuclear war. There can be no doubt that we should take the road to nuclear peace. But the first step in this direction is not yet in sight. It is vitally important, therefore, for the nuclear weapon powers to undertake as soon as possible meaningful negotiations on a series of measures leading to nuclear disarmament. The present draft treaty acknowledges the need for such negotiations, but unfortunately, the non-participation by some nuclear weapon powers will make it only partially effective, and what is more, the other nuclear weapon powers insist on their right to continue to manufacture more nuclear weapons. This is a situation which cannot be viewed with equanimity by non-nuclear countries, especially as they are called upon to undertake not to manufacture or acquire nuclear weapons for their own defence.

At the same time, we have stated that the Government of India do not propose to manufacture nuclear weapons. This is a decision taken many years ago and is unrelated to the treaty on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We shall continue our efforts for nuclear disarmament because it is only through nuclear disarmament that discrimination would be eliminated and equality between nations re-established.

The draft treaty on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons will now be discussed by the resumed session of the General Assembly towards the end of April this year. Several amendments have already been proposed by some non-nuclear countries and there may be more to come. These amendments will serve to impress upon the nuclear powers the need for a balanced and non-discriminatory treaty.

The issue before us is essentially a political one. And it also has serious implications as regards security matters. The treaty and all its implications are under continuous study and the Government will give careful thought to the views of Members as expressed in this House.

I would assure the House that in any decision taken, the best interests of the country and of world peace will guide and inform our deliberations. At the same time, I should also like to warn the House and the country that not signing the treaty may bring the nation many difficulties. It may mean the stoppage of aid and the stoppage of help. Since we are taking this decision together, we must all be together in facing its consequences. I personally think that although it may involve sacrifice and hardship, it will be the first step towards building the real strength of this country and we will be able to go ahead on the road to self-sufficiency.

*From Lok Sabha Debate on
Foreign Affairs, 5 April 1968.*