

What is the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)?

Facts about the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

During the early 1960's, President Kennedy and his successors reached out to other nations to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. This created a network of laws and diplomatic relations, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which convinced many countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Japan, South Africa, and South Korea to become non-nuclear states. The treaty entered into force in March 1970 and provides a framework to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and pursue nuclear disarmament. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. and the international community persuaded countries such as Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine that possessed nuclear weapons, to give up their nuclear weapons. Only 8 countries today have nuclear weapons.

The 189 states that have ratified the treaty fall under two categories:

- a) Nuclear weapon states (NWS): which includes the United States, Russia China, France and the United Kingdom. They are required to commit to general and complete disarmament.
- b) Non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS): according to the treaty, all other states are required to abandon the pursuit of developing or acquiring nuclear weapons. However, they are allowed to uses nuclear technology for peaceful purposes under strict regulations.

The three countries that have not signed onto the treaty are India, Pakistan and Israel.

India and Pakistan: India first tested an explosive nuclear device in 1974. The two countries then conducted "tit-for-tat" nuclear tests in May 1998.

Israel: has not publicly conducted a nuclear test but has never admitted or denied possessing nuclear weapons. However, it is believed that Israel does posses nuclear weapons based on how much fissile material (highly enriched uranium and plutonium) the country is known to have produced. Fissile material is an essential component in order to create nuclear weapons.

The two countries that are under immediate proliferation scrutiny are North Korea and Iran.

North Korea: withdrew from the treaty on January 10, 2003. There is no definite legal opinion whether the country is party to the NPT because it is debated whether North Korea provided the amount of time required to withdraw from the treaty.

Iran: is not known to posses any nuclear weapons or adequate fissile material to build any. However, the International Atomic Energy agency (IAEA) – the a UN organization in charge of ensuring that states do not build nuclear weapons illegally - concluded in 2003 that Iran had tried to establish the capacity to build fissile material. Iran's nuclear program is under continuing investigation by the IAEA.

FACT SHEET

Status of US Membership: Ratified March 5, 1970

Key Terms: NPT permits two categories of member states: Under Articles I & II- non-nuclear weapon states that are prohibited from acquiring manufacturing or transferring nuclear weapons, and under Article VI, nuclear weapon states which agree to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

Status of US Compliance: Current US policy does not comply with its disarmament obligation. According to the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review, the US plans for maintenance of large and modernized nuclear forces for the indefinite future and for expansion of options for use of nuclear weapons.

The Review Conference

Since 1970, the countries who are party to the treaty have met every five years to oversee the implementation of the treaty. The seventh review conference has been scheduled in New York from May 2-27. This meeting presents members with the toughest nonproliferation and disarmament challenges the NPT has ever faced. It also presents the international community to work together and collectively respond to threats such as: promoting universal adherence to the NPT, preventing further withdrawals and how to tackle the inability to enforce compliance to the treaty.

Citizens for Global Solutions would like to credit the Arms Control Association for much of this information.

What We Do

Citizens for Global Solutions envisions a future in which nations work together to abolish war, protect our rights and freedoms, and solve the problems facing humanity that no nation can solve alone. This vision requires effective democratic global institutions that will apply the rule of law while respecting the diversity and autonomy of national and local communities. We work to build political will for our vision in the United States by educating Americans about our global interdependence, communicating global concerns to public officials, and developing proposals to create, reform, and strengthen international institutions such as the United Nations.