

Preface

The nuclear nonproliferation regime, undergirded by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and a host of other international agreements and initiatives, has been generally effective over the past three-plus decades in slowing, and in some cases halting, the spread of nuclear weapons. Although a small number of countries have chosen during this period to acquire nuclear weapons, the number is smaller than many feared would be the case forty years ago. And while a few countries have refused to commit to the regime and several others have clandestinely attempted to circumvent the constraints to which they had agreed, a greater number of countries have halted their nuclear weapons programs. Indeed, several countries (i.e., Belarus, Kazakhstan, South Africa, and Ukraine) have voluntarily given up their stockpiles of nuclear weapons (Stumpf 1995/1996). And in some regions, countries have created nuclear-weapon-free zones to further inhibit the spread of, and therefore the danger from, nuclear weapons.

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which is designed to ban *any* type of nuclear explosion in *any* environment in *any* location, was negotiated both as a nuclear disarmament effort and as a contribution to the nuclear nonproliferation regime. It represents one of the longest-sought and hardest fought prizes in the history of arms control. But problems encountered during its negotiation and implementation demonstrate how international and domestic political and security considerations can undermine what would seem to most people to be an important and useful contribution to international security.

Although there are risks in writing before the full CTBT episode has been played out, the ironies of the Treaty's history to date are worthy of examination. Despite consistent calls over the decades by non-nuclear weapon states

(NNWS) for a ban on nuclear testing, the actions of India—one of the most vocal NNWS on this issue—almost prevented the successful conclusion of the negotiation. And despite the forceful and critical leadership of the United States in pushing the international community toward a consensus on the CTBT, subsequent actions by the United States along with those of other countries are impeding the Treaty's entry into force and, thus, its hoped-for contribution to the nuclear nonproliferation regime and to nuclear disarmament.

Politicians and experts, especially in the United States, continue to debate the pros and cons of the CTBT and differ on its potential contribution to international security. After all, the Treaty is quite limited in its scope; unlike the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, it does not prevent countries from developing or acquiring nuclear weapons, expanding their arsenals, or using such weapons. It simply bans nuclear explosions (i.e. the “bang” not the “bomb”). However modest its potential contribution, it is difficult to deny that the absence of the Treaty, especially when accompanied by actions of several countries that are inconsistent with it, undermines the increasingly fragile international norm against the spread of nuclear weapons (Bunn 2003).

At a time when there appears to be general adherence to a series of national moratoria on nuclear explosive testing, it is important to understand why the Treaty has experienced such difficulties and continues to travel such a bumpy road. The issues involved are complex; regional tensions, rivalries, and insecurities lead some countries to pursue nuclear weapons. Moreover, domestic politics can at times override efforts to support international norms and agreements, such as a ban on nuclear testing, that at least to some would appear to increase national security. Clearly, there are differences of view regarding the value of the CTBT. It is useful, therefore, to look ahead and explore alternative future prospects for the CTBT and their implications for the nuclear nonproliferation regime in order to gain a better understanding and to have more realistic expectations regarding the Treaty's potential contribution to international security. The author hopes that some useful lessons can be drawn from the CTBT episode by both skeptics of the Treaty and by those who favor a permanent ban on nuclear testing.

In an effort to shed light on this exploration, this analysis provides perspectives on the following four questions: (1) how and why did the CTBT evolve the way it did; (2) what are the future prospects for the CTBT; (3) how much influence are future U.S. actions and policies likely to have on the

CTBT's future; and, (4) how important is the CTBT to the nuclear non-proliferation regime? The answers to these questions should be of interest to responsible citizens and serious students of proliferation and disarmament issues. The answers to the last two questions are intended to inform those who are privileged to have influence on or who have the responsibility for making U.S. nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation policy.