



# Weapons of Mass Destruction And Proliferation

**Point #1** The Obama administration is committed to a policy of getting to zero nuclear weapons - but will maintain a credible nuclear deterrent as long as other nations retain them.

**Point #2** A growing body of experts - Republican and Democrat alike - advocates a policy of getting to zero on nuclear weapons.

**Point #3** Concerns with nuclear terrorism and the sale of nuclear technology on the black market are driving the movement for getting to zero on nuclear weapons.

## Non-proliferation

This entails active efforts, usually diplomatic, to combat the spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). This includes nuclear, chemical, biological, radiological, and missile technology, as well as dual-use items that can be diverted from civilian use to weapons use. However, in everyday language, non-proliferation, counterproliferation, and disarmament usually refer to nuclear weapons. In today's debate over U.S. nuclear policy, non-proliferation goals are often tied to the long-standing U.S. policy of extended deterrence; assuring U.S. allies that they are protected under the U.S. security umbrella lessens the chance that these states will develop nuclear weapons of their own.

## Counterproliferation

This refers to an active strike, usually using military assets, to destroy an existing WMD or dual-use site, facility, or weapons program.

## Disarmament

This refers to efforts, usually diplomatic, to reduce existing stockpiles or arsenals of WMD.

## Two Types of Proliferation

Non-proliferation efforts have attempted to combat two types of proliferation:

- **Horizontal Proliferation:** the spread of WMD to new countries or non-state actors that did not previously possess WMD
- **Vertical proliferation:** the development and production of increasing numbers and sophistication of WMD among states that already have them

## Nuclear Proliferation

**Traditional Nuclear Non-proliferation.** The movement to restrain countries from developing nuclear weapons, and to reduce the number of nuclear weapons worldwide, has long followed the logic of non-proliferation and disarmament: minimize the number of countries with nuclear weapons; reduce the number of nuclear weapons held by those countries; and prevent non-nuclear weapons states from acquiring them.



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**New Nuclear Threats: Black Markets and Terrorists.** However, a new international security context has changed the strategic calculus of “mutually assured destruction” that kept the peace between nuclear-armed states during the Cold War. Criminal syndicates such as Pakistan’s A.Q. Khan network and black market trading by North Korea suggest a future in which nuclear technology could be sold to anyone willing to pay. Coupled with an increase in “non-state actors,” such as international terrorist organizations intent on obtaining nuclear weapons, a new theory and security imperative has taken hold, changing the debate over U.S. nuclear policy.

**The Rationale for Zero Nuclear Weapons.** In a July 2007 op-ed, a bipartisan team of preeminent security strategists now known as the Four Statesman (former Republican Secretary of State George Schultz (Reagan Administration), Democratic Secretary of Defense William Perry (Clinton Administration), Republican National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger (Nixon and Ford Administrations), and Democratic Senator Sam Nunn), reintroduced a major rationale and campaign for eliminating nuclear weapons worldwide in order to reduce the possibility that nuclear material could fall into the hands of terrorist organizations that cannot be deterred. This theory claims that more radical steps must be taken to drastically reduce the number of nuclear weapons possessed by current nuclear weapons states and halt testing en route to a world free of nuclear weapons.

**President Obama and the Case for Zero.** In April 2009, President Barack Obama officially embraced this vision in a landmark speech in Prague where he made “Getting to Zero on Nuclear Weapons” official U.S. policy. While the president and other leading advocates of adopting the “zero” framework recognize that such a goal remains in the distant future – and pledge to maintain America’s nuclear deterrent for the U.S. and allies alike so long as nuclear weapons exist – they believe that establishing this long-term vision is essential to gaining international

cooperation in arms reductions from other nuclear weapons states in the near term. Moreover, advocates of zero subscribe to the logic that we cannot make any headway in convincing non-weapons states to forego the pursuit of their own nuclear arsenals when we are not clear about our goal of ultimately eliminating our own. The rationale for zero also includes deep concerns about non-weapons grade fissile material, which many countries possess as part of their civilian nuclear energy programs, as it can be enriched with the right capabilities to create nuclear weapons.



**The Case Against Zero:** On the other side of the current debate are those who see the framework of zero and the movement toward abolition as a mere distraction to effective management of the thousands of nuclear weapons that currently exist. With other nuclear powers such as Russia and China modernizing their own arsenals, this camp maintains that the priority for U.S. nuclear policy should be maintaining an effective modern deterrent against serious threats posed by North Korea, Iran, etc.

Underlying the larger debate and recognized by both advocates and opponents of zero is the importance of assuring U.S. allies that they can still rely on the U.S. security guarantee. Extended deterrence, therefore, marks a major point of consensus in the current debate. In his Prague speech, President Obama made clear that until that goal of zero is reached, this administration will maintain a “safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal to deter any adversary.”



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## The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons—known informally as the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, or NPT—was designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and is the foundation of today’s non-proliferation regime. The three pillars of the treaty are: non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, nuclear disarmament, and the right to civilian nuclear technology. It was initially signed in 1968 and currently has 169 signatory countries. It declares the five countries that tested nuclear weapons before 1968—the United States, Russia, Great Britain, France, and China—to be “nuclear weapons states” (NWS). All other countries are considered to be non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS). The idea behind the NPT was to hold proliferation at bay by keeping nuclear weapons in the hands of only the states that had acquired these weapons before 1968.

The NPT is commonly referred to as a “Grand Bargain” because of the trade-offs it entails. Nuclear weapons states agreed not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states, while non-nuclear weapons states, which reserve the right to develop civilian nuclear power, have agreed to subject their nuclear facilities to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to ensure they are not developing nuclear weapons. According to the NPT, nuclear weapons states are also obligated to work toward complete nuclear disarmament. Importantly, each nuclear weapons state has committed only to disarm in collaboration with other weapons states, not unilaterally.

The NPT has been fairly successful in keeping proliferation to a minimum—but some has nonetheless occurred. A number of countries developed nuclear weapons after 1968, including India, Pakistan, South Africa (which developed nuclear weapons and then disarmed as the apartheid government ended), and Israel (which is presumed to have nuclear weapons but has never tested them, or publicly admitted to having them). None of these countries had signed the

NPT (although South Africa has now signed). North Korea was a member, but withdrew before conducting a nuclear test in 2006. Iran is also a member of the NPT regime.

### Working Outside the NPT:

#### Deals with India and the United Arab Emirates

- **India.** A bilateral civil nuclear power deal between India and the United States was reached in 2008. The deal allows India to purchase nuclear fuel and technology from the United States for its civilian nuclear energy program in exchange for allowing full inspection of its civilian energy program by the IAEA. The deal represented a major development in the non-proliferation regime, as India is not a signatory of the NPT. Opponents of the deal claimed that signing any pact with India would weaken the non-proliferation regime, setting a precedent that nations could abstain from the NPT, develop nuclear weapons, and then return to good standing with the international community. Proponents of the deal argued that it represented a new way forward on non-proliferation, given the geopolitical realities and challenges of the 21st century.
- **United Arab Emirates.** A “123 deal” was reached between the United States and the United Arab Emirates in May 2009. According to this deal, the United States provides fuel to the UAE for its civilian nuclear reactors on the condition that the UAE exclusively import its fuel, not produce it. The UAE also committed to NOT enriching uranium or reprocessing nuclear fuel to create plutonium, which can be used to create nuclear bombs.

With increasing concerns about energy programs being used to possibly create nuclear weapons, these recent deals set a new precedent for addressing this potential threat outside the confines of the NPT.



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## Counterproliferation

Counterproliferation consists of preemptive military strikes against another country's (or non-state actor's) facilities, in order to prevent them from obtaining or using WMD. The most well-known and successful case of counterproliferation was the 1981 Israeli strike against Iraq's Osirak facility, which set Iraq's nuclear program back by at least a decade. However, the Osirak strike led Iraq to pour more resources into its nuclear program, and Iraq was close to developing nuclear weapons in the early 1990s. Israel presumably struck a developing Syrian nuclear weapons site in September, 2007. Some suggest that a counterproliferation strike against Iran is necessary before that country develops nuclear weapons, which experts believe could happen in the very near future. However, difficulties and potential negative consequences of a counterproliferation strike include:

- The fact that such a strike would almost certainly be considered an act of war by the international community.
- The difficulty of getting good enough intelligence to attack the right facilities and destroy them all.
- The fact that most of the likely facilities are well protected and difficult to strike.
- The likelihood of provoking a response (including a WMD response from the target country if the attacking country had underestimated its WMD capabilities).

## Disarmament

Many non-nuclear weapons states take the second pillar of the NPT, disarmament, very seriously, and argue that the nuclear weapons states have an international obligation to move toward and ultimately achieve nuclear disarmament. South Africa is the only country to date that had nuclear weapons and



has completely disarmed, and is now a leading proponent of nuclear disarmament for the rest of the world.

The United States and Soviet Union—now the United States and Russia—have engaged in many rounds of nuclear arsenal reduction; these efforts have been rejuvenated since the Obama administration entered office with new talks between the U.S. and Russian governments in the context of an official policy of moving toward zero.

### Past and present disarmament efforts include:

**The 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.** This treaty restricted American and Soviet attempts to develop missile defense systems. If one side believed the other was about to attain a workable missile defense system, the other side would have an incentive to launch a nuclear strike to prevent this from taking place. The purpose of the treaty was therefore to reduce the likelihood of nuclear war. George W. Bush withdrew the United States from the treaty in 2002 in order to pursue missile defense.



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## **Past and present disarmament efforts continued:**

**START I (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty).** Proposed by President Ronald Reagan, START I aimed to reduce the nuclear arsenals of both the United States and the Soviet Union. It barred both the U.S. and the USSR from deploying more than 6,000 nuclear warheads atop a total of 1,600 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and bombers. START negotiated the largest and most complex arms control treaty in history, and its final implementation in late 2001 resulted in the removal of about 80% of all strategic nuclear weapons then in existence. START I is scheduled to expire in December 2009.

**Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT).** Better known as the “Moscow Treaty,” SORT committed both the United States and Russia to limiting their nuclear arsenal to 1,700–2,200 operationally deployed warheads each. Signed by President George W. Bush and President Vladimir Putin in 2002, the treaty went into force in 2003.



**START II** – A nuclear agreement reached between Presidents Obama and Medvedev in July 2009 set the terms for a replacement or follow on treaty to START I, including commitments to reduce the ceiling on strategic warheads to between 1,500 and 1,675 within seven years (down from the current ceiling of 2,200 warheads) by 2012 and reduce the limit on delivery vehicles (land-based intercontinental missiles, submarines-based missiles and bombers) from the 1,600 currently allowed to between 500 to 1,100.

**Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).** The CTBT bans all nuclear explosions in all environments, for military or civilian purposes. The United States signed the CTBT in 1996, but the U.S. Senate declined to ratify it in 1999. To date, it has been signed by 178 countries and ratified by 144. Supporters of the treaty claim it will restrain proliferation, because countries will be unable to test new weapons. Weapons testing in Pakistan and India in 1998 could have led to nuclear war; CTBT proponents believe this would be less likely to happen if countries were unable to test nuclear weapons. CTBT critics in the United States argue that the CTBT would restrict America’s freedom of action, and that it wouldn’t prevent countries that wanted to test nuclear weapons from doing so. Such nations simply would not sign the treaty. President Obama has identified ratification of the CTBT as a key priority and step in implementing his policy of Getting to Zero.

## **Nunn-Lugar:**

### **Cooperative Threat Reduction Program**

The Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, commonly known as the Nunn-Lugar Act after the Senators who sponsored it in 1992, is a program that provides funding and technical assistance for former Soviet states to dismantle, destroy, or return WMD materials remaining in their borders. Nunn-Lugar has helped dispose of WMD sites and materials in Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. In recent years, the program has grown beyond former Soviet states and has focused on proliferation-reduction programs worldwide. The program is administered by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and typically receives \$200-300 million per year.

### **The Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI)**

The Proliferation Security Initiative is an international agreement lead by the U.S. that helps track potential smugglers of WMD and dual-use materials. It has been especially useful in tracking and, if necessary, interdicting ships containing potentially



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dangerous materials. PSI's most public success was the 2003 interdiction of a shipment of centrifuges bound for Libya, which helped convince Libya to give up its nuclear program. South Korea officially chose to participate in PSI in May 2009 following new recent missile tests by North Korea.

## **Reliable Replacement Warhead Program (RRW)**

The U.S. has greatly reduced its development and production of nuclear warheads since the end of the Cold War. However, some of the existing warheads have fragile designs and require large budgets and extensive upkeep to maintain safety and readiness. The proposed RRW program aimed to advance a new generation of warheads that would replace existing warheads with new ones requiring much less maintenance, and which would be less susceptible to the corrosion of some components, such as the conventional explosive triggers for the nuclear warheads.

RRW faced serious critics in Congress and was seen as an excuse to develop new nuclear weapons, which runs counter to the goals of the NPT. They also argue that RRW would need to be tested at least once, breaking the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (although the United States has not ratified the CTBT), that it would damage the credibility of the international non-proliferation regime, and that it would harm U.S. efforts to persuade other countries to forgo nuclear weapons. With these concerns in mind, this initiative was officially killed in Congress in November 2008 and is not expected to come up for consideration again under current policy.

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