

The Non-Proliferation Treaty will be reviewed for the third time this summer in Geneva. What is the meaning of this event? And why is the NPT important to Canada?

Although Canada participated together with the United Kingdom in helping the United States develop the world's first atomic weapons during World War II, it was the first country to consciously forgo the development of nuclear weapons despite clearly having the technology and capability to do so from the earliest days of the nuclear era. This was a deliberate policy decision taken at a time when the nuclear club was in its infancy. Canada declined to develop a nuclear weapons capability and has adhered firmly to that decision.

Of course, Canada participates in the NATO alliance, and at one time permitted nuclear weapons to be deployed on its territory. The last of these weapons were removed from Canada in 1984. It is the clearly stated policy of the Canadian Government not to accept any nuclear weapons or permit them to be deployed in Canada. Any contingency plans that might be developed in the event of a crisis or an emergency could take effect only with the concurrence of Canada.

Canada has served, and has been well served, by the international non-proliferation and safeguards régime, which had its origins in the 1946 resolution creating the U.N. Atomic Energy Commission, later developed into the IAEA and culminated in the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.