

I Introduction

Whatever else the second half of the twentieth century will come to be symbolized by, the unlocking of the power in the atom will be seen as one of the half dozen or so most significant developments. This power was demonstrated close to the mid-point of the century. There is no turning back the clock. Atomic energy is with us to stay.

It is common knowledge that energy can be released from splitting atoms both suddenly in an explosion and gradually in a nuclear reactor that has mechanisms controlling the rate of the chain reaction. Nuclear explosive devices are not particularly easy to make, nor are nuclear reactors, but there has always been a legitimate concern that nuclear reactors could assist in the development of a nuclear explosive device and, therefore, that nuclear reactors could lead to a proliferation of nuclear weapons. The question that has preoccupied many governments and individuals since nuclear energy was first shown to be viable is how to harness the energy in the atom while preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

A great deal has been written about nuclear proliferation and nuclear non-proliferation since the first detonation of a nuclear explosive device in 1945. This paper can at best provide a brief summary of the main events. The high point in the history of non-proliferation is of course the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) (1968-70). The establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency (the IAEA or "The Agency") in 1957 is also highly significant, especially since it is the international body that is responsible for onsite inspections and safeguards measures that assist the member states of the Agency to demonstrate that no nuclear material is diverted to non-peaceful purposes from safeguarded nuclear facilities. Besides these international efforts, many countries that supply nuclear related materials, equipment or technology have developed national policies that they apply to the export of such nuclear items. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to describe the development of Canada's non-proliferation policy since 1945 and to explain its current highly articulated state in the wider context of the developing international non-proliferation régime.