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Canadian Foreign Policy

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CANADA'S NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION POLICY

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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.



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