

either to expire or be renewed in 1995 – is now clearly jeopardized by the aspirations of a growing number of would-be nuclear weapons states, and by persistent political friction over the perceived discriminatory double standard between nuclear weapons states and others.

The modest INF Treaty – the first-ever disarmament measure for nuclear weapons – and the prospects for large quantitative reductions through a START agreement have for the first time in the forty year history of non-proliferation efforts provided some basis for the two main nuclear weapon states to claim that their restraint justifies a similar response by others. Given the vast nuclear arsenals that will remain, however, and continue to be modernized, it is still a slender reed of argument on which to rely, especially when regional security threats and arms races loom so large for a number of the threshold nuclear states.

The prospects for maintaining (and ideally strengthening) the non-proliferation regime are linked with the issue of nuclear testing. Many argue that an effective ban on all testing could simultaneously head off new entrants to the race and show evidence of a decisive capping of “vertical proliferation” by the existing nuclear weapon states. The general issue of testing has also become linked, in the past two years, with a campaign spearheaded by a few governments and non-governmental organizations to force amendment of the Partial Test Ban Treaty and in effect make it the vehicle for a comprehensive ban. There has been sharp controversy over the legitimacy and usefulness of this tactic, and about the wisdom of making it a litmus test for non-proliferation prospects. The Canadian government, for example, opposed the idea of a Partial Test Ban Treaty Amending Conference, arguing that a “direct” approach would be necessary. But like some others, Ottawa has said that it will participate now that the event is to take place.

In fact, Canada’s longstanding general advocacy of a total test ban has been replaced by a “step-by-step” approach in recent years, in obvious recognition of the unyielding resistance of the United States government to such a ban. The United States, with France, has in fact so far continued to vote against the Canadian-sponsored resolution on a step-by-step approach to a nuclear test ban, undercutting the Canadian government’s attempt to draw Washington into this endeavour on a basis that will respect its legitimate concerns. Canada has also continued to take a leading role in international preparations for verification on testing bans, with the seismic centre in Yellowknife NWT serving as one focus.