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## NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION:

## THE STATUS AND PROSPECTS

by Jozef Goldblat

The need to restrain the military threat of nuclear energy has been evident to many people from the early days of the atomic age. Indeed, the very first UN General Assembly resolution, of January 1946, called for the elimination of nuclear weapons from state arsenals. In the same year, the government of the United States, which was the first to manufacture these weapons and to use them, proposed the establishment of an international authority to control all atomic energy activities. This proposal, known as the Baruch Plan, met with no success. In 1949 the Soviet Union also became a nuclear weapon power, followed in 1952 by the United Kingdom, in 1960 by France, and in 1964 by China.

The realization that proliferation of nuclear weapons would pose a danger to world security led to the development of a non-proliferation regime which encompasses various restrictive rules as well as specialized control institutions, both national and international. Among the latter, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) fulfils an essential practical role, but the pivotal place in the regime belongs to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), signed in 1968. The NPT is a unique document in the sense that it prohibits the possession by an overwhelming majority of states of the most destructive weapons yet invented, while tolerating the retention of the same weapons by a handful of nations. But the NPT is not an end in itself: the declared aim of the parties is to use it as a transitional measure to clear the way towards nuclear disarmament.

In spite of the inequality of treaty rights and obligations of the nuclear and non-nuclear weapon parties, the NPT, in force since 1970, has attracted a record number of adherents for an arms control agreement—nearly 140. These include three

nuclear weapon powers—the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union—as well as almost all highly developed, industrialized and militarily significant non-nuclear weapon states. France, a nuclear weapon power which has not signed the NPT, has a declared policy of behaving like a state party to it. China, the fifth nuclear weapon power, has given solemn assurances that it would not help other states to acquire nuclear weapons.

In the course of the past two decades the non-proliferation regime has been strengthened in spite of certain reverses in the field of nuclear export control. No material breaches of the NPT have been recorded, and no intentions to withdraw have been announced. However, the non-proliferation regime is also experiencing a few disquieting trends. This is due to the planned acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines by non-nuclear weapon states, the growing trade in nuclear-capable missiles and the emergence of new suppliers of nuclear hardware and services. Moreover, the danger that a nuclear “threshold” country may join the “club” of established nuclear weapons states continues to exist.

### NPT PROVISIONS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

#### *Non-Transfer and Non-Acquisition of Nuclear Weapons*

The essential non-proliferation undertakings are contained in the first two articles of the NPT. Article I places the nuclear weapon states under the obligation not to transfer “to any recipient whatsoever” nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over them, and not in any way to “assist, encourage, or induce” any non-

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