some 10 years later, after a series of protests made by both neighbouring and distant countries against radioactive contamination resulting from Chinese nuclear explosions in the atmosphere. Such a militarily important non-nuclear weapon country as Pakistan, which refuses formally to forgo the acquisition of nuclear weapons, is also missing from the list of parties. But even if Pakistan or another "nuclear threshold country" decided to cross the threshold to become a nuclear weapon state, it would most probably not do so by detonating a nuclear device in an environment prohibited by such a widely adhered-to treaty as the PTBT and expose itself to international opprobrium. The PTBT appears to have become a norm of behaviour to be observed by parties and non-parties alike.

The PTBT has complicated the development of very high-yield weapons and has made impossible full-scale operational testing of weapons in the environments in which they are meant to be used — notably in the atmosphere. It has also rendered it difficult to measure the effects of the EMP on military and civilian equipment. However, these restrictions have not prevented the USA, the UK and the USSR from satisfying other military requirements. Moreover, by testing underground, they deny important intelligence information to other states about the characteristics of their weapons that could otherwise be gathered from debris produced by atmospheric tests. The rate of testing by the Soviet Union and the United States increased after the PTBT went into force.

The PTBT has helped curb the radioactive pollution of the atmosphere and reduced the health hazards associated with nuclear fall-out. It has thus made an important contribution to the environmental protection regime. In national policies it marked the first major success of the proponents of arms control, who thus managed to overcome the resistance of the proponents of an uncontrolled arms race. In the international arena it became an obstacle to the wider spread of nuclear weapons and paved the way for the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).