

Advancing the Comprehensive (Nuclear) Test Ban Treaty: Capabilities, Implementation, and Entry into Force

Introduction – Why We Need the CTBT

Non-Proliferation, Arms Control, and Disarmament (NACD) continues to be the most important dynamic for international stability and security in the contemporary era. The end of the rhetorical Cold War hostilities between East and West allowed for a more constructive dialogue amongst significant actors regarding arms control, disarmament, and the general security of the international system. NACD, although certainly multi-faceted, is a process-driven system of security-building. Rarely in NACD developments have we witnessed radical and revolutionary movements to full and inclusive regimes for verification and monitoring of international agreements. Rather, NACD is incremental, and, as a developmental process, NACD regimes reflect the normative ideas or beliefs about the restraint of arms: initiatives themselves respond to the perceived need to keep weapons technology in check. Hence, several interdependent regimes served to formulate a paradigmatic way of conceptualizing nuclear restraint. Efforts to stem nuclear technologies and weapons have comprised several separate regime types, ranging from weapons testing, to possession, to arms reductions, and ultimately outright eradication of weapons types.

However, while this new order has to its credit successes such as the indefinite renewal of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in April 1995, it also has been marked by setbacks, including the non-entry into force (EIF) of the Comprehensive (Nuclear) Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The non-testing regime is at the foundation of nuclear NACD. All other nuclear NACD endeavours depend on a operational and inclusive non-testing regime. Former U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Director Gerald Smith has argued that “it is difficult to conceive of any single measure that would do more to stem the spread of the nuclear scourge than a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing.”¹ Non-testing was the basis for the first true NACD system, the Limited (Partial) Test Ban Treaty (LTBT, or PTBT, in 1963), and efforts to make this treaty truly comprehensive have been at the forefront of NACD undertakings ever since.

The failure of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to reach consensus on a recommendation regarding a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty led to the Australian initiative (sponsored by

¹See Smith, "End Testing, Stem the Bomb's Spread," Arms Control Today, (November 1990), 9.