

# NATO and the Non-Proliferation Treaty

NATO Allies are strongly committed to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is a cornerstone of international efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, and to achieve the goal of nuclear disarmament. It achieves a remarkable balance among its three mutually reinforcing pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation plays an important role in reaching the Alliance’s security objectives. At the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw, NATO Allies reiterated NATO’s commitment to arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament, acknowledging the threat posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as their means of delivery, by states and non-state actors.

## Background

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was signed in 1968 and entered into force in March 1970. The NPT represents a landmark agreement that addressed a security environment where more than twenty countries were thought to be seeking to acquire nuclear weapons. It provides a legal framework for the nuclear-weapon states that are Parties to the Treaty. The NPT also represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon states. It provides the international community with a balanced, step-by-step framework for disarmament. Since the Treaty entered into force, the nuclear-weapons states have reduced their nuclear arsenals significantly.

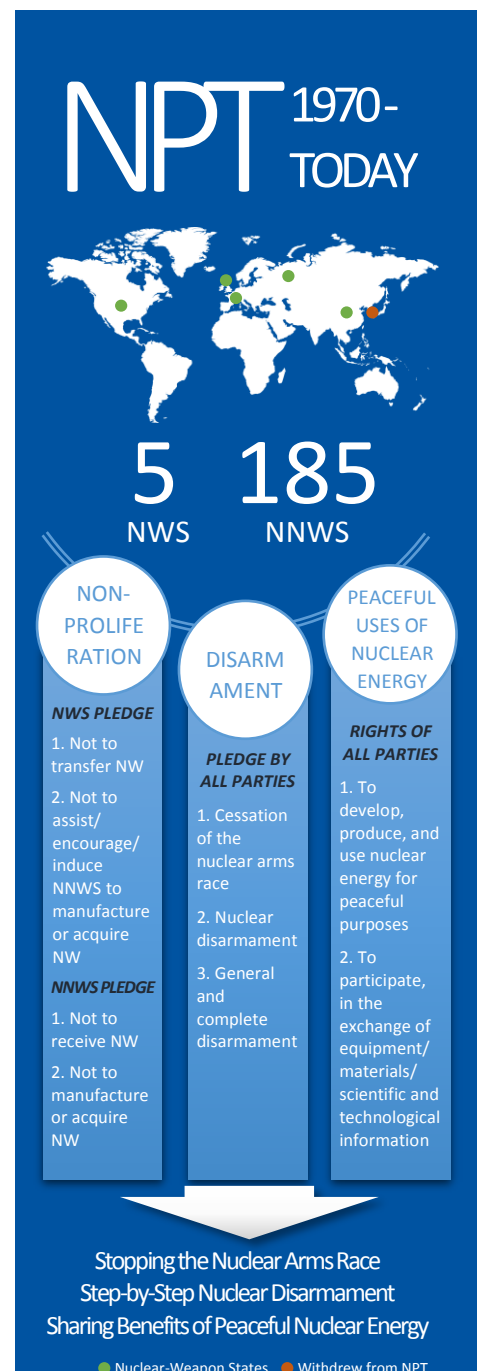
The objectives of the NPT are outlined in its three interrelated and mutually reinforcing pillars: (1) **non-proliferation** (Art. I, II): preventing of the further spread or transfer of nuclear weapons and technologies, or the expansion of the existing arsenals; (2) **disarmament** (Art. VI): furthering the goal of achieving nuclear, and general disarmament; (3) **peaceful uses of nuclear energy** (Art. IV): recognizing the right of states to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and promoting international cooperation. Of key importance is the safeguards system established by the Treaty under the responsibility of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to verify compliance.

The NPT remains of the utmost importance today. All five of the nuclear-weapon states jointly reiterated at the 2015 NPT Review Conference that “for forty-five years, the NPT has served as the **cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime...** and the foundation for the collective pursuit of nuclear disarmament.”<sup>1</sup> Without the NPT in place, there is no legitimate international grounds for preventing countries from seeking nuclear weapons. The NPT provides a strong legal framework to address the ongoing threat of the nuclear weapons proliferation by states and non-state actors, as well as providing impetus to seek to address the continuing threats to international security.

## What is NATO’s position on the NPT?

All NATO Allies are States Parties to the NPT. Allies have repeatedly emphasized their strong commitment to **full implementation** of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty with its three mutually-reinforcing pillars. Allies continue to agree on the importance of universal adherence to and compliance with the Treaty, and on the commitment by all State Parties to non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful nuclear cooperation under effective non-proliferation conditions and strengthened IAEA safeguards. Allies also support the further strengthening of the NPT Review Process, and their continued commitments to efforts aimed at reducing the Alliance’s reliance on nuclear weapons.

At the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw, Allies reaffirmed their resolve to seek a safer world for all and to create conditions for a **world without nuclear weapons in full accordance with all provisions of the NPT**, including Article VI, in a step-by-step and verifiable way that promotes international stability and is based on the principle of undiminished security for all.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Joint Statement from the NWS at the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

<sup>2</sup> Warsaw Summit Communiqué, paragraph 64.

NATO Heads of States and Governments expressed that arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation continue to play an important role in the achievement of the Alliance's security objectives. Both the success and failure of these efforts can have a direct impact on the threat environment of NATO. In this context, it is of **paramount importance that disarmament and non-proliferation commitments under existing treaties – conventional and non-conventional – are honoured**, including the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which remains crucial to Euro-Atlantic security.<sup>3</sup>

International non-proliferation and arms control treaties have served NATO well over the past decades as a means to reduce the threats to the territories and populations of the Alliance. In this context, serious proliferation challenges remain a priority for NATO and the international community. Any **actions changing the strategic security environment** in the Euro-Atlantic area would be met with a strong Alliance response and continued resolve to maintain peace and security for all.

In view of the current security environment, Allies have committed to ensuring that NATO has the full range of capabilities necessary to deter and defend against potential adversaries and the full spectrum of threats that could confront the Alliance from any direction.<sup>4</sup> **Deterrence and defence** – based on an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional, and missile defence capabilities – remain a core element of NATO strategy. And, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons exist.<sup>5</sup> While seeking to create the conditions and considering options for further reduction of non-strategic weapons assigned to NATO, Allies concerned<sup>6</sup> will ensure that all components of NATO's nuclear deterrent remain safe, secure and effective.

### NATO's commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament

After the end of the Cold War, NATO's Allies dramatically reduced the number of nuclear weapons stationed in Europe and its reliance on nuclear weapons in NATO strategy.

Allied nuclear-weapon states have contributed significantly to fulfilling all of their NPT obligations since the end of the Cold War. These contributions include fulfilling their Article VI commitments by radically **reducing their stocks of nuclear weapons, de-targeting them, reducing their alert status, and reducing their roles and salience in defence**. The number of weapons available for NATO based in Europe have been reduced by NATO by over 85% since 1991 and almost 95% since the height of the Cold War. Allies are committed to contribute to creating the conditions for further reductions of nuclear weapons in the future on the basis of reciprocity, recognizing that progress on arms control and disarmament must take into account the prevailing international security environment.<sup>7</sup>

### NATO nuclear sharing arrangements<sup>8</sup>

A core principle of NATO's nuclear posture is that the nuclear-weapon states of the Alliance maintain absolute control and custody of their nuclear weapons. This principle fully conforms with Articles I and II of the NPT, which prohibit the transfer of control of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapons states. Allies note that the states that have assigned nuclear weapons to NATO apply to these weapons the assurances they have each offered on a national basis, including the separate conditions each state has attached to these assurances.<sup>9</sup>

Historically, when the NPT was negotiated and entered into force, NATO's nuclear arrangements were already in place. The negotiating record of the NPT shows that these arrangements were well known and were, from the very start, part of the *acquis* of the Treaty intended to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons, and maintain peace. In several decades following the NPT's entry-into-force, state parties did not question NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements in the context of the Treaty Review process. Moreover, since the NPT's entry-into-force, NATO nuclear-weapon states have signed protocols to the Nuclear Weapon Free Zones and joined in UN-mandated security assurances. The United States and the Soviet Union (later the Russian Federation) continued after EIF of the NPT to negotiate and sign bilateral nuclear treaties (e.g., SALT, INF, and START) to limit nuclear weapons without affecting NATO's nuclear arrangements.

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<sup>3</sup> Warsaw Summit Communiqué, paragraph 62.

<sup>4</sup> Warsaw Summit Communiqué, paragraph 32.

<sup>5</sup> Strategic Concept 2010, paragraph 17, Deterrence and Defense Posture Review 2012, paragraph 9.

<sup>6</sup> All members of the Nuclear Planning Group.

<sup>7</sup> Warsaw Summit Communiqué, paragraph 65.

<sup>8</sup> For more details on NATO nuclear sharing arrangements see: *William Alberque "The NPT and the origins of NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements", Etudes de l'IFRI, Proliferation papers 57, February 2017.*

<sup>9</sup> Deterrence and Defence Posture Review 2012, paragraph 10