

# **Nuclear Weapons States vs. Nonweapons States**

**By**

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Since 1958, when Irish Foreign Minister Frank Aiken first proposed a nuclear nonproliferation treaty, the question of what the nuclear benefits and responsibilities of nuclear weapons states and nonweapons states should be has been at the crux of tenability for the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). A half century of debate over these issues has clarified three things. First, the current set of answers is hardly optimal. It argues that nuclear weapons states must disarm and nonweapons states have an “inalienable” right to any form of nuclear energy so long as it declared to be for “peaceful purposes” and is occasionally inspected by relatively weak international authorities. This view could potentially encourage a world with more Irans and North Koreas -- states that have used their “inalienable right” to peaceful nuclear energy to get to or beyond the very brink of acquiring bombs. Second, this current view is at odds with the original justification for the NPT that Frank Aiken and others advocated. That view emphasized that stemming the horizontal nuclear proliferation was prerequisite to any hope of achieving vertical nuclear disarmament and that nonproliferation benefited nonweapons states at least as much as weapons states in reducing the threat of nuclear war and arms competitions. It also presumed spreading nuclear power technology risked nuclear weapons proliferation, and that, therefore, nonweapons states should welcome intrusive inspections of their facilities to help demonstrate the feasibility of verifying the even more challenging task of nuclear disarmament. What is needed to get nonweapons states to reconsider their unqualified demands to some of the most dangerous forms of nuclear energy (e.g., nuclear fuel making) as a “right” today? Demonstrating nuclear power’s commercial inferiority in reducing carbon emissions in the quickest cheapest fashion would help. This would require an effort in the G-20 or other international forms to compare the full costs (including government subsidies) and time requirements of deploying different commercial energy projects. It also would be helpful to get states to be more candid about what nuclear activities and materials the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) can and cannot safeguard to provide timely warning of military diversions as required by Article III of the NPT. If this was done, a reinterpretation of Article IV might be possible similar to how Article V of the NPT has been reinterpreted.