

Letter to the Editor 1 -- No Title
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In his May 21 op-ed column, "Without Honor," George Will engaged in a classic exercise of "old think." Citing Zbigniew Brzezinski as his authority that U.S. policy always has been one of selective proliferation, he castigates the international norm of nonproliferation.

Selective proliferation was U.S. policy until the mid-1960s. We helped the United Kingdom and looked the other way with respect to France. But when the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was signed in 1968, U.S. policy definitively changed to supporting the international consensus on nonproliferation—no more declared nuclear weapon states.

If selective proliferation had continued to be U.S. policy in the 1970s, Iran and Yugoslavia would have been prime candidates to receive nuclear weapons. The wisdom of such a policy can be judged by imagining nuclear weapons in the hands of Slobodan Milosevic.

Over the past 30 years, this norm of international behavior based on the NPT evolved into a world-wide consensus that the number of declared nuclear weapon states would remain at five (the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, France and China), there would be three "threshold" nuclear weapon capable states (India, Pakistan and Israel) outside the NPT, and the rest of the world—some 180 states—would be dedicated to the nonnuclear weapon provisions of the NPT.

India broke this international consensus with its tests, opening the door to a significant increase in the number of nuclear weapon states and thereby threatening the security of all states.

Predictions made during the 1960s of 25 to 30 avowed nuclear weapon states by the end of the 1970s (with far more today) did not hold true largely because of the signature of the NPT, one of those arms control treaties that Mr. Will dismisses with the term of "pieces of paper."

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