

Overview

In this activity, students evaluate past and present nuclear threats and reflect on why these threats have changed over time.

Length

One–two class periods

Materials

- [“The History of Nuclear Proliferation” \(World101\)](#)
- [“South Africa: Why Countries Acquire and Abandon Nuclear Bombs” \(World101\)](#)
- [“The Nuclear World” \(World101\)](#)
- Understanding Past and Present Nuclear Threats worksheet (below)

Instructional Plan

1. Ask students to read “The History of Nuclear Proliferation,” “The Nuclear World,” and “South Africa: Why Countries Acquire and Abandon Nuclear Bombs”
2. Have them fill out the worksheet in pairs.
3. Have each pair present to the class what their top threats were and their reasoning for the change.
4. Lead a class discussion on any patterns that emerge or disagreements among the groups.

Extension and Additional Resources

- This lesson plan could easily lead into either the “Analyze Nonproliferation Policy Tools” or “Apply Nonproliferation Policy Tools” lessons.

Evaluating Past and Present Nuclear Threats

Understanding Past and Present Nuclear Threats Worksheet

Using the list below (and any other threats you wish to include), rank in order of significance the threats posed by nuclear weapons and their proliferation in the past and present. Some threats may be applicable to both. Then explain why you have placed the threats in the order you chose.

Threats:

- Nuclear conflict between major powers (e.g., the United States and Soviet Union or Russia)
- Nuclear attack by North Korea
- Nuclear weapons acquisition by Iran
- Nuclear weapons acquisition by other countries
- Use of nuclear weapons in a terrorist attack
- Nuclear war between India and Pakistan
- Pakistani state's loss of control of nuclear weapons
- Sale of nuclear materials on the black market
- A non-NPT country's acquisition of nuclear material for peaceful purposes

Evaluating Past and Present Nuclear Threats

PAST	PRESENT
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.

Explanation of Ranking:

Why did you put the threats at the top that you did? Why have the top threats changed over time?