

Essay and Discussion Questions

Nuclear Proliferation High School Questions

Help students understand nuclear proliferation through these essay and discussion questions.

Introduction

1. Why is there such focus on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, as opposed to other kinds of weapons?
2. What are the crucial technological prerequisites to developing a nuclear weapon?
3. How have the threats posed by nuclear weapons evolved over time? Are these threats greater today than in past decades, and if so, how?
4. Why does the United States extend security guarantees to some allies? Has this policy measure successfully served its purpose?
5. In what ways are the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the production of nuclear weapons related? What challenges does this relationship pose to nonproliferation efforts?
6. Construct an argument supported by specific evidence that agrees or disagrees with the statement “The goal of a world without nuclear weapons is attainable.”

Nonproliferation

1. Why is there such focus on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, as opposed to other kinds of weapons?
2. What obligations does the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) impose on different categories of countries? Why have these obligations been the subject of disagreement in the decades since the treaty was negotiated?
3. What policy tools have been effective in stopping or preventing nuclear proliferation, and why?
4. How have the priorities and tools of nonproliferation policies changed since the end of the Cold War? How have they stayed the same as before?
5. What does the case of South Africa tell us about what motivates countries to develop or relinquish nuclear weapons?
6. To what extent is the NPT an effective tool for limiting the spread of nuclear weapons? In what ways has it succeeded and in what ways has it fallen short?
7. Construct an argument supported by specific evidence that agrees or disagrees with the statement “The goal of a world without nuclear weapons is attainable.”
8. Construct an argument supported by specific evidence that agrees or disagrees with the statement “On the whole, international nonproliferation efforts have succeeded.”
9. Do you think it is fair that the NPT places limits on nonnuclear states when nuclear states have not disarmed?
10. What recommendations would you make to modify the NPT and any other policy tools to address current nonproliferation priorities?