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Nuclear arms control negotiation  
with special reference to New Zealand and the  
Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
The University of Auckland, 1999.

## || Abstract

In 1996, at a special session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was opened for signature. Within one week, seventy states, including all five nuclear-weapon states, signed the Treaty. This brought to an end fifty years of both nuclear tests and nuclear test-ban negotiations. For many states, the achievement of the CTBT was a major success for nuclear arms control.

New Zealand played an important role in the early stages of the CTBT negotiation. Every year from 1972, New Zealand and Australia tabled a resolution in the General Assembly calling for a CTBT. After two decades of diplomacy, the resolution was adopted by consensus in 1993, allowing negotiation for a CTBT to take place in the Conference on Disarmament.

Substantive negotiation for a CTBT began in 1993, but test-ban negotiations had been taking place almost since the start of nuclear testing in 1945. Like many other nuclear arms control issues, the negotiations had been dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union. Engaged in their own nuclear arms race, the two superpowers pursued their own bilateral nuclear arms control negotiations to manage their strategic relationship. Until the CTBT negotiation, multilateral nuclear arms control was mostly limited to the Treaty for the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The NPT reflected the desire of many non-nuclear states to become involved in nuclear arms control and use multilateral agreements to place obligations on the nuclear-weapon states.

While both bilateral and multilateral nuclear arms control often languished due to disagreements, multilateral nuclear arms control negotiation has also dealt with the complexity of reconciling the perspectives of many states. This complexity has made the use of negotiation theories difficult, although if used pragmatically, theory can be a useful tool for the study of negotiation events. Through the test-ban resolution, New Zealand was able to contribute to the process of reaching consensus by acting as a facilitator. New Zealand is a good example of how a small non-nuclear state can make a useful contribution in multilateral nuclear arms control negotiation, typically dominated by large nuclear-weapon states, and still advance its national interests.

## || Acknowledgements

My supervisor, Associate-Professor Steve Hoadley, for setting such a high standard and inspiring me to produce the best thesis I was able to.

The Peace and Disarmament Education Trust for their generous financial support through the PACDAC/PADET scholarship programme.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade historical research grants programme for financial support for a research trip to Wellington.

The personnel in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade International Security and Arms Control Division for making the Ministry's files available and giving up their work time to assist me.

The academic staff, the administrative staff, and fellow post-graduate students in the Department of Political studies for their direct assistance, helpful advice, and camaraderie.

My parents, for being supportive and for being there when needed most.

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## || Glossary of abbreviations

ABM – Anti-Ballistic Missile  
CTBT – Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty  
IAEA – International Atomic Energy Agency  
ICBM – Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile  
INF – Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces  
MFAT – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
MIRV – Multiple Independently-targetable Re-entry Vehicle  
MTCR – Missile Technology Control Regime  
NPT – Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons  
PNE – Peaceful Nuclear Explosion  
PNET – Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty  
PTBT – Partial Test Ban Treaty  
SALT – Strategic Arms Limitation Talks  
SLBM – Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile  
SPNFZ – South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone  
START – Strategic Arms Reduction Talks  
TTBT – Threshold Test Ban Treaty  
UNGA – United Nations General Assembly