

How the Treaty of Tlatelolco Shaped the NPT's Grand Bargain

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THE ARCHITECT

Alfonso García Robles (1911-1991)

- Played a key role in NPT negotiations as the official responsible for Mexican policy toward nuclear arms control in regional and global contexts.
- Responsible for guiding the Latin American nuclear-weapon-free zone through to a successful conclusion as



Photograph of Alfonso García Robles in 1976 (SRE A1/2, s.338)

- chair of the treaty's negotiating body
- Helped draft the Mexican Amendments to the NPT, which introduced or revised significantly Articles IV, V, VI, and VII of the treaty.
- Gained concessions from the United States and the Soviet Union amid concluding UN General Assembly debates over the NPT
- Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1982 for his contributions to nuclear arms control

THE TREATY OF TLATELOLCO

Prohibits states parties from "testing, use, manufacture, production or acquisition by any means whatsoever of any nuclear weapons" or "receipt, storage, installation, deployment and any form of possession of any nuclear weapons."

The making of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was closely linked with that of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, known more commonly as the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Mexican officials with Undersecretary of State Alfonso García Robles at the helm played central roles in negotiating the Treaty of Tlatelolco and in shaping the NPT. The results were a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and a more even balance of rights and obligations between nuclear-weapon states (NWS) and non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS) in the NPT, which constituted the treaty's 'grand bargain.'

THE TREATY OF TLATELOLCO SET KEY PRECEDENTS FOR NPT

- It was the first treaty to specify the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as the agency responsible for applying full-scope safeguards on nuclear activities.
- Its Article 17 detailing a right to "nuclear energy for peaceful purposes" was the model for Article IV of the NPT.

NNWSs BENEFITED FROM FOUR MEXICAN AMENDMENTS TO NPT

- Draft Article IV was expanded to lay down the rights of states parties to and the special duty of nuclear-weapon states to facilitate "the fullest possible exchange of information on peaceful uses of atomic energy."
- Article V provided for an international service to supply 'peaceful nuclear explosives.'
- Article VI embodied, according to Mexican diplomats, "a solemn recognition of the special responsibility of the nuclear Powers," to "undertake to pursue negotiations in good faith" for nuclear arms control and disarmament.
- Article VII ensured that the NPT would not affect "the right of any group of states to conclude regional [denuclearization] treaties."

LATIN AMERICAN STATES WON MAJOR CONCESSIONS FROM NWSs IN FINAL UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY DEBATES ON THE NPT

- Numerous NWSs agreed to ratify Protocol II of the Treaty of Tlatelolco in exchange for Latin American votes.
- Article IV of the NPT was further expanded to require exchanges of nuclear-related equipment and materials in addition to information.
- A statement was added to the NPT's preamble that invoked the UN Charter's prohibition against states employing "the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State."

CHRONOLOGY

SEPTEMBER 1958	Irish proposal to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) outlines NPT
MARCH 1962	Eighteen Nation Committee on Disarmament (ENDC) inaugural meeting.
SEPTEMBER 1962	Brazil advances Latin American NWFZ at UNGA
OCTOBER 1962	Cuban Missile Crisis
AUGUST 1963	Limited Test Ban Treaty
MARCH 1965– FEBRUARY 1967	Preparatory Commission for the Denuclearization of Latin America
NOVEMBER 1965	UNGA Res. 2028 (XX) calls for balance of "responsibilities and obligations" between NWSs and NNWS in NPT
FEBRUARY 1967	Treaty of Tlatelolco
SEPTEMBER 1967	Mexican Amendments to NPT
FEBRUARY– MARCH 1968	Final ENDC deliberations on NPT
APRIL–JUNE 1968	UN debates NPT
JULY 1968	NPT

Soviet deposit of instrument of ratification of Protocol II of Treaty of Tlatelolco (SRE A1/6, s.974)



Signature of Treaty of Tlatelolco in Mexico City, February 1967. García Robles center (SRE A3/2, s. 314)

Archival Sources

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Photographic Sources

SRE Archives

Background image: Plaza of the Three Cultures, Tlatelolco, Mexico City, 1966 (SRE A3/2, s.325)

Special thanks to Senor Jorge Fuentes Hernández, Brandon Hunter, and the Stanton Foundation

