

Nuclear Proliferation

Years each country gained their first atomic weapon:

| Country | Year of first nuclear test |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| USA | 1945 |
| Russia | 1949 |
| UK | 1952 |
| France | 1960 |
| China | 1964 |
| India | 1974 |
| Pakistan | 1998 |
| Israel | Unknown, possibly 1966 |
| North Korea | 2006 |

As of 2015, these are the only nine countries which possess nuclear weapons. It's interesting to note that while America and the UK initially worked together on creating the first nuclear weapon, the UK did not gain nuclear weapons until 1952 - even after the Soviet Union. It is also worth noting that the Soviet Union gained their nuclear weapon so quickly after World War Two due to the number of spies working within the Manhattan Project. In 1945, the USA predicted it would maintain the atomic monopoly over the Soviet Union until 1960 and when the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic weapon in 1949, began looking for leaks. American citizens Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed for treason in 1953 after being discovered to have passed atomic secrets onto the Soviet Union.¹ They became the only spies executed for this crime but not the only spies convicted. Klaus Fuchs was another spy whom passed atomic secrets but fled the United States before being discovered.²

It's worth noting that both the United States and the Soviet Union quickly developed hydrogen bombs. The US exploded their first hydrogen bomb in 1952 and the Soviet Union in 1953. By 1954, the US had a hydrogen bomb that yielded 14.8 megatons - 740x more powerful than the atomic bomb exploded at Hiroshima. Delivery of these atomic weapons was also very important and in the 1950s Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) were developed by both countries which were a potentially much more effective delivery system than the strategic bombers - the previous delivery method and the one used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Whilst exploring The Times digital archive, I found citizens calling for nuclear disarmament as early as 1947. Citizens also seem to have at least a rough knowledge of the nuclear tests, in The Times of September 24, 1949 (less than a month after the Soviet Union tested their first atomic bomb on August 30th 1949) an article begins with "It would be useless to pretend that the firm knowledge that Russia now was at least the prototype of an atomic bomb is not a shock or that it will make no

¹ R. D. Lipschutz, *Cold War Fantasies: Film, fiction and foreign policy* 2001, p. 28, 75

² Ibid p. 75

change in the balance of world power: for this reason alone the British American, and Canadian Governments were undoubtedly right to publish this news at once."

