



Pledge to Stop Nuclear Proliferation: Permanent Five of UNSC

For Prelims: United Nations Security Council, Non-Proliferation Treaty, Cold War, IAEA, JCPOA, New START, Nuclear Weapon.

For Mains: Non-Proliferation Treaty its significance and what changes are needed to make it better, India's Stand on NPT, Cold War, IAEA, JCPOA, New START.

Why in News

Recently, the Five permanent [United Nations Security Council](#) members (China, France, Russia, the U.K. and US) pledged to prevent atomic weapons spreading and to avoid nuclear conflict.

- The pledge was made in a rare joint statement ahead of a review of the Non-[Proliferation Treaty \(NPT\) 1970](#).
- The statement comes as **tensions between Russia and the US** have reached heights rarely seen since the [Cold War](#) over a troop [build-up by Russia](#) close to the Ukrainian border.
- The statement also comes as the **world powers seek to reach agreement with Iran** on reviving the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\) 2015](#) over its controversial nuclear drive, which was rendered dying by the US walking out of the accord in 2018.

Key Points

- **The Pledge:**
 - The further **spread of such weapons must be prevented**. A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.
 - The avoidance of war between nuclear-weapon states and the **reduction of strategic risks as our foremost responsibilities**.
 - Nuclear weapons — for as long as they continue to exist — **should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war**.
 - They intend to maintain and further strengthen their national measures to prevent unauthorised or unintended use of nuclear weapons.
- **China's Stand:**
 - It **raised concerns that tensions with the US could lead to conflict**, notably over the island of Taiwan.
 - China considers Taiwan part of its territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary.
- **Russia's Stand:**
 - Russia welcomed the declaration by the atomic powers and expressed hope it would reduce global tensions.

Non-Proliferation Treaty

▪ About:

- The NPT is an **international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology**, to foster the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of disarmament.
- The treaty was **signed in 1968 and entered into force in 1970**. Presently, it has 190 member states.
 - India is not a member.
- It **requires countries to give up any present or future plans to build nuclear weapons** in return for access to peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
- It represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States.
- **Nuclear-weapon states parties** under the NPT are defined as those that manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive devices before 1st January, 1967.

▪ India's Stand:

- India is **one of the only five countries that either did not sign the NPT or signed but withdrew later**, thus becoming part of a list that includes **Pakistan, Israel, North Korea, and South Sudan**.
- India always considered the NPT as **discriminatory** and had refused to sign it.
- India has **opposed the international treaties** aimed at non-proliferation since they were selectively applicable to the non-nuclear powers and legitimised the monopoly of the five nuclear weapons powers.

▪ Issues Related to NPT:

◦ Failure of Disarmament Process:

- The NPT is largely seen as a Cold War era instrument that has **failed to fulfil the objective of creating a pathway towards a credible disarmament** process.
- Treaty proposes **no tangible disarmament roadmap**, no reference to test ban or to the freezing of production of either fissile materials or nuclear weapons, and omitted provisions for reductions and elimination.
- It **instead allowed sustenance and expansion of arsenals** by stipulating January, 1967 as the cut-off date to determine the NWS.

◦ System of Nuclear 'Haves' and 'Have-Nots':

- **Non-Nuclear Weapon states (NNWS)** criticize the treaty to be discriminatory as it focuses on preventing only **horizontal proliferation** while there is no limit for vertical proliferation.
 - **Vertical proliferation** can be defined as the advancement or modernization of a nation-state's nuclear arsenal, whereas **horizontal proliferation** is the direct or indirect transfer of technologies from one nation-state to another, which ultimately leads to the more advanced development and proliferation of nuclear weapons.
 - As there is **no explicit obligation on part of NWS to reduce their arsenal**, NWS have continued to expand their respective arsenals without any constraints.
- In this context, NNWS groupings demand that the Nuclear-Weapon States (NWS) should renounce their arsenals and further production in return for commitment of NNWS not to produce them.
- Due to this tussle, most of the quadrennial **Review Conferences (RevCon)**, the forum that reviews the health and functioning of the treaty, has remained largely inconclusive since 1995.

◦ Post-Cold War Challenges:

- The treaty's existential challenges began in the post-Cold War setting when the **attempts by a few State Parties to break-out or gain nuclear latency led to numerous instances** of non-compliance, violations and defiance.
 - For example, the US alleges Iran of building nuclear Weapons of Mass Destruction.
- The **NPT's indefinite extension in 1995**, while invoking its irreplaceability, also underlined the inability of states to formulate a stand-alone instrument towards the objective of disarmament, as enshrined in the NPT.
- The **emergence of non-state actors** with declared intent to access weapons of

mass destruction and the detection of a global nuclear black-market, has raised concerns on the limitations of the treaty to address the challenges thrown up by the new strategic milieu.

Way Forward

- Rising energy demands have led to a growing number of countries pursuing nuclear energy, and many countries wish to be energy-independent, in order to ensure a sustainable and dependable domestic energy supply. As clean energy, development, and peaceful coexistence are essential for every country.
- Thus, **the challenge for the international community will be to reconcile states' desire for energy independence with their desire to both reduce the intrusiveness of [International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#) safeguards and diminish the possibility of proliferation.**
- Also, NNWS welcomes **New START** and other initiatives, but is anxious to see more concrete actions on reducing the role of nuclear weapons in national security doctrines, reducing alert levels, increasing transparency, and other steps.
- **More regions** in the world (preferably comprising NWS) **should enter into an arrangement of establishing Nuclear-weapon-free zones.**
- Further, the **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a step in the right direction** for nuclear disarmament.

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