

UPSC Civil Services Examination

UPSC Notes [GS-I]

Topic: Non-Proliferation Treaty - Members & Drawbacks

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, otherwise commonly known as the Non-Proliferation Treaty or NPT, is an international treaty with an objective to limit the escalation of a nuclear arms race and the technology related to it. Further goals of the treaty also included to promote cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy and achieving complete nuclear disarmament.

The topic, 'Non-Proliferation Treaty' is important for [IAS Exam](#) as it comes under the section current affairs which is significant for civil services examination's Mains GS-II (International Relations & Multilateral Agreements.)

What is the Non-Proliferation Treaty?

The treaty was drawn, drafted and negotiated by the Eighteen Nation Committee on Disarmament, an UN-sponsored organisation based in Switzerland.

On August 6th and 9th, 1945, the twin Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed by the United States with a powerful and terrible weapon - The Atom Bomb. The act brought about the end of World War 2, but with a terrible price. Total casualties amounted between 129,000 to 226,000 between the two cities, with countless other injured and suffering from radiation sickness.

The after-effects of the bombings were a serious cause of concern among world powers, along with potential misuse of the weapon. This concern led to calls for a safeguard to ensure a [Nuclear Arms Control](#) was in place. Thus it was in 1961, a U.N resolution called for a treaty to prevent an arms race for nuclear weapons. This treaty would go on to become the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Who has signed the Non-Proliferation treaty?

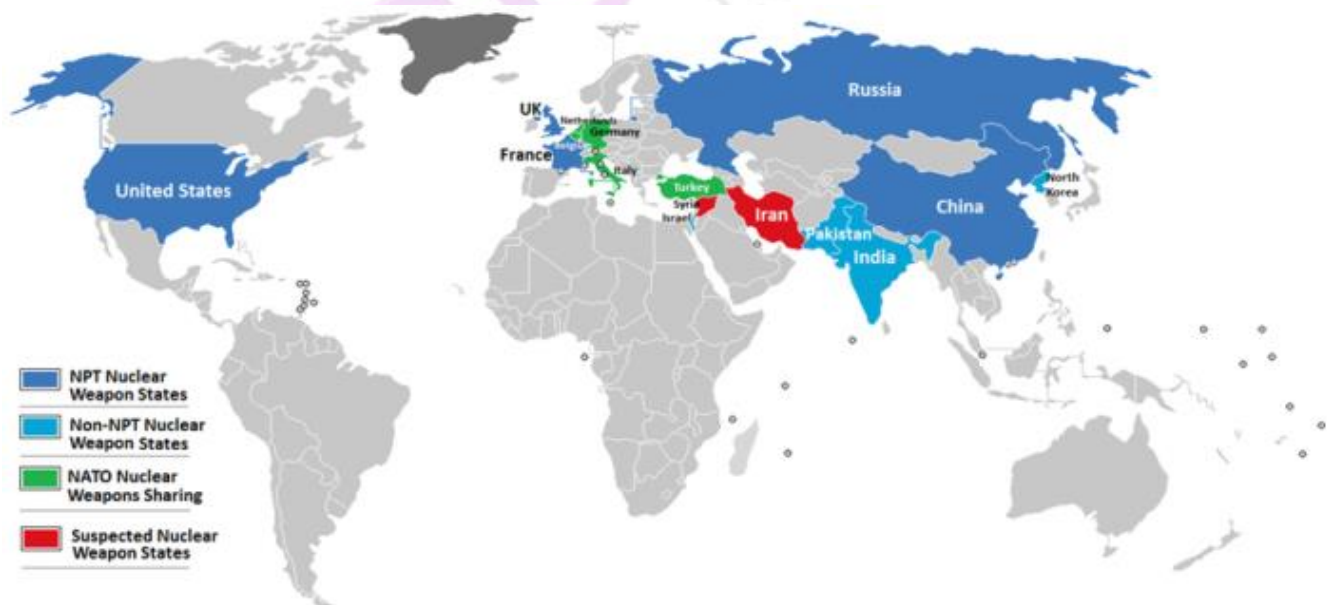
Ever since it came into effect since 1970 after it was opened for signing in 1968, the Non-Proliferation Treaty has 187 nations who are a party to it - more than any other arms limitation treaty.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty prohibits the nations who don't have nuclear weapons from acquiring them, at the same time prohibiting the nuclear states from helping others in acquiring the weapons. At the same time working towards total disarmament. The International Atomic Energy Agency, which is the successor of the [United Nations Atomic Energy Commission](#) verifies the compliance with the treaty. The compliance, in turn, is enforced by the United Nations Security Council.

There are a total of nine nations who possess nuclear weapons.

Five of the nations namely - US, UK, France, Russia and China have signed the treaty. The remaining four nations namely - India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea have not signed the treaty and thus not a party to the treaty.

The image below gives an idea of which nations have ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty and those who have not.



Why India never signed the treaty?

As per the stance of the Indian Government, the treaty in its current form is unfair as it, virtually, states that the 5 victorious nations of World War II have the right to possess nuclear weapons, while condemning the rest of the nations who don't have the weapons, to be subservient to the whims and fancies of the nations who do. In short, the treaty divides the world into nuclear 'haves' and 'have-nots'.

India's traditional position has always been that either the five nations denuclearize or everyone has the same rights as those who possess them. Also escalation of tensions by one of its nuclear-armed neighbours i.e. China was the primary reason why India conducted its own nuclear tests in the first place. It is this same escalation by India that prompted Pakistan to conduct its own nuclear test in order to act as a deterrent to what is perceived as "India's naked aggression."

What are the drawbacks of the treaty?

The main drawbacks of the treaty are that it never held accountable the 5 nations who possessed nuclear weapons at the time when the treaty was signed. At the same time, the enforcement of the treaty is also a serious cause for concern. Despite the threat of economic sanctions and other serious consequences, North Korea detonated its first bomb in 2006. Now even Iran is poised to go down the same route.

The treaty even has serious loopholes which can be exploited by other nations in order to have their own nuclear weapons program.

Regardless, it's clear that the world is a better place because of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It was predicted that about 25 nations will possess nuclear weapons. But the mere presence of it has reduced it to 9.

The NPT was not the only reason for this, but the mere presence of the safeguard can at least promise an era of peace, and if the current loopholes are fixed, it will fulfil such a promise.

International Relations of India covers an important part of the UPSC syllabus. Candidates preparing for the [UPSC 2020](#) should also keep a track of the latest [current affairs](#) to know about any new developments in the world.