

## India's Refused to Sign the CTBT

The Government of India refused to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) on 20 June 1996 at the Geneva Conference. This would have implications that would change the foreign policy of India as a whole.

### CTBT and India

- The [Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty](#) (CTBT) is a nuclear test ban treaty which bans nuclear explosions in all environments, whether for civilian or military purposes.
- Countries that sign the treaty agree not to carry out any nuclear weapons test explosions and also to prevent any such explosion in regions under their jurisdiction. The countries also agree to refrain from taking part in or holding any nuclear weapons test explosions.
- In 1954, after the Castle Bravo test conducted by the United States, the then Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru called for a “standstill agreement” on testing.
- India always maintained that it was in favour of a [nuclear arms control](#) treaty provided that such a treaty was fair to all countries and not skewed in favour of nuclear weapons states (NWS).
- The **Conference on Disarmament** (CD), which first met in 1979, was the main negotiating body that drafted the CTBT in 1993.
- In 1963, the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) was signed by 123 nations besides the USA, the UK and the Soviet Union. This treaty banned nuclear testing in the atmosphere, underwater and in outer space both for civilian and military purposes.
- But the underground tests could be done and these continued. The PTBT was a step towards the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The NPT was also not signed by India citing discriminatory provisions. The NPT prevents non-nuclear weapons states from possessing, developing, or acquiring nuclear weapons or explosive devices while at the same time, there were no restrictions on the NWS from developing nuclear weapons.
- Two other treaties were signed by the USA and the USSR known as the Threshold Test Ban Treaty (1974) and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty (1976).
- India, in the CD, maintained that there was a need for a total disarmament treaty rather than a non-proliferation treaty. Otherwise, the non-nuclear weapons states were in a disadvantageous position vis-à-vis the countries that already had nuclear stockpiles.
- It was seen as a move to control the non-nuclear weapons state since the NWS did not show any intentions towards eliminating their own nuclear stockpile in a time-bound manner.
- Also, the treaty only banned nuclear explosions, but countries could carry out sub-critical experiments and computer simulations. India also had pressing national security concerns in signing the CTBT. Pakistan and China are known as nuclear weapons states.
- After decades of negotiations, the CTBT was finally adopted by the [United Nations](#) (UN) on September 10<sup>th</sup> 1996.

- In June that year, the Indian representative to the UN, Arundhati Ghose had started rejecting the treaty, *“The CTBT that we see emerging appears to be shaped more by the technological preferences of the nuclear-weapon states rather than the imperatives of nuclear disarmament. This was not the CTBT that India envisaged in 1954. This cannot be the CTBT that India can be expected to accept.”*
- India did not accept the CTBT since many other countries were reluctant to eliminate their nuclear weaponry.
- On seeing an Indian rebuttal of the treaty, an entry ‘into force clause’ was inserted into the final draft of the treaty which made it mandatory for the treaty to be ratified by all 44 nations recognised by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as possessing nuclear weapons (this included India) for the treaty to enter into force. India condemned this move and said it went against the Vienna Convention Law of Treaties.
- So, the CTBT is yet to enter into force since many countries have not yet signed or ratified it.
- The non-signatory states are India, Pakistan, Bhutan, Tuvalu, Cuba, Tonga, Dominica, Syria, Mauritius, South Sudan, North Korea, Somalia and Saudi Arabia.
- China, USA, Israel, Iran, Sri Lanka, Nepal and a few other countries have signed it but not yet ratified the treaty. 166 countries have signed and ratified the CTBT.
- India conducted its first nuclear tests in 1974. Later, tests were conducted in 1998.