

NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

NEWS: Recently, **Iran's Foreign Ministry** has confirmed that its **Parliament is drafting legislation to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Treaty**.

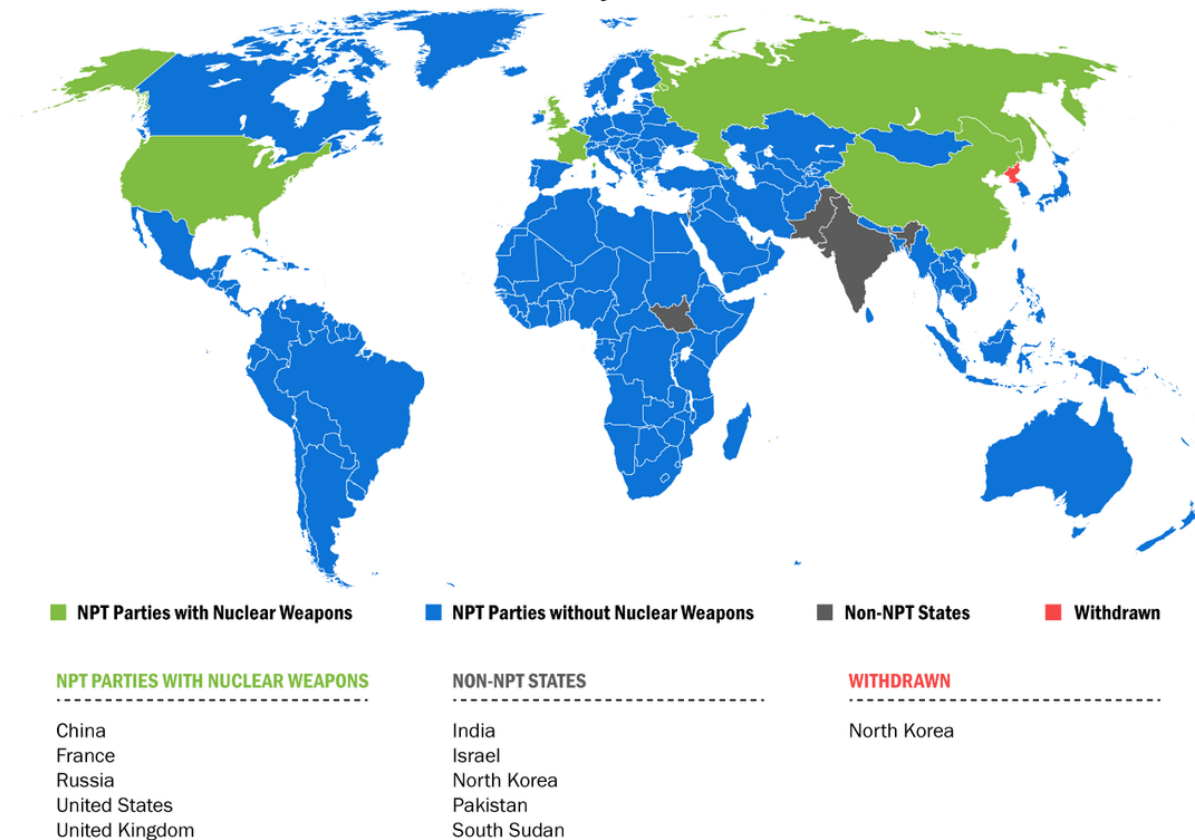
- It comes amid **escalating tensions with Israel** and renewed scrutiny from the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**.
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WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Background of the NPT

- The **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** is a landmark international treaty aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
- It was **opened for signature in 1968** and formally **entered into force in 1970**, becoming the cornerstone of global nuclear non-proliferation efforts.
- In **1995**, the treaty was extended **indefinitely**, ensuring its continuing relevance in global arms control architecture.

Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty



Source: <http://disarmament.un.org/treaties/t/npt>

BROOKINGS

Membership Provisions: Two-Tier System

- The NPT divides countries into two categories:
 - **Nuclear-Weapon States (NWS):** States that tested nuclear weapons before January 1, 1967 — **United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom.**

- **Non-Nuclear-Weapon States (NNWS):** All other signatories that **commit not to develop or acquire nuclear weapons**, and **accept International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards** on their nuclear facilities.

Three-Pillar Framework of NPT

- **1. Non-Proliferation:**
NWS pledge **not to transfer nuclear weapons or assist NNWS** in acquiring them in any form.
- **2. Disarmament:**
All member states are committed under Article VI to pursue **negotiations towards nuclear disarmament** and general and complete disarmament.
- **3. Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy:**
The treaty promotes **equitable access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes**, under IAEA supervision, especially for NNWS.

Withdrawal Clause (Article X)

- Under **Article X**, a party may withdraw from the treaty if **extraordinary events** have jeopardized its **supreme national interests**.
- Withdrawal requires a **three-month advance notice** to all other signatories and the **UN Security Council**.
- **North Korea** used this clause to withdraw in 2003.

Present Status of NPT

- As of now, **191 countries** are parties to the treaty, making it one of the most widely subscribed arms control agreements globally.
- **India, Pakistan, Israel, and South Sudan** have **never signed the treaty**.
 - India, Pakistan, and Israel are known or believed to **possess nuclear weapons**.
- **North Korea** **joined** the NPT in 1985 but **withdrew in 2003**, after allegations of non-compliance.

Other Key Nuclear Disarmament Treaties

- **START I & II (1991–1993):**
Bilateral treaties between the **USA and USSR/Russia**, aimed at reducing deployed strategic nuclear arsenals.
- **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT, 1996):**
Prohibits all nuclear test explosions for both civilian and military purposes.
 - Has **not entered into force** as key states (USA, China, India, Pakistan) have not ratified it.
- **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW, 2017):**
First legally binding international agreement to **comprehensively ban nuclear weapons**.
 - Entered into force in **2021**, but **none of the nuclear-armed states** are parties.

- **New START Treaty (2010):**
A US-Russia treaty to **limit deployed strategic nuclear warheads and delivery systems**, ensuring mutual transparency and verification.

India's Approach to the NPT

- India has **refused to sign the NPT** since its inception in 1968, maintaining a consistent stance.
- India objects to the **discriminatory nature** of the treaty which permanently divides the world into nuclear 'haves' and 'have-nots'.
- Former PM **Indira Gandhi** described India's decision as based on "**enlightened self-interest and national security**".

India's Alternative Vision and Commitments

- India supports a **universal, non-discriminatory, and verifiable disarmament regime**, applicable to all nations equally.
- It has proposed a **Nuclear Weapons Convention** that seeks a **global ban on the development, production, and use** of nuclear weapons.
- India adheres to responsible nuclear conduct through:
 - **Voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing.**
 - A declared **No First Use (NFU)** policy.
 - **Strong export control laws** aligned with international non-proliferation norms.
 - Membership in **global regimes** like:
 - **Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)**
 - **Wassenaar Arrangement**
- The **2008 India–USA Civil Nuclear Agreement** and the **NSG waiver** recognized India's **credible nuclear non-proliferation record**, even outside the NPT.

Concerns and Challenges in the NPT Framework

- **Disarmament Stalemate:**
Critics argue that **NWS have failed to fulfill their disarmament obligations** under Article VI, undermining the treaty's legitimacy.
- **Non-Compliance and Withdrawal:**
Cases like **North Korea's withdrawal** and **Iran's disputed nuclear activities** highlight weaknesses in the treaty's enforcement mechanisms.
- **Technological Dual-Use Dilemma:**
Peaceful nuclear technologies can be **diverted for weapons development**, raising global proliferation concerns.

Future Outlook and Reform Priorities

- **Strengthening Verification:**
Universal adoption of the **IAEA's Additional Protocol** would enhance inspection capabilities and ensure transparency.
- **Bridging the Disarmament Gap:**
Renewed commitment by nuclear states to **reduce and ultimately eliminate their arsenals** is essential to restore faith in the treaty.
- **Engagement with Non-Signatories:**
Engaging countries like **India, Pakistan, and Israel** through **parallel confidence-building measures** may strengthen the global non-proliferation architecture.
- **Safeguarding Against Emerging Threats:**
The weaponization of **cyber capabilities, AI, and autonomous systems** poses new challenges requiring updated verification and governance mechanisms.
- **NPT Review Conference 2026:**
The **upcoming Review Conference** will be crucial for addressing these emerging issues and reinvigorating global disarmament commitments.

Source: <https://ddnews.gov.in/en/iran-says-parliament-is-preparing-bill-to-leave-nuclear-non-proliferation-treaty/>