Fifty Years of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: A Review of Indian Perspective

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ABSTRACT
Implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is going to complete 50 years in 2020. In the domain of nuclear arms control and disarmament, NPT is regarded as an essential milestone as more than 190 countries have become parties to NPT, making it one of the most successful disarmament treaties in the world history. Debate on its success generates a mixed response highlighting some positive and negative dimensions of the nuclear arms race. Under this background, an effort has been made in this article to understand NPT and its relevance for India, who declared herself as a nuclear weapon state after the Pokhran – II nuclear test in Rajasthan in May 1998. At present only five countries namely India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea and South Sudan remain out of the domain of NPT.

Keywords: Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Nuclear Weapons, P-5 Countries, United Nations, India

INTRODUCTION
After many years of negotiations, the Nuclear Non – Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was voted by the UN General Assembly in June 1968. The treaty was finally signed on July 01, 1968, and came into operation on March 05, 1970. More than 190 countries have signed the treaty, making it one of the most successful arms control agreements in the world history. The main objective of this treaty is to eliminate the further spread of nuclear weapons¹.

MAIN PROVISIONS OF THE NPT
- It instructed all the countries holding nuclear weapons not to propagate nuclear knowhow and transfer manufactured nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapon countries.
- It seeks to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear technology.
- Nuclear weapon countries agreed to give preferential treatment to non-nuclear weapon countries in the matter of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Such kind of assistance is available only for the peaceful use of nuclear energy, but not for the military application of nuclear energy.
- It seeks to promote co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

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• Non-nuclear weapon countries are assured to be provided with immediate assistance by nuclear weapon countries in case of any attack or aggression.

• Non-nuclear weapon countries should accept the verification measures set by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to ensure a peaceful application of nuclear energy. This provision has been designed to prevent diversion of nuclear assistance from peaceful to the military application of nuclear energy.

• Nuclear disarmament is its main goal; however, it has not set the dateline for achieving this objective.

Initially, the treaty was designed to remain valid for 25 years, i.e. up to the year 1995, however in 1995 during the fifth review meeting held at New York, and member countries agreed to extend the treaty for indefinitely and without conditions.

**INTERPRETATION OF PROVISIONS OF THE NPT**

From the provisions of NPT, it is clear that NPT divides the countries of the world into two categories, i.e. nuclear haves and nuclear have-nots. The main objective of NPT is to rule out further spread of nuclear weapons, and accordingly, it laid down various provisions to achieve this. NPT also seeks to achieve nuclear disarmament, but it does not mention the timeline for accomplishing this task.

Nuclear proliferation is of two types, i.e. Horizontal and Vertical. NPT has been successful in checking the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons since 1970. In 1968, only five countries viz. USA, USSR, UK, France and China had nuclear weapon capabilities. Now this list enlarges to include India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea. However in case of vertical proliferation, it can be said that NPT has been failed to check nuclear proliferation as P-5 countries (USA, USSR, UK, France and China) continue to develop more lethal nuclear warheads. From the provisions of NPT, it seems that it perpetuates the phenomenon of nuclear imperialism. It seems that NPT has assigned the role of protector and guardianship to P-5 countries and rest other countries are made to accept the superiority of P-5 countries. An environment where nuclear weapons are seen as the greatest symbol of political power and pride, NPT has been contemplating to achieve nuclear disarmament by artificially dividing countries into nuclear haves and nuclear have-nots. From a realist perspective, this objective is nothing but a mirage. In a world where there is an intense struggle for power, why a nation would jeopardize its security by accepting such a false narrative of nuclear disarmament.

According to western scholars, P-5 countries are responsible powers and do a careful cost-benefit analysis before any move in the direction of application of nuclear weapons. Such perception is nothing but a false explanation that aims to maintain the status quo favouring big five powers. Under the UN charter, all the member states of the UN are regarded as equal sovereign states. This principle seems to have no place when big powers make efforts for nuclear disarmament. When NPT aims at nuclear disarmament, then questions arise, i.e. why this double standard has been adopted in favour of nuclear weapon countries, why they have been allowed to increase their nuclear arsenal vertically and qualitatively. When the cold war ended in 1991, it was hoped that thrust for nuclear weapons would come down, but this thinking proved as a utopian concept. Nuclear weapons and nuclear strategies are still very much relevant, and they will remain so considering objective laws that govern human nature. Under this background, it is imperative to examine the status of nuclear weapons being held by P – 5 countries to evaluate the worth of the NPT treaty since 1968.
From these two graphs, it is clear that countries like France and China have increased their nuclear weapon capabilities significantly over the last 50 years. From the graph, it is evident that countries like USA, Russia and the UK have reduced their nuclear weapons in number but at the same time, these countries have taken steps to upgrade their nuclear arsenals qualitatively. A new generation of nuclear weapons has been developed. Battlefield nuclear weapons or mini-nukes or tactical nuclear weapons are being developed as new-age weapons.

Factors responsible behind the desire of countries to have nuclear weapons are as follows:
- Given the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons, an attack on nuclear power is unlikely.
• Nuclear weapons have substantial symbolic significance as well as political prestige. It is a ticket for sitting around the high tables of world politics.
• The international environment is more or less anarchical, where might is right. In such a background, nation-states must enhance their power, and in this regard, nuclear weapons are the best options to ensure security.
• The nuclear-weapon-free world is a myth as long as concepts like power, and national interests have remained major factors of international politics. Such a myth cannot be translated into reality.

INDIA’S STAND ON THE NPT
India has criticized provisions of NPT as discriminatory and unrealistic. It is also argued that the NPT treaty has ignored security scenario of India. Security paradigm of India is very precarious as from two fronts India has chances of war. Relations of India with China and Pakistan remain hostile and will remain so shortly. While China is a recognized nuclear-weapon state, clandestine nuclear and missile relationship between China and Pakistan has remained a matter of great alert for India; therefore, India wants to keep its nuclear option open and flexible. Under such circumstances, India must maintain a minimum nuclear deterrent for ensuring its security\(^4\).

CRITICISMS OF THE NPT TREATY
• In 2020, NPT is going to complete 50 years of its operation, and still, now it has not achieved its objective of nuclear disarmament.
• No set timeline for nuclear weapon states to get rid of their nuclear weapons.
• It is discriminatory and artificially divides countries of the world into nuclear haves, and nuclear have nots.
• Pursues the policy of nuclear imperialism.
• UN principle of sovereign equality seems to have no application in the operation of NPT.

CONCLUSION
Traditionally India has been a strong votary of elimination of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) including nuclear weapons; however, no concrete steps have been taken in this regard in the real sense of the term at the global level. India should not become a party to NPT given its discriminatory provisions. Only one option is there for India for becoming a member state of NPT, i.e. as a nuclear-weapon state. This pre-condition is very unlikely to happen; therefore, India should continue its policy of unilateral moratorium in respect of further nuclear testing and do all such strategies necessary for becoming a responsible power of the present century. India is a de-facto nuclear weapon state, a fact well recognized by the major powers of the world; therefore, India should continue its policy of opposition of NPT in its present form.

ENDNOTES
1 Vinay Kumar Malhotra, International Relations, Disarmament and Arms Control (New Delhi: Anmol Publication Pvt.Ltd.) pp. 353-373.
2 Andrew Heywood, Global Politics, Nuclear Proliferation and Disarmament (Palgrave Macmillan) pp. 263-267.
3 Andrew Heywood, Global Politics, Nuclear Proliferation and Disarmament (Palgrave Macmillan) pp 263-267.