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Q6(c)

Discuss the reasons behind India's refusal to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT)

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · PSIR GS 2 · 15 marks · Contemporary Global Concerns

Contemporary Global Concerns: Democracy, human rights, environment, gender justice, terrorism, nuclear proliferation.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the reasons behind India's refusal to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT)
- Write at 15-mark length

Revision summary

The NPT recognises only five nuclear-weapon States by a 1967 date.

India rejected that hierarchy as unequal law.

China's arsenal and later Pakistan made accession a security risk.

1974 and 1998 locked a weapons-capable identity.

A US-led NSG waiver later gave civilian trade without signature.

Introduction

The NPT of 1968 divides nuclear-weapon States as of 1967 from all others. India refused to sign as a nuclear have-not. The reasons are legal inequality, security, and status.

Body**Discriminatory structure**

- Article IX's cut-off date freezes five recognised nuclear-weapon States. India called this nuclear apartheid, not a genuine non-proliferation community.
- Disarmament duties on the five remained vague. Horizontal proliferation was policed more than vertical reduction.

Security and autonomy

- China tested in 1964. The 1962 war sat in memory. An open-ended non-nuclear vow looked reckless in a Waltzian self-help world.
- Pakistan's programme and later tests made a unilateral NPT accession even less likely.
- Peaceful nuclear explosion in 1974 and the 1998 tests showed a dual civil-military path that the NPT's non-nuclear box could not hold.

Diplomatic identity

- NAM and NIEO-era India treated unequal treaties as a continuation of hierarchy, akin to Carr's unmasking of status-quo law.

- India offered a nuclear-weapon-free world and later a voluntary test moratorium, but not accession as a non-nuclear-weapon State.

After refusal

- NSG sanctions followed 1974 and 1998. The later US civil nuclear deal and NSG waiver gave trade without NPT signature, which confirmed New Delhi's bet that exceptionalism could be bargained.
- Additional Protocol-style safeguards on civilian facilities were accepted as a price. The NPT itself was not.

Flow diagram

NPT 1968 cut-off 1968 cut-off -> Discriminatory status

China 1964 Pakistan -> Security self-help

Discriminatory status -> India refuses to sign

Security self-help -> India refuses to sign

1974 and 1998 tests -> India refuses to sign

Conclusion

India refused the NPT because it froze a hierarchy of nuclear haves, ignored its China-Pakistan security setting, and contradicted equal sovereignty. 1974 and 1998 made the refusal material. Later civil nuclear commerce came despite, not through, the treaty.

Facts & figures

NPT 1968

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; nuclear-weapon State defined by a 1967 test cut-off.

China 1964

First Chinese nuclear test, a regional reason India would not lock itself as a permanent have-not.

1974 PNE

Pokhran peaceful nuclear explosion that triggered technology denial and NSG tightening.

1998 tests

Declared nuclear-weapon tests; India still stayed outside the NPT while seeking a nuclear normalcy bargain.