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**DAILY EDITORIAL
ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

Nuclear Disarmament

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NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Context

- Almost seventy years ago, the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made a speech that would put India on the global stage of nuclear disarmament, which was marked by **pragmatism, vision, and self-assurance**.

Nuclear Power in the World:

- There are nine countries (United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel) recognized as possessing nuclear weapons.
- These countries are often referred to as '**nuclear-armed states**' or '**nuclear power**'.

Nuclear Disarmament

- It refers to the act of eliminating or abolishing weapons (particularly offensive arms) either unilaterally or reciprocally.
- It may refer either to reducing the number of arms, or to eliminating entire categories of weapons.

Treaties Related to Nuclear Disarmament

- **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT):** Signed in 1968 and entered into force in 1970, the NPT aims **to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and promote disarmament**.
 - ♦ It divides the world into **nuclear-weapon states (NWS)**, recognized as possessing nuclear weapons at the time of the treaty's signing, and **non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWS)**, which agree not to develop or acquire nuclear weapons.
 - ♦ It requires NWS to pursue disarmament negotiations in good faith.
- **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW):** Adopted by the United Nations in 2017 and opened for signature in 2018, the TPNW aims to prohibit the development, testing, production, stockpiling, stationing, transfer, use, and threat of use of nuclear weapons.
 - ♦ It represents a significant step towards nuclear disarmament, although it has not been signed by nuclear-armed states.
- **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT):** Opened for signature in 1996, the CTBT aims to ban all nuclear explosions for both civilian and military purposes.
 - ♦ While the treaty has been signed by 185 countries and ratified by 170, it has not entered into force as nuclear-armed states must ratify it to become operational.
- **Outer Space Treaty:** This multilateral agreement **entered into force in 1967** and bans the siting of weapons of mass destruction in space.
 - ♦ All nine states believed to have nuclear weapons are parties to this treaty.

India's Nuclear Weapons Program

- India's nuclear weapons programme arose from security concerns as well as a desire for international recognition. India believed that acquiring nuclear weapons was required to deter potential adversaries and ensure India's security.
 - ♦ India has first-hand knowledge of the dangers of nuclear proliferation, having been the victim of Chinese nuclear testing in 1964 and facing nuclear blackmail from Pakistan.
- **Smiling Buddha (1974):** India conducted its first nuclear test code-named 'Smiling Buddha', and since then, it has developed a nuclear triad consisting of land-based, sea-based, and air based delivery systems.
- **Operation Shakti (1998):** India conducted a series of nuclear tests at **Pokhran**, codenamed 'Operation Shakti'.
 - ♦ It marked India's formal entry into the nuclear weapons club.

India's Policy Towards Nuclear Weapons

- **Credible Minimum Deterrence:** India emphasises maintaining a nuclear arsenal sufficient for deterrence but not so large as to pose a threat to other countries.
- **No First Use:** India has a declared nuclear no-first-use policy, under which it cannot use nuclear weapons as a means of warfare unless first attacked by nuclear weapons.
- **Non-Use Against Non-Nuclear Weapon States:** India has committed to not using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states.
- **Retaliation Only:** India's nuclear doctrine asserts that nuclear weapons are solely for deterrence and that India will pursue a policy of 'retaliation only'.
- **Multilateral Legal Arrangements:** India is prepared to convert these undertakings into multilateral legal arrangements.

Arguments in Favour of Nuclear Disarmament

- **Humanitarian Concerns:** Nuclear weapons possess unparalleled destructive power, capable of causing immense loss of life, widespread devastation, and long-term environmental damage.
- **Global Security:** The proliferation of nuclear weapons increases the likelihood of their use, whether intentionally or accidentally, leading to catastrophic consequences for humanity.
- **Economic Benefits:** Maintaining and modernising nuclear arsenals incurs substantial financial costs for countries whereas funds can be redirected from nuclear weapons towards more constructive purposes to improve overall well-being.
- **Non-proliferation and Arms Control:** By demonstrating commitment to disarmament, nuclear-armed states can encourage non-nuclear-weapon states to adhere to non-proliferation agreements and refrain from developing their own nuclear capabilities.
- **Ethical and Moral Imperatives:** Eliminating nuclear weapons is viewed as a moral imperative and a step towards building a more peaceful and just world.
- **Environment Pollution:** Nuclear weapons testing and potential use can have devastating environmental consequences, including radioactive contamination of land, air, and water.

Arguments Against Nuclear Disarmament

- **Deterrence:** Proponents of nuclear deterrence argue that possessing nuclear weapons serves as a powerful deterrent against potential adversaries, preventing conflicts and maintaining strategic stability.
- **National Security:** Possessing nuclear arsenals provides a form of insurance against potential threats and enhances the ability to protect the interests and sovereignty of a country in an uncertain international environment.
- For these countries, relinquishing nuclear weapons could be perceived as weakening their security posture and leaving them vulnerable to external threats.
- **Strategic Stability:** Nuclear weapons are often seen as instruments for maintaining strategic stability between rival nuclear-armed states.
- **Verification and Compliance:** Critics argue that without robust verification mechanisms and effective enforcement measures, countries may exploit disarmament agreements for strategic advantage.
- **Geopolitical Realities:** Deep-rooted mistrust, unresolved conflicts, and strategic competition among states make it difficult to envision a scenario in which all countries would willingly and simultaneously relinquish their nuclear weapons.

India's Stance on Nuclear Disarmament

- India has argued that any country's possession of nuclear weapons poses a threat to global security, and that the only way to ensure peace and stability is for all nuclear weapons to be destroyed.

- India is **not a signatory to the NPT**, and stated that the NPT is **discriminatory** and perpetuates a two-tiered system of nuclear haves and have-nots by unfairly restricting access to peaceful nuclear technology for non-nuclear weapon states.
- **National Security:** India's nuclear weapons programme is a legitimate expression of its national sovereignty, and that India has the right to defend itself against potential threats.
 - ♦ India's nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation policy is complex and nuanced, reflecting the country's desire **for security and recognition**, as well as its commitment to global **disarmament and non-proliferation**.

Conclusion

- India's stance on nuclear disarmament is a delicate balance between its commitment to a nuclear-free world and its own strategic interests. While it continues to advocate for global disarmament, it also maintains a robust nuclear weapons program for its own security.
- This complex position reflects the challenges faced by many countries in the pursuit of a nuclear-free world.

Mains Practice Question

[Q] How do you think India's No-First-Use policy contributes to the global goal of nuclear disarmament, and what challenges do you foresee in maintaining this stance in the face of evolving geopolitical dynamics?

