

9th Annual SYP Conference - 20th March 2026

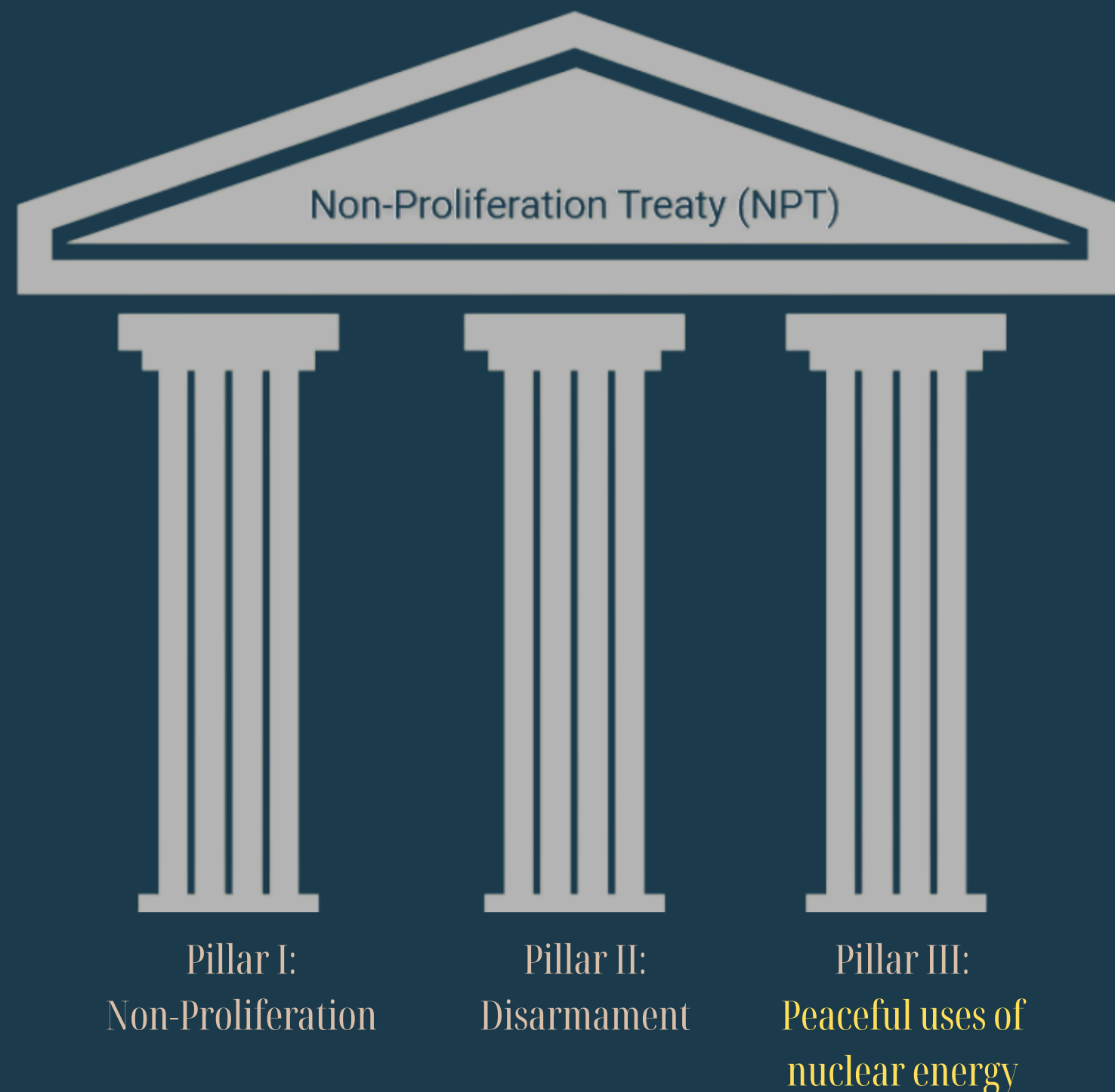
Assessing the Potential of NPT Pillar III to Prevent proliferation in the Era of a Nuclear Renaissance

PABLO JOSÉ PÉREZ CAÑAVATE - AFRICAN CENTER FOR SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY (AFRICISIS)



Koeberg Nuclear Power Plant, South Africa. Source: The Africa Daily Post (2024)

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) - Pillar III



1967 cutoff & The Grand Bargain

ARTICLE IV

1. Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of this Treaty.

Source: Non-Proliferation Treaty

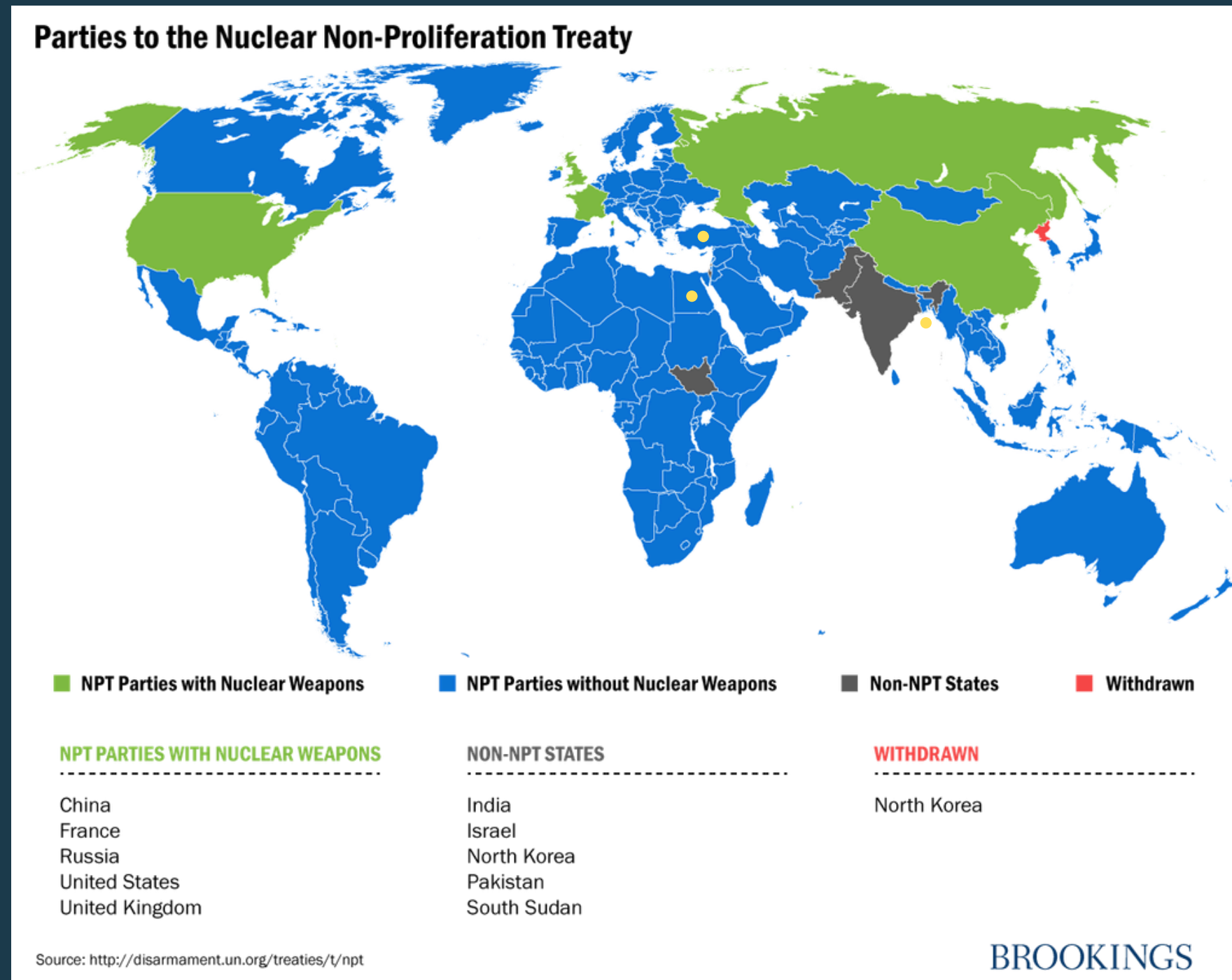
Emphasizing that nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of its States Parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination,

Source: Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

13. The provisions of this Treaty shall be implemented in a manner which avoids hampering the economic and technological development of the States Parties for further development of the application of atomic energy for peaceful purposes.

Source: The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

What is in it for non-nuclear weapon states (I)



Active Construction (First Plants): ●

- Bangladesh: Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.
- Egypt: El Dabaa Nuclear Power Plant.
- Turkey: Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant.

• Advanced Planning & Potential:

- Poland
- Kazakhstan
- Uzbekistan
- Saudi Arabia

• Emerging Interest & Feasibility Studies:

- Africa: Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda
- Asia/Middle East: Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Jordan
- Europe: Estonia
- Americas: Jamaica

Source: World Nuclear Association (2025)

What is in it for non-nuclear weapon states (II)

The Non-Proliferation Regime is under increasing pressure. However, the current momentum behind nuclear energy presents an opportunity to reinforce the Treaty's "grand bargain"

- If states exist in a world where strong prevails and no meaningful incentives are offered for renouncing the right to develop nuclear weapons, the value of the Treaty itself could come into question.

Does this mean nuclear proliferation?

Not all states face the same threats, contexts, or conditions.

- Nonetheless, states may choose less compliant, supportive, or even withdraw - Further weakening the Treaty

Wildcard Hypothesis

- 5 Nuclear Weapon States (NWS)
- 5 Nuclear-Armed States (potentially one more)
- A reduced number of Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS)



"The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must".

Source: [Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War](#) (416 B.C)

The other side of the coin - A Permanent Tension

Implications of Civilian Nuclear Technology Expansion:

- Dual-use concerns
- Nuclear latency risks

Expansion of nuclear technology into more volatile environments and less stable regimes:

- Challenges related to export control regimes and the transport of nuclear materials
- Emerging nuclear security threats
- Political constraints associated with nuclear cooperation

Wildcard Hypothesis

- How many conflicts are we willing to risk or engage in based on the existence—or potential development—of weapons of mass destruction?



Source: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School (2017)

Potential Solution - Next Steps



(Partially)

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The non-proliferation regime is sustained by a “grand bargain” centred on the peaceful use of nuclear energy—an established international norm

- Aggressive behaviour by NWS
- Renewed momentum behind nuclear energy (“nuclear renaissance”)

While these trends are not inherently contradictory, aggressive behaviour risks weakening the non-proliferation regime, whereas nuclear energy momentum offers opportunities for development for NNWS

No definitive solution for great power competition or development challenges; however, it can demonstrate to NNWS that the IAEA and the NPT provide tangible benefits and incentives for cooperation

At the same time, expansion implies risks, particularly related to dual-use concerns and nuclear security

A potential way forward is to reinforce the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in promoting the safe, secure, and responsible use of nuclear energy among interested states