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China's warning shots with minerals that run the world

(The Hindu, 26-09-24)

What recent actions has China taken regarding critical minerals?

- Announced restrictions on antimony exports in August 2023
- Curbed exports of gallium and germanium in 2023
- Restricted export of high-purity graphite materials
- Limited export of rare earth processing technologies

Why are China's actions concerning for other countries?

- China dominates critical mineral supply chains:
 - Controls 60% of rare earth production
 - Controls 60% of critical minerals production
 - Controls 80% of processing worldwide
- Many countries, including India, EU, Japan, and the US, are strategically vulnerable due to dependence on these minerals

How has China's approach to critical minerals exports evolved?

- Moved from politicization to weaponization of mineral exports
- Using mineral resources as a political tool and foreign policy objective
- Responding to US and Western actions with reciprocal measures
- Demonstrating its status as a mineral power to remind the West of their dependency

What are the implications for India?

- India is heavily dependent on imports of critical minerals like lithium, nickel, cobalt, and copper
- Import costs for these minerals reached around ₹34,000 crore in FY23
- India's mineral demand is expected to grow, potentially increasing vulnerability
- The situation serves as a wake-up call for Indian policymakers to take precautionary measures

Can you answer the following question?

Discuss potential strategies India could adopt to reduce its dependency and enhance its mineral security, considering China's dominance in critical minerals.

Taking stock of global nuclear disarmament

(The Hindu, 26-09-24)

What is the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and how does it differ from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)?

- TPNW, also known as the Ban Treaty, came into force in 2021
- It prohibits developing, testing, producing, stockpiling, transferring, using, deploying, keeping, or threatening to use nuclear weapons
- Goes beyond the NPT, which only bans proliferation and is silent on nuclear use and deterrence

What is the current status of the TPNW and its global support?

- As of July 2024, 70 states had ratified the treaty
- 27 more had signed but not yet ratified
- Total support from 97 states represents almost 50% of states bound to legal frameworks on weapons of mass destruction

How has the concept of nuclear deterrence been challenged recently?

- Russia's nuclear threats during the Ukraine invasion were countered without overtly nuclear responses
- China publicly opposed Russia's nuclear sabre-rattling despite their "friendship without limits"
- These events contradict justifications for continued nuclear possession

What is India's stance on nuclear treaties, and how does it relate to the TPNW?

- India has not signed the NPT, perceiving it as discriminatory
- India has not actively undermined the NPT despite not signing it
- The article suggests nuclear possessors, including India, could similarly avoid challenging the TPNW while not joining it

Can you answer the following question?

Evaluate the potential impact of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on global nuclear disarmament efforts.

