

US NUCLEAR HYPOCRISY: BAD FOR THE US, BAD FOR THE WORLD

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Every five years the parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty meet in a review conference to further the non-proliferation and disarmament goals of the treaty. This year the conference ended in a spectacular failure with no final document and no agreement on moving forward. The failure of the treaty conference is overwhelmingly attributable to the nuclear policies of the Bush administration, which has disavowed previous US nuclear disarmament commitments under the treaty. The Bush administration does not seem to grasp the hypocrisy of pressing other nations to forego their nuclear options, while failing to fulfill its own obligations under the disarmament provisions of the treaty.

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By David Krieger

Every five years the parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty meet in a review conference to further the non-proliferation and disarmament goals of the treaty. This year the conference ended in a spectacular failure with no final document and no agreement on moving forward. For the first ten days of the conference, the US resisted agreement on an agenda that made any reference to past commitments.

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obligations under the disarmament provisions of the treaty.

The treaty is crumbling under the double standards of American policy, and may not be able to recover from the rigid "do-as-I-say, not-as-I-do" positions of the Bush administration. These policies are viewed by most of the world as high-level nuclear hypocrisy.

Paul Meyer, the head of Canada's delegation to the treaty conference, reflected on the conference, "The vast majority of states have to be acknowledged, but we did not get that kind of diplomacy from the US."

Former UK Foreign Minister Robin Cook also singled out the Bush administration in explaining the failure of the conference. "How strange," he wrote, "that no delegation should have worked harder to frustrate agreement on what needs to be done than the representatives of George Bush."

What the US did at the treaty conference was to point the finger at Iran and North Korea, while refusing to discuss or even acknowledge its own failure to meet its obligations under the treaty. Five years ago, at the 2000 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, the parties to the treaty, including the US, agreed to 13 Practical Steps for Nuclear Disarmament. Under the Bush administration, nearly all of these obligations have been disavowed.

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Although President Clinton signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1996, the Bush administration does not support it and refused to allow

ratification of this treaty, which is part of the 13 Practical Steps, to even be discussed at the 2005 review conference. The parties to the treaty are aware that the Bush administration is seeking funding from Congress to continue work on new earth penetrating nuclear weapons ("bunker busters"), while telling other nations not to develop nuclear arms.

They are also aware that the Bush administration has withdrawn from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in order to pursue a destabilizing missile defense program, and has not supported a verifiable Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, although the US had agreed to support these treaties in the 13 Practical Steps.

The failure of this treaty conference makes nuclear proliferation more likely, including proliferation to terrorist organizations that cannot be deterred from using the weapons. The fault for this failure does not lie with other governments as the Bush administration would have us believe. It does not lie with Egypt for seeking consideration of previous promises to achieve a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone.

Nor does the fault lie with Iran for seeking to enrich uranium for its nuclear energy program, as is done by many other states, including the US, under the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It would no doubt be

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preferable to have the enrichment of uranium and the separation of plutonium, both of which can be used for nuclear weapons programs, done under strict international controls, but this requires a change in the treaty that must be applicable to all parties, not just to those singled out by the US.

Nor can the fault be said to lie with those states that, having given up their option to develop nuclear weapons, sought renewed commitments from the nuclear weapons states not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states. It is hard to imagine a more reasonable request. Yet the US has refused to relinquish the option of first use of nuclear weapons, even against non-nuclear weapons states.

The fault for the failure of the treaty conference lies clearly with the Bush administration, which must take full responsibility for undermining the security of every American by its double standards and nuclear hypocrisy.

The American people must understand the full magnitude of the Bush administration's failure at the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. This may not happen because the administration has been so remarkably successful in spinning the news to suit its unilateralist, militarist and triumphalist worldviews.

As Americans, we can not afford to wait until we experience an American

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Hiroshima before we wake up to the very real dangers posed by US nuclear policies. We must demand the reversal of these policies and the resumption of constructive engagement with the rest of the world.

David Krieger is president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (www.wagingpeace.org). He has written extensively on nuclear dangers.