



Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Parties Meet in New York

By Arjun Makhijani

Transcript of radio commentary that aired in May 2004 on [KUNM](#) public radio 89.9 fm in Albuquerque.

One more time, the parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, or [NPT](#), have gathered at the United Nations in New York to consider the state of that treaty. They're meeting at a time when the treaty is fraying from the twin assaults of the U.S. nuclear weapons establishment, which is itching to get its hands on new nukes, and proliferators in sundry places [who] seem to be equally busy trying to get their hands on nukes, new or old.

Four years ago, the United States, along with the four other nuclear weapons states that are parties to the [NPT](#), pledged to reduce their reliance on nuclear weapons, and to commit to irreversible reductions in their numbers. Instead, the United States has now embarked on the road to designing new weapons, called Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrators. It wants to build a huge new bomb factory for the mass manufacture of nuclear weapons. And the principle of irreversibility has fallen by the wayside. The Bush administration in increasing readiness to test bombs once more, also flying in the face of treaty commitments. Do-as-I-say-and-not-as-I-do is the watchword. This may seem an option at a time when the United States has more military muscle than any other country or any combination of countries. But it is not an option. It simply isn't working.

North Korea has learned a perverse lesson from Iraq: you won't be attacked if you already have nuclear weapons – and indications are that North Korea does have them. The U.S. policy of pre-emptive war and nuclear threats is stoking fears and, in reaction, nuclear ambitions. I have little doubt that from Iran to Brazil, the nuclear hawks are gaining the upper hand in their countries, as they did in India in 1971, when the United States sent a nuclear-armed aircraft carrier, threatening India during the South Asian war of that year.

Nuclear threats have been at the leading edge of nuclear proliferation. They are not a solution to a problem; they are the problem. They are paving the way to nuclear chaos. Stemming proliferation requires that those who want to give up nuclear weapons must become politically stronger in their home countries. That means, first of all, that they must be far stronger in the United States itself. Leadership by example of nuclear threats and nuclear bombings got the world into this mess. Only leadership by the contrary example of a determination to achieve universal nuclear disarmament can get us out it.

For more on security issues, see the website of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, www.ieer.org. This is Arjun Makhijani.

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Published on 2004-05-29

Last modified on 2012-05-16