**The Toothless Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty**

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Every five years or so the United Nations hosts a foreign minister level conference to review the implementation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). The United Nations has been hosting the latest such review conference this month.

This year, Iranian strongman Mahmoud Ahmadinejad decided to join the party. He delivered, on the first morning of the review conference, his customary condemnation of Israel and of the United States while defending his country’s nuclear program.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke later the same day, accusing Iran of being the only country attending the UN review conference that is acting with impunity when held to account by the International Atomic Energy Agency and Security Council. Iran, she said, is consistently violating its obligations under the NPT. That was a good start, but then she rhetorically crouched into a defensive position.

Clinton said that President Obama had come to office with “an open hand” extended to the Iranian regime. We “reached out” in many ways, she said, without elaborating and without acknowledging the fact that we have wasted over a year in this futile exercise while Iran marches on towards developing nuclear weapons.

Then, in order to show how transparent the United States really is, Clinton announced that the Obama administration had decided to unilaterally reveal the number of nuclear arms in our arsenal. She reiterated Obama’s unilateral pledge to develop no new nuclear weapons. And, in an implied threat to Israel, Clinton said that the United States was “prepared to support practical measures” towards the objective of a nuclear-free Middle East – a stalking horse pushed by Egypt and other Muslim countries in the region to force Israel to give up its suspected nuclear arsenal without any means of assuring that Iran or the other Islamic countries would desist from pursuing their own nuclear arms ambitions. This was not just feel-good rhetoric. U.S. officials are reportedly in talks with Egypt over a plan to make the Middle East a nuclear-free zone.

Some have criticized Israel for not joining the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and refusing to declare its suspected nuclear arsenal. However, Israel has observed the conduct of rogue states that have joined the NPT like North Korea, which quit the treaty once it had successfully tested nuclear weapons, and Iran which regularly flouts its NPT obligations. Faced with existential threats from Iran and its armed terrorist surrogates, Israel is correct in asserting that there must be real peace in the Middle East before agreeing to any nuclear-free zone.

Hillary Clinton also mentioned in her speech at the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty review conference that the Obama administration would submit Protocols to the Senate for ratification regarding nuclear-free zones in Africa and the South Pacific. However, our Secretary of State said nothing about maintaining a nuclear-free zone in Latin America even though there is a real threat of the spread of nuclear arms technology from Iran and North Korea to Venezuela. The reason for Clinton’s silence on Latin America, I believe, was not to embarrass Brazil, whose foreign minister addressed the UN conference immediately after Clinton.

Brazil, according to some reports, is busy moving forward with its own nuclear development program. It has already had three secret military nuclear programs between 1975 and 1990, and is now embarking on the building of nuclear-powered submarines. During his election campaign, Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva criticized the NPT, calling it unfair and obsolete. Although Brazil has signed the treaty, it has placed restrictions on inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency and has defended Iran’s nuclear program.

President Obama has called Lula, as the Brazilian president is called, “my man.” Obama said he “loved this guy,” calling him “the most popular politician in the world.” Yet Lula is the same man whose pals include Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez. He is the same man who said that there was “no fraud in the Iranian election,” congratulating President Ahmadinejad on his stolen election. He is the same man who decided to open a Brazilian embassy in North Korea shortly after Kim Jong Il’s missile testing. And he is the same man who laid flowers in the terrorist Yasser Arafat’s grave, but refused to follow the custom of other visiting presidents to Israel of laying down flowers in the grave of Theodor Herzl, revered in Israel as its founder.

Obama loves Lula and trusts him more than he trusts the leader of one of our closest allies, Israel. He is willing to press Israel to give up its nuclear deterrent in pursuit of a nuclear-free Middle East that Iran is certain to ignore, while giving Lula (not to mention Hugo Chavez in Venezuela) a free pass to possibly pursue a nuclear arms capability.

Hillary Clinton’s speech to the UN Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty review conference was yet another demonstration of the appeasement policies that the Obama administration is recklessly pursuing. It wants to show the world the virtues of nonproliferation by unilateral actions that put our security at risk.

The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty is ineffective and Clinton even admitted in her speech that it would not be fixed anytime soon to give it the enforcement teeth that it would need. Yet the treaty appears to be a centerpiece of President Obama’s nuclear disarmament policy along with unilateral actions he is taking.

Not once did we hear Clinton mention the only multilateral mechanism that has proven effective in preventing dangerous nuclear proliferation – the Proliferation Security Initiative. This Bush administration initiative involved naval surveillance and interdiction to stop the transport of nuclear arms materials and missile technology to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concern. It was used successfully, for example, to effectively end Libya’s nuclear ambitions.

President Obama has expressed support for enhancing the PSI, but there is scant evidence to date that he means it. Instead of emphasizing muscular diplomacy to stop dangerous nuclear proliferation backed by a credible threat of interdiction, Obama wants to lead the way to total nuclear disarmament. He may lead the way, but the world’s dictators who get their hands on nuclear materials will surely not follow.