

# **Nuclear Hypocrisy: Iran, the United States, and the Perils of Proliferation**

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Once upon a time, not so long ago, nuclear weapons were widely considered to be unusable. Even proponents of nuclear deterrence, commonly and correctly referred to as the balance of terror, had no real desire to unleash the power of the atom. In the grand paradox of the Cold War, the very existence of nuclear weapons—and the threat to use them *en masse*—served to prevent their use.

Indeed, apart from the horrific bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, menacing mushroom clouds have not risen above cities or battlefields. In the history of the human race, it is difficult, if not impossible, to think of another weapon, especially a weapon as destructive as the nuclear bomb, which has gone unused for so long.

This is not to say, however, that there was no preparation or thought given to using nuclear weapons over the past six decades. To the contrary, a significant amount of war planning was done in the United States and the Soviet Union (and now Russia), and presumably in Britain, France, China, and Israel. Scenarios were devised and refined, war games were run and re-run, targets were identified, and vast databases assembled to prepare for the use of the ultimate weapon. During every major conflict following World

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War II, the United States (and perhaps Russia), gave serious consideration to using nuclear weapons to defend its interests.

Then there were the accidents and close calls, when the weapons and systems we so carefully designed to protect us, nearly ended up hastening our demise. Most of us are familiar with the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, rightly said to be the closest we've come to nuclear war. But how many remember, or even know about the incident during the Suez crisis in 1956? That's when the U.S. military received four separate indications that Soviet forces might be preparing to intervene on Egypt's side (against British and French forces), which in the heat of the moment could have triggered the activation of NATO's nuclear strike plans against the Soviet Union. Fortunately, further investigation revealed that each indication had a completely innocent explanation, including that a fleet of unidentified aircraft flying over Turkey was, in fact, a flock of swans.

Then there were the early warning system computer failures at the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) in 1979 and 1980, one caused by someone running an exercise tape simulating a nuclear attack which fed data into the live display screens at four command posts, the other by the failure of a 46 cent computer chip, leading U.S. commanders to fear a Soviet nuclear attack and begin preparations for a counterattack.

And what about the incident in 1983, triggered in part by a NATO command post exercise codenamed ABLE ARCHER, in which high-level officials, including the secretary of defense, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and even the President and Vice President were to have participated? This exercise had taken place in previous years, but this one included a practice drill that took NATO forces through a full-scale simulated release of nuclear weapons.

As it happens, two years earlier, the KGB, fearful and even somewhat paranoid of the Reagan administration's nuclear buildup, had launched Operation RYAN (an acronym in Russian for nuclear missile attack) to monitor and provide worldwide early warning indications of U.S. preparations for war, especially a surprise attack. KGB headquarters misinterpreted ABLE ARCHER as the real thing and asked its operatives in Western Europe for confirmation and further evaluation. Thankfully, the lack of further indicators, such as unusual troop or equipment movements, along with a timely tip from a Soviet double agent regarding the high level

of concern raised within the KGB by the exercise, kept things from escalating further.

Nor were such incidents confined to the Cold War. Early one morning in January 1995, Norway and the United States jointly launched a four-stage rocket to study the *aurora borealis*, the Northern Lights, from an island off Norway's coast. As it rose above the horizon, the rocket was picked up by Russian early-warning radars, which duly alerted a command center in Moscow. President Boris Yeltsin and his defense minister were both notified and for the first time Yeltsin's nuclear launch authorization briefcase, similar to the one, nicknamed the "Football," which accompanies the U.S. President wherever he goes, was activated. For five or six tense minutes, confusion reigned as officials attempted to gather additional information and, presumably, consider ordering a retaliatory response.

The Norwegian Foreign Ministry had sent a routine notification to Russia and 34 other countries in advance of the launch. But for reasons unknown the notification never reached the on duty officers manning and overseeing the early-warning system. Thus the research rocket was mistaken for a U.S. Trident II submarine-launched missile, which made the threat of greater concern because such missiles, when launched close to Russia, can reach their targets in as little as five minutes. Thankfully, the nuclear button was not pushed that day. After a few more minutes, beyond the time in which Moscow could have been destroyed had the attack been real, it was clear that the trajectory of the rocket was north, *away* from Russia. Another crisis was averted.

But now, more than 15 years after the end of the Cold War, when many people wrongly assumed that the nuclear threat had dissipated, nuclear weapons are back on our minds and on the front pages. And instead of worrying about an accidental nuclear war, we find ourselves pondering the possibility that nuclear weapons might be used deliberately by a nation or terrorist organization. Although such use would be confined to one or perhaps several weapons, and thus hardly come close to the massive worldwide devastation once possible during the Cold War, government officials and ordinary citizens alike believe this threat is more likely, partly because terrorists seem less rational and are not bound by nuclear deterrence, and partly because it's easier to envision an attack with one weapon than an attack with many.

Ask most people today what country presents the greatest nuclear threat and the response is likely to be Iran. Our government, the news media, and many policy experts have drummed this into us. Is this true and, if so, what can be done about it?

Iran does represent a threat, and we are in the midst of a crisis. But it is not a crisis about the nuclear bomb. It is a crisis about the nuclear nonproliferation regime, the international network of treaties and obligations that for more than 35 years has successfully prevented the spread of nuclear weapons.

As a party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), Iran insists it has the right to develop nuclear power technology for civilian purposes. And parties to the NPT do indeed have the right to nuclear power for non-military projects. But with that right comes the obligation to operate under the rules of the treaty. And Iran's illegal importation of gas centrifuge technology from the clandestine network operated by Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan; its unwillingness to allow routine monitoring and inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its decision in January to remove the IAEA's seals from its test centrifuge equipment; its on-again, off-again negotiations with Russia to abandon uranium enrichment activities in Iran and instead pursue this jointly, and under appropriate safeguards, at a facility in Russia; and its overheated rhetoric regarding Israel, have all created serious suspicions about Iran's true intentions. My own best guess, and it's one shared by some of my colleagues in the arms control community, is that Iran is seeking to acquire at least the capability to produce nuclear weapons, but that no decision to do so has yet been made.

In any case, Iran is *at best* 5-10 years away from being able to build a nuclear weapon, and that assumes it goes all out *and* encounters no serious technical obstacles along the way. At this point, Iran has only 164 test centrifuges, known as a cascade, machines which exploit the small differences in the atomic weights of different isotopes of uranium to enrich it to the level needed for use in a nuclear bomb. These were obtained from Pakistan and are currently part of a pilot enrichment facility in Natanz. The centrifuges have not operated flawlessly, and so Iran is some time away from being able to scale up its enrichment operations.

The pilot plant can hold as many as six 164-machine cascades, or about 1,000 centrifuges. But absent major modifications, the plant is not likely to

play a major role in the manufacture of highly-enriched uranium (HEU) for nuclear weapons. Iran has indicated it intends to start industrial operations soon at its underground Fuel Enrichment Plant. Its plans call for installing some 50,000 cascades in modules of 3,000. Should Iran pursue these plans, instead of reaching agreement with Russia to conduct joint enrichment operations there, it could eventually produce approximately 500 kilograms of HEU annually, or enough for about 25-30 weapons a year. Smaller scale operations are also possible. Just 1,500 centrifuges optimized to produce HEU could generate enough for about one weapon a year.

An Iranian bomb does not yet exist. Neither is it inevitable, although at least one senior U.S. official thinks otherwise, telling the *New York Times* last month, "Sooner or later it's going to happen. Our job is to make sure it's later." For the time being, our efforts must focus on how to stop Iran from going nuclear, not on how best to deter it if it does. The key to success is in correctly understanding the Iranian government's motivations and being willing to engage with Iran and reach a negotiated diplomatic settlement. Unfortunately, the United States government shows little interest in doing this.

Countries seek nuclear weapons for various reasons. In Iran's case, there are at least three. First, Iran clearly views Israel as a threat. Israel has an unacknowledged arsenal of 75-200 nuclear weapons, deliverable by aircraft, ballistic missile, and cruise missile. Iran's leaders may view the acquisition of nuclear weapons as a means to deter Israel. It is possible that some may also seek the destruction of Israel, but any serious move in that direction would almost certainly result in attacks on Iran by Israel and perhaps the United States, factors that would weigh heavily in rational minds.

Second, Iran may seek to deter or threaten the United States. The U.S. government after all, has made no secret of its distaste for Iran's theocratic regime. Four years ago, President Bush nominated Iran as a charter member of his "axis of evil." And with more than 130,000 U.S. troops operating across the border in Iraq, and senior U.S. officials having openly talked in 2003 of taking on Iran after overthrowing Saddam Hussein's government, the Iranian leadership has reason to be concerned about U.S. intentions.

Third, as with India's development of nuclear weapons, there is an element of prestige and national pride at work. Many Iranians now support the government's efforts because they see acquisition of nuclear technology as

the key to respect by the Western world and the means to assert Iranian influence in the Middle East. It is also worth noting that Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is not universally popular in his country. Many were in fact surprised when he won election last June. But by creating an international showdown over nuclear energy to stoke the fires of nationalism, he has been able to divert attention from the state of the Iranian economy, among other things.

This showdown may be ill-advised, and it could well backfire on Ahmadinejad if Iran becomes more isolated internationally as a result. But despite the various logical reasons why Iran might want to obtain nuclear weapons (and I want to make clear that I am not at all condoning what Iran is doing), or why it might want to provoke a fight with western nations, many observers, including what I suspect is a large number of people in the United States, find Iran's motivations to be irrational, in a word insane.

This was exemplified by an editorial cartoon that ran in the *Chicago Tribune* and other newspapers last month:



The cartoon, by Doug Marlette, features a maniacal-looking bearded Semitic man labeled "Iran" holding a butterfly net and chasing the symbol of atomic energy, which in this context seems to refer to nuclear weapons. Running

right behind him, carrying a bigger net, is an angry-looking white man whose identification tag reads "Bellevue Mental Hosp[ital]." The not-so-subtle message is that Iran is literally crazy for seeking nuclear weapons.

Would the *Tribune* have published the cartoon if the apparently escaped mental patient were labeled "Israel," to pick a country at random from the region?

To digress for just a moment, there are eight countries that have nuclear arsenals—the United States, Russia, Britain, France, China, India, Israel, and Pakistan. Two of them, the United States, and Russia, together possess nearly 26,000 nuclear weapons, 95 percent of the world's total. More than 15 years after the end of the Cold War, some 11,500 of these weapons remain operational and on active alert, ready to be fired within minutes at their pre-programmed targets.

To put this in perspective, if the firepower contained in just the operational U.S. nuclear stockpile could somehow be segregated into Hiroshima-size weapons (15 kilotons, or 15,000 tons/2,204,620 pounds of TNT apiece), the U.S. arsenal would consist of slightly more than 91,500 Hiroshima-size bombs. If these weapons were then exploded at the rate of one each minute, or 1,440 every day, it would take two months (63.6 days, to be precise) to use up the entire stockpile.

Moreover, the fiscal 2007 budget submitted to Congress last month makes clear the Bush administration is seeking the down payment on a controversial, unnecessary, and very expensive plan to resume production of new nuclear weapons with the goal of rebuilding the entire U.S. nuclear arsenal by 2030.

How crazy is that?

Iran can also now look to India as an example of how to break the rules and get away with it. After India conducted a series of provocative underground nuclear weapons tests nearly eight years ago (24 years after India first demonstrated a nuclear weapons capability), the Clinton administration imposed sanctions on India and on Pakistan, which had swiftly responded to India's provocation with a test series of its own. These sanctions were short-lived, however, even as India refused to negotiate away its arsenal, which like Pakistan's and Israel's exists outside the legal framework of the NPT.

Just two days ago, President Bush rewarded India (as well as the U.S. nuclear power industry) with a deal that tacitly accepts India's nuclear arsenal *and* grants it unprecedented access to nuclear technology, which will enable it to build even more weapons. Iranians may well be thinking to themselves, "If we are patient, play our cards right and make ourselves a valuable ally of the United States, this could be us in a decade or so."

This is, to put it mildly, not a helpful message to be sending when our paramount objective should be preventing the further spread or misuse of nuclear weapons and nuclear technology.

Not so long ago, nuclear weapons were considered inherently dangerous no matter who controlled them. U.S. policy concentrated on limiting the spread of such weapons regardless of who sought them. With the advent of the Bush administration, the approach has changed. Now the emphasis is on regime change, to prevent nuclear weapons from falling into the "wrong" hands. President Bush made this clear in a pre-election debate with Senator John Kerry on September 30, 2004. When asked to identify "the single most serious threat to the national security of the United States," Bush answered, "...the biggest threat facing this country is weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a terrorist network." Senator Kerry's response, by contrast, made no such distinction. Replied Kerry, "Nuclear proliferation."

Among the many problems with this approach is that the "bad guys" and the "good guys" can switch places with a change in government leadership. This is, in fact, what that unnamed senior U.S. official is clearly hoping for with regard to Iran at some point down the road.

Pakistan is another case in point. For more than 20 years, successive U.S. administrations have turned a blind eye to Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, first because it was an ally against the Soviet Union following the invasion of neighboring Afghanistan and then, after 2001, because it supported U.S. efforts to overthrow the Taliban and oust al Qaeda. Even the stunning revelations about A.Q. Khan's nuclear black market have not caused the United States to fundamentally alter its relationship with Pakistan, although President Bush has ruled out, for the present, a nuclear cooperation agreement similar to the one just negotiated with India.

During the past two decades, there have been two military coups and, more recently, Islamic extremists have targeted President Pervez Musharraf for

assassination, which he has narrowly escaped at least twice. Pakistan's government may be friendly now, but what happens if Islamic extremists take over? At the very least, a lot of people will be asking why we didn't do more to eliminate Pakistan's arsenal when it was still possible.

Another problem with the Bush administration's approach to nuclear nonproliferation is its disdain and even contempt for international law and diplomacy. Early in his first term, President Bush simply abandoned the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty, saying it was a relic of the Cold War, when the true relics of that time are the more than 26,000 nuclear weapons that exist worldwide, along with the policies and mindsets that still contemplate and anticipate their use. While pledging not to resume nuclear weapons testing, the administration refuses to push for ratification of the widely supported 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, a key means of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. It has also reduced and even tried to eliminate funding for a worldwide network of sensors to verify and enforce the treaty by detecting nuclear explosions, even extremely small ones, in the atmosphere, underground, or underwater.

And we must not forget that the administration also actively impeded and denigrated the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency in the months and weeks before attacking Iraq. We now know, of course, that the IAEA inspectors were right about the complete lack of any nuclear weapons or even an active weapons development program in Iraq, something they could have proved had they been allowed to complete their work. The irony is that what led to the discovery and dismantlement of Iraq's nuclear program in the first place was the inspection regime put in place after the first Gulf War in 1991.

Most troubling of all, the administration has reneged on commitments made by the Clinton administration to honor the letter and spirit of the NPT by working to further reduce and eventually eliminate the U.S. nuclear arsenal. At the most recent review of this landmark treaty in 2005, the Bush administration disavowed this commitment and, even worse, undermined the ability of the assembled delegates to achieve consensus on anything of significance.

The primary reason we have just eight nuclear-armed states, instead of the 15 or 20 that President Kennedy (speculating in the early 1960s) worried might exist by 1975, is the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. That agreement

convinced countries that might have “gone nuclear” to abstain by offering them incentives and by committing the then five nuclear nations to “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament....” And while the arms race is clearly over and the number of weapons worldwide has decreased by nearly 60 percent (or more than 38,000), that still leaves more than 26,000 weapons, and for most people that’s 26,000 too many. The more than 180 non-nuclear signatories to the NPT have been patient, but it is clear they will not wait indefinitely for the nuclear powers to fulfill their obligations.

In lieu of diplomacy and the rule of law, the administration in 2001 and 2002 implemented a series of policies and directives aimed at using coercion and military force to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. This is known as counterproliferation. Not surprisingly, the military takes the lead in this effort.

There are many problems with relying on counterproliferation rather than nonproliferation. For one, the focus tends to be on eliminating weapons or weapons programs rather than preventing their acquisition in the first place. But the biggest problem today with the U.S. approach is that the administration has very little credibility on this issue. By initiating a preventative war with Iraq three years ago this month on the pretext that it was or would imminently become a nuclear threat, only to discover that no such threat existed, the administration has made it significantly harder to go after countries that are known—and were known in a less ambiguous way before the war—to represent bigger proliferation threats. Now, when the administration starts proffering the same arguments against Iran that it made against Iraq, the international community is skeptical. It is also wary of once again using the United Nations as a staging ground for another preventive war, even one that might be more limited.

The United States undercuts its own arguments in other ways. The Bush administration’s Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), completed in late 2001, requires “nuclear strike capabilities” for “immediate, potential, or unexpected contingencies” involving North Korea, Iran, Syria, Libya, Russia, and China, which was actually dropped from nuclear war plans in the 1980s. Immediate nuclear contingencies include “a North Korean attack on South Korea or a military confrontation over the status of Taiwan.”

The Nuclear Posture Review also calls for developing “deliberate pre-planned and practiced missions” to attack an adversary’s weapons of mass destruction facilities preemptively or in response to an attack on the United States or its allies. And it promotes the rebuilding of the nuclear weapons production complex, largely shuttered since the early 1990s, and the development of new nuclear weapons to support such planning.

Such new weapons include the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, a high-yield nuclear weapon concept intended to hold at risk and destroy hardened underground targets, such as arms bunkers or command and control installations, without causing significant damage, including radioactive fallout, at the surface. Addressing what’s wrong with this concept would require more time than I have today, so suffice it to say that such a weapon is physically impossible. It is a fantasy dreamed up by people desperate to find new uses for increasingly irrelevant weapons, people who want to make the use of nuclear weapons more palatable, more politically acceptable, by, in effect, neutering them, taking away the very qualities that make them what they are. Congress has terminated this program as unnecessary and incompatible with U.S. policy, but it may yet re-appear in the future when the political climate is more favorable, perhaps under a different name.

More troubling is the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) program. This project is based on the false premise that U.S. warheads will only grow more unreliable over time and that they therefore must be replaced if nuclear deterrence is to remain viable. Supporters of the program, which will cost \$25 million this year and is still in an exploratory phase, also argue that it is simply too expensive to maintain 12 different warhead types in the existing arsenal. Developing a standardized, simpler, more rugged warhead design, they say, will reduce production and maintenance costs and improve reliability.

Originally proposed by Congress in late 2004, the RRW is now part of a broader effort initiated within the Department of Energy, which is responsible for the development, production, testing, and dismantlement of nuclear weapons, to reconfigure the entire nuclear weapons production complex, which last built new warheads in 1990 and last tested them in 1992. This effort is very roughly estimated to cost at least \$150 billion over the next 24 years.

In December 2002, the administration released its *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction* in unclassified form (it was based on classified National Security Presidential Directive 17, signed by President Bush in May 2002). This document builds on the Nuclear Posture Review and on the administration's *National Security Strategy for the United States*, released in September of that year.

Signaling an expansion of the administration's preventive/preemptive war doctrine, the document declares that, "We must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients *before* they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies and friends." It continues, "Given the goals of rogue states and terrorists, the United States can no longer solely rely on a *reactive* posture as we have in the past.... *We cannot let our enemies strike first.*"

But the document goes further still in marrying a preventive/preemptive strategy with nuclear weapons.

"Today's threats are far more diverse and less predictable than those of the past.... As a consequence, we require new methods of deterrence.... The United States will continue to make clear that it reserves the right to respond with overwhelming force—*including potentially nuclear weapons*—to the use of WMD against the United States, our forces abroad, and our friends and allies."

"Because deterrence may not succeed, and because of the potentially devastating consequences of WMD use...U.S. military forces and appropriate civilian agencies must have the capability to defend against WMD-armed adversaries, including in appropriate cases through preemptive measures. *This requires capabilities to detect and destroy an adversary's WMD assets before these weapons are used.*"

A Top Secret appendix (not released), authorizes attacks on Iran, Syria, North Korea, and other countries believed to be close to acquiring WMD or long-range missiles capable of delivering them. Attacks would be ordered to prevent the use of WMD or the transfer of WMD or WMD components into or out of such countries.

Now put yourself in the shoes of Iran, North Korea, China, or even Russia. How would you respond to a country that pledges allegiance to the concept of nuclear nonproliferation but which:

- Shows no interest in verifiably dismantling its stockpile of 10,000 warheads and bombs, 5,300 of which remain operational;
- Continues to maintain some 2,500 warheads on quick launch alert, ready for firing within minutes of receiving a launch order;
- Publicly promulgates a strategy for preemptive nuclear attack and even identifies possible target countries;
- Initiates plans to rebuild its nuclear weapons factories for the express purpose of churning out new warheads well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- Modernizes its warheads and delivery systems to increase their accuracy and effectiveness against hardened targets, something that only makes sense if the weapons are launched first;
- Is building a missile defense system which clearly has no current or even prospective capability to defeat an attack of anything more than a handful of ballistic missiles—if that—but which could prove quite useful in “mopping up” an adversary’s ragtag response to a U.S. first strike?

If you are and wish to remain a sovereign nation, you will retain what nuclear weapons you have or, lacking any, you will seek to acquire them as quickly as possible to deter the United States from attacking you. And this is, of course, what is happening. This is not to say that U.S. actions and policies are an excuse or the sole justification for the actions of other countries. But it is clear that U.S. policies and programs are exacerbating rather than ameliorating today’s dangerous trends in nuclear proliferation.

Worse, it is not just the so-called rogue states that are responding. China is considering options for augmenting its arsenal. Russia, hearkening back to its earlier existence as the Soviet Union, has increased its reliance on nuclear weapons, touted the development of a maneuvering warhead (to defeat any U.S. defensive system), and is preparing to roll out a new mobile ICBM. And in mid-January, French president Jacques Chirac announced that henceforth, France’s nuclear arsenal would protect not only France itself but also serve to guarantee certain “strategic supplies” necessary to the functioning of the nation. French analysts, among others, have interpreted this to mean oil, and specifically oil from Iran.

Yet amidst all this bad news, there are some surprisingly positive trends. There are now fewer operational nuclear weapons (approximately 12,300) worldwide than at any time since 1958. Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan all were persuaded to return to Russia the nuclear weapons they inherited after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Libya has recently abandoned its interest in developing nuclear weapons. No nation has tested nuclear weapons since 1998 despite the fact that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty has not yet entered into force. Meanwhile, the treaty's network of sensors continues to grow in capability each year.

Today, more than half of the earth has been declared a nuclear weapons free zone by one treaty or another, including much of the southern hemisphere. And Congress, after a prolonged period of somnolence and excessive deference to the executive branch, is finally exercising its constitutional authority on nuclear matters, including canceling the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, scrutinizing the Reliable Replacement Warhead, and raising strong objections to the just-signed U.S.-India nuclear cooperation agreement.

So what can be done?

When it comes to Iran, there are no really good choices. The key now is to unite the international community behind an effort to persuade the Iranian government that its actions are unacceptable and will not be tolerated and that serious penalties will accrue if it continues down this path. At the same time, the international community must demonstrate that important benefits will come Iran's way if it remains within the NPT and abandons its current uranium enrichment plans. Agreeing to Russia's proposal to host a joint uranium enrichment facility on Russian soil would be a welcome first step in that direction.

Subsequent steps will obviously depend on what Iran does next, but among the options under consideration are economic and political sanctions and military attack. There is insufficient time this morning to go into all possible permutations, but the key thing to keep in mind with sanctions is that they will only be effective if they are imposed by the United Nations and not individual countries. The U.N. Security Council cannot allow Iran to evade its obligations under the NPT. If it does, the legitimacy and future effectiveness of that treaty will be in serious jeopardy.

As for a military attack, notwithstanding all the recent news stories based on leaks or informed speculation from the United States and Israel (at least some of which seem designed to pressure Iran into modifying its behavior), it's important to understand that targeted strikes against Iran's nuclear infrastructure would only delay its program, not destroy it. The facilities are too widely dispersed, many are buried underground, and some are probably still unknown to military targeters. And a campaign of massive and sustained bombardment would seem to be out of the question.

The model for such an attack is the Israeli strike against Iraq's Osirak reactor in 1981, at a time when Iraq was pursuing the use of plutonium for nuclear weapons. That attack did destroy the reactor before it became operational, but it was not the success it was believed to be at the time or even today. After the attack, Saddam Hussein switched to the use of highly-enriched uranium and directed that the program be carried out in great secrecy. So successful was this approach that it was only after the first Gulf War that international inspectors discovered just how extensive the program was, and how close Iraq had come to building a bomb.

Moreover, an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities would be seen, inside Iran and by the Muslim world in general, as an attack on a sovereign state, rallying the Iranian people and much of the Muslim world against the attackers. Before seriously considering such an option, it is essential to ask how Iran would respond to attack and how we would respond to their response. If the answers to these questions don't show things getting better following an attack, it's time to try another approach.

Then there's the effort by the United States, announced recently by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, to spend \$75 million to encourage internal opposition to Iran's government. How ironic that the world's self-appointed advocate of democracy would support—much less publicly announce—an effort to destabilize a democratically elected government in a region where we have been promoting democracy! This paltry program seems doomed to failure because it will most likely delegitimize and thus hamper internal Iranian dissent while at the same time providing the Iranian government ample reason to harden its position and accelerate its nuclear program.

A better use of the State Department's time and money (our money, really) would be to use the United Nations to rally the world behind the cause of

nonproliferation, demonstrating that this is not just a regional problem but a global one. Then we could lead the way on strengthening the NPT, starting with renewing our commitment to nuclear disarmament and then moving on to close the loopholes in the treaty that allow parties to legally acquire everything necessary to produce nuclear weapons and then withdraw from the treaty with no penalty to develop such weapons free from the treaty's restrictions.

We should also abandon counterproliferation as our primary means of combating the spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear technology. Taking nonproliferation seriously means expanding and fully funding efforts like the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, which since the early 1990s has helped Russia to secure sizable quantities of nuclear weapons materials and destroy numerous nuclear delivery systems like ICBMs, bomber aircraft, and submarines. However, an influential 2004 Harvard study found less progress in this program in the years following 9/11 than in the years preceding it. The government should also heed the recommendations of a bipartisan 2001 task force, which recommended spending \$30 billion over 10 years, or \$3 billion a year, to eradicate the threat posed by unsecured or poorly secured nuclear weapons and weapons materials. Yet five years later, annual spending continues to be just over \$1 billion.

The United States should also work with Israel and the other nations of the Middle East to establish a nuclear weapon free zone in the region. This is clearly a long-term objective, but even agreeing to it as an objective, and beginning negotiations toward that end, could go a long way toward resolving some of the current dilemmas. As part of this process, Israel would have to acknowledge the existence of its nuclear stockpile.

The American people, and the Congress which represents them, must demand a reversal of the Bush administration's failed and inconsistent approach to nuclear proliferation. We cannot pick and choose whose nuclear weapons are acceptable and whose are not and expect any degree of success or safety. Neither can we have a successful policy by confronting proliferation one country at a time. We need a policy that treats countries equally, and fairly.

Lastly, as the undisputed sole superpower and the only country ever to use nuclear weapons, the United States has a unique responsibility when it comes to nuclear nonproliferation. We also have more to lose if the

nonproliferation regime collapses, or is allowed to deteriorate to such a point that it becomes meaningless.

Simply put, we must lead by example. If we, with our vastly superior conventional capabilities and inherent geographic advantages, insist on retaining and modernizing a nuclear arsenal in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and using it, among other things, to target those countries that would challenge us, other countries will naturally respond in kind. When combined with a systematic effort to devalue international agreements that constrain the spread of nuclear weapons, this is a recipe for nuclear disaster.

If, on the other hand, we abandon our six-decade embrace of the Bomb, devalue nuclear weapons as instruments of military and diplomatic policy, and demonstrate that such weapons actually contribute to instability and insecurity, we will be doing ourselves and the world a tremendous favor.