

Obama administration undermines UN disarmament efforts

Though the United States may have taken the lead in the international diplomatic initiative against Iran's nuclear program, the Obama administration has also taken the lead in undermining the United Nations' efforts to promote nuclear arms control and disarmament elsewhere.

In a series of moves that received very little media attention in this country, the United Nations General Assembly in December [adopted 57 resolutions](#) recommended by the U.N.'s Disarmament and International Security Committee. However, the United States, more than any other member state of the 193-member body, cast votes in opposition to many of these modest efforts.

Unlike resolutions adopted by the U.N. Security Council, resolutions of the General Assembly are nonbinding. At the same time, they are a strong indication of world opinion on key international issues. The Obama administration, therefore, has put itself on record that the U.S. is an outlier in the global consensus on the need to take stronger action against the nuclear threat.

For example, the U.S. was one of only seven countries to vote against a resolution calling for accelerating the implementation and monitoring of nuclear disarmament commitments and was one of only three countries to vote against a paragraph in the resolution emphasizing the importance of a successful review conference for the [Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty](#) (NPT) later this year.

In a resolution stressing the fundamental role of the NPT in achieving nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation and urging India, Israel and Pakistan to accede to it as non-nuclear-weapon states, the U.S. was the only country other than these three last NPT holdouts to vote against it. The U.S. was also the only country to join these three countries in voting against the call for them to place their nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

While the U.S. is willing to impose strict sanctions against Iran simply for having the potential of converting its thus-far peaceful nuclear energy program into a weapons program, the Obama administration is simultaneously willing to defend allied nations that -- unlike Iran -- have refused to sign the NPT and have already developed nuclear weapons. Indeed, the U.S. provides nuclear-capable jet fighters to all three countries, and President Barack Obama recently signed an expanded nuclear cooperation agreement with India.

Notwithstanding the end of the Cold War, both Russia and the U.S. still have several thousand nuclear weapons on high alert, which has long concerned those aware that the threat of a cataclysmic nuclear exchange is still with us. Unfortunately, the U.S. was one of only four countries to vote against a resolution calling on nuclear-armed countries to decrease the operational readiness of those systems. The Obama administration also placed the U.S. on record as the only country in the world to vote against a paragraph in that resolution encouraging nuclear-armed states to "promptly engage and consider the interests of non-nuclear-weapon States in further reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons systems."

In addition, the U.S. was one of only four countries to vote against a resolution calling for measures to prevent the placement of nuclear weapons in outer space. The U.S. was also one of only four countries opposing a

resolution calling for the establishment of a nuclear-free weapons zone in the southern hemisphere and for states with nuclear weapons to withdraw any reservations or interpretive declarations contrary to those treaties. And the Obama administration also placed the U.S. on record as one of only five countries to vote against a resolution calling on "Member States, international organizations and civil society to continue to enrich discussions on how to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations in the relevant United Nations bodies."

It has been more than 30 years since the [pastoral letter on war and peace](#) from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops put the church on record recognizing the immorality of nuclear weapons and the urgency of nuclear disarmament. The end of the Cold War less than a decade later gave hope that this was an achievable goal. Even traditional Cold Warriors like former secretaries of state Henry Kissinger and George Schultz have now gone on record recognizing the imperative of nuclear disarmament.

Despite being an unrivaled superpower with conventional military capabilities more powerful than the rest of the world combined, the U.S. still insists on undermining efforts to control and eliminate nuclear weapons.

The Obama administration's obstructionism is broader than that, however. U.S. opposition to efforts by the U.N.'s Disarmament and International Security Committee went beyond their efforts at nuclear arms control. For example, the U.S. cast one of only four negative votes against a resolution that called for providing assistance to countries affected by the use of ammunition containing depleted uranium, including identifying and managing contaminated sites and material.

And the U.S. was one of only two countries to vote against a resolution calling for a prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems for such weapons.

While the attention of the mainstream media, Congress and the American public continues to focus on Iran and whether the Obama administration was being tough enough in its negotiations with the Islamic State group, there has been virtually no attention to our own government's far more dangerous diplomatic efforts to undermine multilateral initiatives promoting nonproliferation, arms control, and disarmament. Not only does the U.S. have by far the world's largest nuclear arsenal, but the U.S. is the only country to have actually used nuclear weapons against another nation, crimes most American politicians still defend to this day.

As Americans, therefore, we have a particular obligation to challenge our government's dangerous nuclear policies. The stakes couldn't be higher.

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