**The NPT Illusion**

Disarmament fantasies help the Iranian regime.

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These are strange days for New York City's finest. Over the weekend, they deployed in force to find the terrorist who tried to bomb Times Square. Yesterday, they deployed in force to protect the terrorist who is president of Iran. One of these guys works in propane, fireworks and gasoline; the other guy in enriched uranium, polonium triggers and ballistic missiles.

That other guy—the one who didn't roll into town in a Pathfinder—was in Manhattan to unload on this month's U.N. review conference of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. And unload he did: on the Truman administration, on the Obama administration, on "the Zionist regime," on U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, on the NPT itself. For all this, Iran is still considered a member in good standing of the treaty, entitled to its seat at the International Atomic Energy Agency and its right to the nuclear reactors.

Does this make sense? In the upside-down universe of Turtle Bay—the same one in which Iran was just elected by acclamation to the U.N.'s Commission on the Status of Women—it does. What's stranger is that it also makes sense to President Obama, who has called the NPT the "cornerstone of the world's efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons." If that's the cornerstone, it's no wonder the edifice on top of it is collapsing.

The case for the NPT is that it has slowed nuclear proliferation by offering a grand bargain between the world's nuclear haves and have-nots. The haves promise to work toward the elimination of their arsenals via arms-control treaties; the have-nots get access to civilian nuclear technology while promising not to build weapons of their own.

As a show of global good citizenship, last month President Obama signed another arms-control treaty with Russia, and yesterday disclosed previously classified information about the exact size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. This surely made a deep impression in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Bhutan, where conspicuous displays of moral stainlessness are considered the essence of geopolitical strategy.

As for the effect of the administration's gesture politics, it probably hasn't been what Mr. Obama envisioned. A biting U.N. sanctions resolution on Iran is nowhere in sight. The regime's nuclear bids proceed undeterred. Countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt are openly entertaining doubts about U.S. seriousness—while entertaining nuclear futures of their own.

And it turns out that when it comes to a U.N. beauty contest, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad beats Barack Obama every time. Twenty-four countries walked out of Ahmadinejad's speech yesterday. Another 168 remained in their seats, including those virtuous Scandinavians.

There's a reason the NPT has failed the administration. It enshrines a status quo that is 40 years out of date. Today, four of the world's nine nuclear-weapons states are not signatories to the treaty. Of those four, three—India, Israel and Pakistan—are democracies and allies of the U.S. And yet the NPT treats them as pariahs for not subscribing to a treaty that fails to recognize their imperative national security interests, at least as they themselves perceive them. The Canadas of the world may be happy to go along with the NPT, secure as they are under America's nuclear umbrella. That was a luxury India, Israel and Pakistan did not enjoy when they embarked on their nuclear programs.

Now Iran, in connivance with the usual Middle Eastern suspects (and their useful idiots in the West), is trying to use the NPT as a cudgel to force Israel to disarm. That makes perfect sense if you subscribe, as Mr. Obama does, to the theology of nuclear disarmament. It makes no sense if you think the distinction that matters when it comes to nuclear weapons is between responsible, democratic states, and reckless, unstable and dictatorial ones. Nobody lies awake at night wondering what David Cameron might do if he gets his finger on the U.K.'s nuclear trigger.

The world today is rapidly moving toward what strategist Andrew Krepinevich calls the "second nuclear age," in which deterrence no longer works as it did during the Cold War. "It may be," he writes, "that leaders of the newly armed nuclear states do not calculate costs and benefits in a manner similar to the United States." Yet we haven't even begun to think seriously about how to navigate these waters. Hillary Clinton's mindless calls yesterday about strengthening the NPT won't do.

One day a Pathfinder with tinted windows may park itself in Times Square with something more than propane tanks in the back seat. We may not be able to stop it. But we will live more securely if the driver of that car knows exactly what we intend to do next.