

# THE NEW LOOK IN U.S. NONPROLIFERATION POLICY

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## I. INTRODUCTION

As always, it is a pleasure to participate in the Carnegie International Non-Proliferation Conference. Regrettably, given the dismal recent record of negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament, the NPT Review Conference, and the UN First Committee, it is one of the few venues where one can expect a serious debate on today's most pressing proliferation challenges.

It is appropriate at a conference entitled "Sixty Years Later" to ask the question, what precisely is new in U.S. nonproliferation policy, and should we applaud or decry recent changes in Washington's approach to nonproliferation.

We have assembled a motley group of experts and sometime practitioners from the United States and abroad to help us sort out the hallmarks of current U.S. policy and their impact on global nonproliferation efforts. Although I am sure they will, on their own accord, provide very different and provocative interpretations of U.S. policy, I will further incite them by offering several observations about what I regard to be the main principles that currently govern the Bush administration's approach to nonproliferation.

***Principle One: Nuclear proliferation is inevitable; at best it can be managed not prevented.*** According to this perspective, although the pace of nuclear weapons spread has been much slower than predicted, we are approaching a new tipping point in which a

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number of states may “go nuclear.” U.S. policy to counter proliferation must be selective. In those instances in which the United States cannot prevent nuclear weapons spread, it can and should seek to influence the development of responsible nuclear policies on the part of new nuclear nations. This principle applies to the Indian subcontinent, the nuclearization of which should have been anticipated and cannot be reversed.

***Principle Two: There are good proliferators and bad proliferators.*** Throughout most of the post-World War II era U.S. declaratory policy opposed the spread of nuclear weapons without regard to the political orientation of the state in question. In recent years, however, it has been replaced by a more differentiated policy that distinguishes between U.S. friends and foes. This policy change has meant applying higher standards for nonproliferation compliance to selected states and discounting the proliferation risks posed by others. In addition, it has had the effect of recasting the nature of the proliferation challenge from “dangerous weapons” to “evil regimes.” India is depicted as an example of a “good proliferator” that subscribes to democratic norms and also has demonstrated responsible nuclear policies.

Although it is true that Washington in the past often played favorites with the NPT outliers, the new policy of nonproliferation exceptionalism is far more explicit and pronounced than prior routine efforts by the United States to deflect criticism of Israel’s nuclear policies. As one defense expert close to the administration reportedly put it, unlike the Clinton administration, which “had an undifferentiated concern about proliferation,” the Bush administration is not afraid to distinguish between friends and foes.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William Scheider quoted in *Financial Times* (August 21, 2001)

***Principle Three: Multilateral mechanisms to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons are ineffectual.*** The Bush administration consistently has exhibited a strong preference for foreign and military tools that are unconstrained by the need to seek approval from international organizations or multilateral bodies be they the United Nations Security Council or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This general orientation applies with equal force to the nonproliferation sphere and was in evidence at the May 2005 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference and the September 2005 United Nations High-Level Summit, neither of which produced a single recommendation relating to nonproliferation or disarmament. Although Washington had attached greater importance to the 45 member Nuclear Suppliers Group as a means to curtail the spread of uranium enrichment technology, it also is prepared to weaken that body in pursuit of a strategic partnership with India.

***Principle Four: Regional security considerations trump those of global nonproliferation.*** Diplomats have long struggled with the problem of how best to enhance nuclear stability in South Asia without appearing to reward those few states not party to the NPT. The U.S.-India nuclear deal essentially resolves the dilemma by ignoring how other states may interpret the repudiation by the United States of existing domestic law and international political obligations regarding nuclear trade with a non-NPT state that also possesses nuclear weapons. It does so because of a determination by the architects of the new India policy that international political objectives take precedence over nonproliferation considerations. A central premise of this policy is that a substantial Indian nuclear arsenal will serve U.S. interests in Asia in the future vis à vis a more assertive and powerful China.

Again, I would argue that although some elements of the new U.S. policy toward India have antecedents in which nonproliferation considerations in South Asia took a back seat to other foreign policy objectives, prior to the July 18<sup>th</sup> India-U.S. Joint Statement, the trade-offs between pursuing global nonproliferation objectives and those of regional security were never linked as directly or publicly.

Hopefully, I have provoked our distinguished panelists. I will introduce them now in the order in which they will speak:

Mr. Henry Sokolski, Executive Director, The Nonproliferation Policy Education Center

Dr. Lewis Dunn, Senior Vice President, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC)

Dr. Harald Müller, Director, Peace Research Institute (PRIF)

Each panelist has been asked to speak for approximately 10-12 minutes.