

The Facade of Nuclear Disarmament

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The UN Security Council passed the US-sponsored resolution on nonproliferation and nuclear arms control and disarmament. There was euphoria all around as the media applauded the unanimity shown in the UNSC and the resolution was lauded as a move towards nuclear disarmament.

What led to such applause was the shift seen to have been brought in the US position by Obama. Certainly, President Obama has moved the US away from the Bush era where arms control and disarmament measures of any type were simply ignored at best, or flouted with abandon.

But many of us have been living with these periodic highs at the declaratory level on the issue of nuclear arms control and disarmament – till we realize they are merely a rhetorical facade to hide away the growing nuclear arsenals of the nuclear weapon states.

For instance, is it not strange to find that countries like Britain and France, which in reality face no military threat from anywhere, are unable to part with and destroy their nuclear arsenals? Can they not take a lead in showing the way to nuclear disarmament?

As for Obama, how different is he on nuclear issues in terms of policy so far? He continues to support the Bush-sponsored US Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty draft in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, although he has spoken of a willingness to accept a verification clause.

But without presenting a draft text containing this new shift, Obama's words have little credibility. This is especially so because the US has continued to flout the Shannon Mandate on how to proceed on the FMCT and is still attempting to fast track the Treaty while ignoring issues like reduction in existing stockpiles of fissile material and Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS).

The issue of not touching existing stockpiles smacks of unacceptable discrimination.

Obama has also shifted from opposition to Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) to modification of it. So there will be no BMD placements in Poland and the Czech Republic but there will be BMD systems placed on highly mobile sea platforms to counter a largely imagined threat to Europe and the US from Iran.

Of course, these ships can be moved easily from the Mediterranean to the Gulf or Indian Ocean so Pakistan would also come into this BMD target loop – again with India being helped in the development and acquisition of BMD as part of its strategic military alliance with the US.

BMD has also undermined deterrence which was sustained through mutual vulnerabilities.

Now BMD has focused attention on nuclear war fighting, thereby increasing the danger of nuclear weapons being used in war.

Unfortunately, while Obama may call for nuclear disarmament, his policy on BMD betrays this rhetoric.

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