

We Need a New Foreign Policy

The Bush administration's foreign policy is pushing our country, and the world, in a dangerous direction. The invasion of Iraq is the most visible aspect of a foreign policy that has become increasingly aggressive and unilateral. Here's why our country needs a foreign policy more aligned with American values:

US arms sales and military aid bolster human rights abusers and backfire on Americans.

The US leads the world in arms sales and military training to countries that abuse human rights. The Bush administration has expanded arms sales and military assistance to countries like Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Both have histories of torturing their own citizens, suppressing political opposition and the media, and religious persecution. While our own State Department has found military and police forces in the Philippines guilty of human rights violations, US arms sales and military aid to the Philippines continue to rise.

As a result of a "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" mentality, the US has armed and/or trained Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein and Manuel Noriega. The war on Iraq marks the seventh consecutive time that US troops have been sent into battle against opposition armed with US weapons. Prior to war and/or military intervention, the US provided arms to Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Haiti, Somalia, and Panama.

US policies increase the danger posed by nuclear weapons.

In March of 2002, the details of the administration's "Nuclear Posture Review" —a policy statement that outlines radical changes for US nuclear policy — were leaked to the press. The Review calls for targeting China, Russia, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Libya and Syria for a potential nuclear first strike. It outlines plans for a new generation of nuclear weapons and expands the circumstances under which the US will consider using nuclear weapons.

These dangerous plans lower the threshold for using nuclear weapons and encourage nuclear proliferation. In the views of other countries, the best way to avoid attack by the US is to build their own nuclear weapons. With every country —like North Korea— that "goes nuclear," the pace of proliferation increases. North Korea's nuclear program could lead to similar programs in Japan and South Korea.

According to Senator Jack Reed, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, "We're moving away from more than five decades of efforts to delegitimize the use of nuclear weapons."

US unilateralism is increasing anti-American sentiment while weakening international law.

After the September 11th terrorist attacks, the world was nearly united in its support for the United States and grief at our loss. Now, the opposite is true: anti-American sentiment has grown dramatically worldwide, even in allied countries. This hostility toward the US poses a long term threat to our security. Dealing with fanatics like al Qaeda will require global cooperation, not global resentment.

During its tenure, the administration has blocked, or withdrawn from, many important international agreements. So far the administration has withdrawn from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty; blocked enforcement of the Biological Weapons Convention; scoffed at the International Criminal Court; abandoned the Kyoto Protocol on global warming; and walked out of the Durban Conference on Racism.

While all treaties are imperfect, international lawlessness and an ethos of "might makes right" will prove far more dangerous. America will be far better off if we devote our creative and economic energies to solving problems that the rest of the world recognizes as long term threats.



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Campaign for a New Foreign Policy

Our country deserves a break from the failed policies of the past. Our arms sales and military aid programs have created widespread anti-American sentiment. Our nuclear weapons policies are encouraging nuclear proliferation. Our approach to the international community is leading to growing isolation and foreclosing meaningful leadership.

Huge increases in military spending won't make us safer, but they will take funds from education, health care and other programs and harm the quality of life for all Americans. Eliminating civil liberties will threaten our constitution and undermine the very values that

make our nation great. We'll make our country safer by affirming our values, not abandoning them.

What You Can Do

There may never have been a more important time to speak up and demand change. Call or write your Representative and Senators and tell them you support a fundamental change in US foreign policy. Urge them to support and sign the Pledge for a New Foreign Policy.

To get involved with the Campaign for a New Foreign Policy see Peace Action's web site or contact the local organization below.

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Three Steps To A Safer World

1. Support Human Rights and Democracy

We should exhibit international leadership by opposing the policies of human rights abusers, not rewarding them with weapons.

Democracy and human rights are ideals that the American people hold dear. Our elected officials have not held true to these values. Sadly, our country leads the world in providing arms sales and military training to human rights abusing governments and dictatorships. When US weapons are used to prop up governments hated by their own people, bitterness is the result. When we sell weapons world-wide, those arms end up being used against our own troops.

2. Reduce the Threat from Weapons of Mass Destruction

Our nation should lead a worldwide campaign to reduce and control the threat from weapons of mass destruction - a policy we could be proud of.

We face no greater threat than nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Such weapons are only effective as a means of terror - that can be aimed at us as well as others. The only way to be safe from this threat is to destroy the stockpiles and secure those facilities that make nuclear materials. Instead of leading efforts to secure and dismantle nuclear weapons, the Bush Administration wants to build new ones. In addition, spending billions on a missile defense that won't work while building new nuclear weapons will only speed the pace of nuclear proliferation.

3. Cooperate with the World Community

We should play a positive leadership role in the world community, planning strategies for a future we can all live with.

The Declaration of Independence urged "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind." Our foreign policy isn't reflecting that core value. Our elected officials have abandoned or blocked a host of international agreements on arms control, human rights, the environment, and the International Criminal Court. Instead of promoting "pre-emptive strikes," the US needs to promote policies that address the larger needs of the world community and that minimize the potential for hate and anger. The US has the strength and ability to better the working and living conditions of human kind, and to increase our own security in the process - but only if we lead through cooperation.

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