**Obama Faces Trap at U.N. In Demarche by Egypt On Nuclear Arms**

Aim Is To Seek a Disarmament of Israel

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UNITED NATIONS — President Obama’s “nuclear spring,” celebrated by his fans across the world all through April, is about to be turned into a trap here, as Third World countries, led by Egypt, are set to push back against America and Russia — and to try to force Israel to drop its long-held nuclear policy.

Egypt’s envoy to the world body, Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz, circulated this week to key United Nations members a proposal to push Israel to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty “as soon as possible as a non-nuclear-weapon state” and to open “all its nuclear facilities” to international inspection.

The Egyptian paper is only one among several new challenges that Mr. Obama is expected to face as he comes to Turtle Bay in early May to open a month-long conference reviewing the 40-year old NPT. Third World countries also demand that nuclear states apply to themselves the same strict standards that they demand from would-be proliferators of nuclear materiel to terrorists. The last NPT review conference, five years ago, ended without agreement, as President Bush dismissed similar demands from so-called “non-aligned” countries.

Egypt is seeking to convene next month a meeting of Middle Eastern countries here, perhaps chaired by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, with the aim of creating a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East and hammering in a binding resolution that would force Israel to disarm. Prime Minister Netanyahu indicated this week that Israel doesn’t intend to change its long-held nuclear policy, known as “ambiguity.” He scoffed at the notion that treaty-signing would end nuclear proliferation, urging the world to seriously act to disarm Iran instead.

Arab diplomats say that they sense more openness from their Western colleagues — including from the Obama administration — to the idea of “moving the goal post” on the push toward regional nuclear-free zone. An unnamed United Nations diplomat told Reuters this week that Israel could only gain, as Arab countries would be more open to Iran sanctions if they “get something they want” from Israel.

But Israel — which like Pakistan and India has never signed the NPT and therefore will not attend the May review conference — is unlikely to credit this argument. Nor will it join the NPT, Mr. Netanyahu told George Stephanopoulos of ABC News in a Monday interview celebrating Israel’s 62nd Independence Day.

“If the Middle East one day advances to a messianic age where the lion lies down with the lambs, then you can ask me this question again,” Mr. Netanyahu said.

Saddam Hussein had built the Osirak facility even as Iraq was a member in good standing of the NPT, Mr. Netanyahu noted. Similarly, Libya and Syria cheated on their treaty obligations, and Iran’s nuclear program in violation of the NPT presents a major menace to the region.

“Those regimes that call directly for Israel’s destruction are developing atomic weapons,” Mr. Netanyahu said. “So it’s not whether we sign or whether they sign. It’s how do we prevent leaders like Ahmadinejad from acquiring nuclear weapons.”

By contrast, the Obama administration appears to be enamored with treaties. America’s ambassador in Turtle Bay, Susan Rice, hails the New Start treaty that Mr. Obama signed in early April with the Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev, at Prague as a “major milestone” and “concrete step” toward a nuclear-free world.

Speaking alongside her Russian counterpart, Vitaly Churkin, Ms. Rice told the General Assembly Monday that “our joint appearance here today is a sign of the much strengthened relationship between our two nations, a relationship built on candor, cooperation and mutual respect.”

At that same General Assembly session, however, several Arab diplomats staged an attack on New Start and on other American-proposals that were raised earlier this month during Mr. Obama’s summit of top leaders from 47 countries, which attempted to tighten international oversight in order to combat the transfer of nuclear weapons to terrorists.

Egyptian Ambassador Abdelaziz, who chairs the so-called “Non Aligned Movement” group at the U.N., told the General Assembly that “each time there is progress in disarmament,” the countries that do not currently possess nuclear weapons end up bearing the brunt of new measures, adding that the five recognized nuclear states should instead do more to demolish their own facilities.

Several diplomats characterized the maneuvering against on the nuclear superpowers as an Egyptian negotiation tactic, aimed at shaming them to convene the meeting on Israel’s nuclear facilities.