

International Atomic Energy Agency Report Is Not a Justification for War

*Hans Blix was Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden (1978-79); Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (1981-97); and head of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspections Commission in Iraq (2000-03). As the head of UNMOVIC, Dr. Blix, along with his successor at IAEA, Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, fought, right up to the last moment, to prevent the first Iraq War; an effort he recounted in his 2004 book, **Disarming Iraq**. On Nov. 15, **EIR** Counterintelligence Editor Jeffrey Steinberg interviewed Dr. Blix by phone at his home in Stockholm.*



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EIR: Dr. Blix, thank you very much for making yourself available. I'd like to start out just by asking you about the report that has been released by the IAEA. Does this, in your view, represent in any way a justification for military action?

Blix: No, absolutely no. [laughs] I'll tell you what I think is significant about the report, first. I do not see that there is any remarkable new data given. We have heard about much of the information that has come into the IAEA over the last two years from intelligence agencies, and some of it figures here. Until now, the agency's attitude has been, I think rightly, to welcome intelligence from various countries—and they say now it's about ten countries—but they have not espoused them. They have not made them their own, but rather said that these raise questions, and that is legitimate, I think.

This time, they have said that we are comparing what we have received from intelligence, with what we have ourselves, through our safeguards, inspections observations, and what we have got from the A.Q. Khan network (they don't mention it by name, but that's understood); and as we assess these things together, we

find an overall picture of credibility.

Now, that is not perhaps endorsing every piece of intelligence they received, but the overall impression is one, under which they say, there are actions by Iran, which are activities that would be relevant for the development of a weapon. And there are other activities, which they can see are relevant for nothing but producing a weapon.

So this is how far they've gone. It's relatively cautiously formulated. They're not saying that "we assert," "we conclude," that they are going to produce a weapon, because Iran is not there yet. And of course, the last stretch, whether they will make a weapon, is a question of political will. And they do not pretend to know that that will is there.

Now, already this conclusion of the assessment, of course, is a new thing. They have not done so before, and that is what I think was being discussed. One needs to read rather carefully to see that the agency is not asserting that they *are* making a weapon.

Are They Making a Bomb?

EIR: The Russians, and in particular, Foreign Minister [Sergei] Lavrov, earlier today, basically said that since the IAEA is putting increasing reliance on intelligence provided by member-states, he's called for the IAEA to, for the first time, be specific about which countries are making which allegations. And I wonder what your thinking is, in terms of the member-states' allegations. We've been there before with the Iraq case, which you very eloquently described in your book *Disarming Iraq*. Do you see the rhetoric being in sync with the actual evidence in the report?

Blix: Well, it may be that they received information on condition that they do not reveal the source. But I

think they would do well in being very circumspect in judging this evidence. We know from Iraq, as you remember, that the famous case was the alleged contract between Iraq and Niger for the import of uranium oxide, and that proved to be a forgery.

And we have, in this Iran case, a famous part has been talked much about in the past, about a computer that I think was stolen, or it was found, and when it was examined, it contained material which suggested that there was work going on to make a missile sufficient to carry a nuclear weapon, a nuclear device of some kind. We've heard about that for a long time, it sounded like James Bond. And I do not know whether the agency's assessment of the various pieces, whether it's a correct one or not. I hope that they have been prudent and cautious.

But I did notice one piece of information that they gave in the report, namely that there had been a foreigner active and assisting in Tehran, regarding high-level explosions. But this was contradicted from Moscow. The agency's report does not indicate that it was a Russian, but in Moscow, they have a Russian [who] has turned up, and he said, "I was in Tehran, and I lectured on explosions, but explosions that had regard to the production of diamonds." And he denied that he had anything to do with the military program, the nuclear military program. . . .

The main point that I have made, is that there's tremendous attention to two things: One is, are they making a bomb? And the other one is, shall we bomb? And to me, the more interesting question is, what should the world do about what the agency is reporting and seeing?

And then we get into the first preliminary question: Should Iran be bombed? And I'm saying, absolutely not. I think, first of all, it would be illegal, for one thing. Iran is not threatening anybody. They don't have a record of aggression or a record of expansionism. They suffered horribly during a war with Iraq, for a long time [1980-88]. So there is not any sign of aggression. There are statements from [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad and others, which are totally unacceptable, yes! But, I don't think that they are actually a threat, there's no imminent threat to anybody else. So, so much for the legal thing.

There are many, many arguments against a bombing. The first one is that you could have terrible consequences in the Middle East. The Iranians aren't going to sit there and twiddle their thumbs. And you could have belligerent developments in the Gulf—in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, with mining; the Iranians have friends

in Gaza; they have friends in Lebanon. So no one knows where a starting of a military event would lead.

And then, certainly, if the Israelis and others don't know where all the installations are in Iran, so some would presumably be left, and if the Iranians had not made up their mind earlier to go for a nuclear device, I think that an attack from the outside would probably lead to this.

In addition, you have a country where there are many different views on this matter, and much criticism of the government, and I'm sure they will unite, in a united front, if they're being attacked from the outside. So, I see many, many horrible possible consequences of an attack.

An Offer Iran Can't Refuse

If ones rules that out, then, others will say, "But, look, the negotiations haven't given you anything." They have tried to get the Iranians to suspend the enrichment program, and they haven't done so, and there have been various sanctions, and it hasn't led to anything. And this is true, but how many people know, actually, what has been offered to the Iranians in this situation? The world is asking them to suspend enrichment, okay. The Iranians must make a cost-benefit analysis: How much do they gain by suspending, and how much will they lose? And I think some of the offers that have been made from the outside world have been quite sensible and quite positive: Of course, the economic sanctions would be lifted; Iran would be free in the financial markets again—they have drawbacks from that that would disappear.

And, very significant is that Iran's contention that the world is trying to deprive them of the benefits of nuclear energy, is not quite correct. Because, what the outside world has asked, through the Five-plus-One,¹ is that they should suspend enrichment and the heavy-water reactor, but they are not asking at all, that they should close their nuclear power program, the civilian program that gives them electricity. On the contrary, they have been, rather, offered assistance from the outside to build more power reactors! So that's very significant.

The outside could also come up with more things, if you want to criticize the outside world for not getting results—because what else could they do? Well, compare what the outside world has suggested to North Korea, and you'll find that North Korea is offered guar-

1. The UN Security Council permanent five—Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States—plus Germany.



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"There's a tremendous attention to two things," Blix noted. "One is, are they making a bomb? And the other one is, shall we bomb? And to me, the more interesting question is, what should the world do about what the [IAEA] is reporting and seeing?" Shown: IR40 heavy water reactor facility, near Arak, Iran.

antees that they will not be attacked from the outside, and I think also, guarantees that there will be no subversion inside. Now, that has not, to my knowledge, been offered to the Iranians, and that would be an important element.

The U.S. has not had diplomatic relations with Iran since 1979, since the occupation of the embassy; again, that could also be something valuable, that would be weighed in a cost-benefit analysis. There could be other things, if you exercise your imagination. There has been blocking of the idea of a pipeline from Iran, through Pakistan, to India. Well, again, that would be something that could be offered in a negotiation, in return for a suspension of the enrichment program.

So, this is one important chunk of considerations, that are not much discussed in the press, where they only discuss bombing or not.

A WMD-Free Middle East

But I have another idea, that is perhaps a little more long-term, and which would perhaps not—certainly would not be accepted by Israel today, and that is, the concept of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, in the Middle East. The NPT [Non-Proliferation Treaty] Review Conference of 2010 decided that there shall be such a conference in 2012; and if they hadn't taken that resolution, I don't think the conference would have

ended successfully, as it did.

Now, there is the decision—and the UN has announced also—that there *will* be such a conference next year, in Helsinki actually, and with a Finnish undersecretary as a facilitator who is working on the concept.

Now, this concept of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, or as it was originally called, "free of nuclear weapons," of course had its edge against Israel at that time. The Arab states wanted Israel to do away with their nuclear weapons. And Israel has, over the years, responded: Yes, we are positive to the idea, but only after peace has been reestablished. So, they put it off very far. I think, today, you cannot think of the Middle East, without also considering the Iranian development of an enrichment program and the possibility that gives for Iran, one day if it so desires, to go for a nuclear weapon.

In this constellation, I think there is something interesting. If you were to have a zone, in which all the Middle East countries are participating, including Israel and Iran, and I think also Turkey and Saudi Arabia and Egypt, etc., and they all committed themselves to have neither [nuclear] weapons, nor capability to produce weapons material from highly enriched uranium or plutonium, then Israel would have to sacrifice its weapons capability, to be sure, but at the same time, they would gain the advantage of Iran doing away with its enrichment program, and all the others are committing themselves to stay without enrichment and reprocessing.

And you would have to add to that, of course, very intrusive inspections, and you'd probably have to have assurance of supply of nuclear fuel for power reactors in the region, perhaps security guarantees; there will be all kinds of things that will be required.

If I advance this idea to the Israelis today, they'd probably laugh at it. But the closer the Iranians get to an option of making the bomb, and the more interested Egypt and Saudi Arabia might become, in the future, to start seriously a nuclear program, perhaps including fuel-cycle activities, the more interesting, I think, such a grand scheme, as it were, would be...

What gives me a little optimism, is that, I don't think that at the depth of it, Iran has a need for nuclear weapons. When you look at history, states mostly acquire nuclear weapons for *perceived* security interests: Paki-

stan-India, India-China, China vis-à-vis Russia and the United States, and so forth.

Also perhaps, to acquire status. It's a great power status. If you're a pariah, or are even pointed to as a pariah, maybe you would like to demonstrate a nuclear weapon.

But, perceived security is the most important, and I think that's relevant. And I think it is wise of the West or the U.S. to say to the North Koreans, that, "If you do away with your nuclear program, we are willing to guarantee that there will be no attacks from the outside and no subversion from the inside." And I think Iran, too, which is treated as a pariah, and which was called [by President George W. Bush—ed.] part of the "Axis of Evil," that they would also feel a need for such assurances, not least after the U.S. had their aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf.

I would say, about the Obama Administration: I think they have been much more sensitive. It's so often said, that all options are on the table, although they have stiffened the rhetoric a bit, after the Qom affair, when it was revealed that Iran had a second enrichment site. You know, when you say that all options are on the table, it's about the same as saying, "I'd hate to shoot at you, but I can't exclude I'll do it"! And, if I sat in Tehran or in North Korea, and heard that, I think I would be worried.

But then, all the more important that they go to the table with the Iranians, and say, "We don't like your regime. No one in the Western world is enthusiastic about the regime that you have, etc., but we are not going to touch that. That's for you, for your people to deal with that. . . ."

The Israeli Factor

EIR: There's been a series of visits by U.S. officials, the most recent, by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, to Israel, warning the Israelis not to act preemptively without consultation in advance. But nobody at this point is confident, it seems, that Israel will not take some kind of unilateral action, knowing full well, that they don't have the capacity to wipe out the Iranian program. The bet seems to be that if Israel launches an action, the United States, confronted with a choice between siding with Israel or siding with Tehran in an election season, will back Israel, and essentially come in and finish the job. How serious a danger do you see, of this erupting into a war, given the fact that, as you've said, this will not be a limited or contained war, and has all kinds of unforeseen consequences?



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"Iran is not threatening anybody," Blix pointed out. "They don't have a record of aggression or a record of expansionism. They suffered horribly during a war with Iraq, for a long time." Shown: an Iranian soldier wearing a gas mask during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88).

Blix: Well, I don't think I would dare to be 100% sure that the Israelis would not do something; but the way in which they've gone about this publicity I think is a little intriguing. I mean, there was practically a description of the discussions in the Israeli Cabinet, and how many were in favor and how many were against. And then there was a discussion about "How could this leak to the media?"

I mean, one certainly could believe that they make use of the IAEA report in order to say, "See how threatened we are? And we must think of an attack." But they know that the outside world does not want it; and the second best would then be a stiffening of the sanctions, and adding some further sanctions, maybe as rather a way of increasing the pressure. But one cannot be 100% certain: I mean, they did destroy the Osirak reactor [in Iraq] in 1981, and they bombed the Syrian reactor that was claimed to be of North Korean design in 2007. So one cannot be absolutely calm about this issue.

But I think one only has to argue with the Israelis: "Look, it's easy to take a dramatic step, but where does it lead you?" I mean, it may not be anything that's very helpful for them. They're fairly isolated now, with the policy on the West Bank. And the Arab world around them is not going to be more positive to them if they attack Iran. So I think there are many good arguments for them to stay away, but I wouldn't bet my head or my arm on how they will behave.

EIR: A final question, if you don't mind: One of the

people internationally, who's been very vocal about the need to take dramatic action against Iran, is former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who played a significant role in the lead-up to the Iraq War, and he has very strong access to President Obama; in fact, they met at the White House last week.

I think, as you indicated, there's some shift in the rhetoric coming out of the United States, and the President clearly is aware of electoral pressure to side with Israel in the event of some kind of action. What is your evaluation?

Blix: Well, I think that joint philosophy of Blair and Bush in the Iraq War did not really add much pleasure to the world. And, so I hope that the same philosophy will not transpire by osmosis from Blair to Obama. . . .

When you listen to what governments say—Blair is not in government any longer; he lost, very much, because the public resented his action in Iraq. But when you listen to the French and to the Germans today, they are explicitly opposed to military action. [British Prime Minister David] Cameron I think is less clear, what he would do. He hasn't explicitly opposed it. But when you see what happened in Iraq, you can find that the British Foreign Office and the civil service, and the

public, they were highly skeptical about military action.

And Blair went ahead with it for a variety of reasons, and some idealistic, I think, because Blair took the view that great powers should—it was good if they would do away with terrible dictators. Well, if the Security Council decides that in the case of genocide, then I also understand it, but I don't like the idea of great powers sitting there and taking decisions on who is odious, and who is sufficiently odious to be slaughtered by them.

EIR: The danger here is that any action against Iran can trigger a much larger war, drawing in all of the superpowers.

Blix: Yes. Well, Obama has a difficult situation. It's an election year as you say, and the AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee] lobby is extremely strong in the U.S. To my knowledge, the majority of American Jews are voting Democratic. And I've met many who would be very, very skeptical, I think, against any military attack on Iran. But the Netanyahu government is a government on the rightwing side, and they have strong AIPAC support. And I think that reduces the maneuvering room of a U.S. President in an election year.

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3. FOR LACK OF REAL ASSETS REMAINING, ISSUE HAMILTONIAN CREDIT FOR NATIONAL PROJECTS



5. IMMEDIATE NATIONAL MOBILIZATION FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NAWAPA PROJECT



6. ENGAGE LATENT LABOR FORCE FOR SUBSIDIARY PROJECTS SUCH AS TRANSPORT AND NUCLEAR



2. DIVISION OF FICTITIOUS FROM REAL LIABILITIES ACCORDING TO GLASS-STEAGALL STANDARD



4. THE ONLY BAILOUTS WILL BE HONEST BAILOUTS FOR THE BANKRUPT CITIES AND THE STATES



7. EXTEND COOPERATION INTERNATIONALLY TO MEXICO, CANADA, RUSSIA, CHINA AND OTHERS