



COMMENTARY

By Dr Hanan Chehata

On the Article *["It's not just about Iran"](#)* By Hans Blix (The Guardian, Thursday 8th October 2009.)

We are told that the prospect of Iran developing nuclear weapons is one of the major threats to global peace and security today, one that must be stopped at all costs. America has threatened that it will take all necessary steps to ensure that Iran does not develop nuclear weapons, including military options. Israel too has threatened on several occasions that it will not hesitate to employ a pre-emptive military strike against Iran if it is thought to be developing nuclear weapon technology.

The hostile language and threats to attack Iran have remained, despite the fact that Iran has stated time and time again that its nuclear ambitions are peaceful. There are many reasons why a country may wish to develop nuclear abilities including technological advancement, economic development, national pride and the production of electricity as a fuel source (thus reducing reliability on finite natural resources such as gas and oil). These all seem like perfectly legitimate aims and according to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) (Articles 4 and 5) Iran has the right to pursue nuclear energy as a peaceful power source.

So why is it that there is such an outpouring of fear and anger towards Iran's nuclear power programs? Part of the reason seems to be that many countries simply do not trust Iran. As Hans Blix points out, in his article *["It's not just about Iran"](#)* (The Guardian, 8th October 2009) *"Iran could change its mind next year and would then have come closer to a weapon by the progress made in the enrichment programme."* As such, Mr Blix says that it *"remains desirable to persuade Iran to abandon enrichment."* But how can that goal be achieved?

According to Mr Blix, shaming Iran will not work and *"economic sanctions and military measures could have dire consequences."* However, if the stick will not work, has the carrot fared any better? Mr Blix points out that, in the past, attempts to deal with the situation extended to offering potential rewards such as *"making investments easier, offering help with civilian nuclear power construction and supporting its membership of the World Trade Organization – if the country were to abandon enrichment."* But, he says, this has *"obviously not been enough."*

However, it does not seem very fair to spend so much time and money scheming for ways to ensure that Iran never becomes a nuclear power when so many other countries already are. Isn't it hypocritical of countries that already have nuclear capabilities to tell Iran that although they can be trusted to have it, Iran can not? Aren't double standards being employed here?



The two most vociferous opponents to Iran's nuclear ambitions are America and Israel, two of the world's strongest nuclear powers. But why is Israel allowed its vast and advanced weaponry but not Iran? America frequently points out that Israel is only a small patch of land surrounded on all sides by hostile Arab nations who all want to do her harm. However, why are we only looking at the issue from the Israeli perspective? What about looking at it the other way around? How should Iran feel considering the fact that one of its nearest neighbors is a country that has been founded on illegal occupations, thinks nothing of invading a land that belongs to another people and then proceeds to expel, arrest and kill those people and continues to do so year in and year out having absolutely no regard to the laws or opinions of the International community and is seemingly finding itself constantly beyond the reach of the law. Add to that the fact that *"Nuclear proliferation analysts claim that Israel may have anywhere between 100 and 300 nuclear weapons. It makes Israel the 'fifth largest nuclear power in the world.'"*¹ Furthermore, Israel clearly has no compunction against using chemical weapons against the civilian Palestinian population. Now further consider the fact that Israel's closest ally is the most powerful county in the world and that they too have nuclear weapons and have used them in the past. If you were Iran, wouldn't you also want nuclear weapons so that you could defend yourself?

This is not to say that Iran should be allowed to develop nuclear weapons. The consequences of such a development are unknown. It may serve a deterrent function and protect Iran against military attack but it may also, as many fear, lead to a new arms race. Equally, we must not force Iran to remain subjugated and powerless against its nuclear enemies. Either all countries should be allowed to have the technology or none should and as no one seems to think that Iran should, then neither should anyone else. This leads us back to Hans Blix's call for *"A WMD-free zone in the Middle East."* I agree with him on that point, as that must surely include the prospect of Israel disarming – which I cannot imagine that it would ever agree to do - but I do not think that he has taken the argument far enough or to its logical conclusion. Why does his argument stay confined within the boundaries of the Middle East? Why call only for Middle Eastern nuclear disarmament? The only truly fair option is Global nuclear disarmament. You have to level the playing field. Rules of war should apply equally to everyone. In the same way that other countries are demanding that Iran never achieves nuclear weapon status, neither should they.

¹ P337 *The Iranian Nuclear Issue* American Foreign Policy and the Muslim World, by Prof Dr. Choudhury M. Shamim, pp324-349.

