
Interview: Dr. Hans Blix

Cooperate with Russia, China, says UN nuclear specialist

Dr. Hans Blix was Foreign Minister of Sweden during 1978-79, and Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) during 1983-99. On April 12, after delivering a speech at the George C. Marshall International Center in Leesburg, Virginia, which focussed on UN arms control efforts in Iraq and the need to promote peaceful nuclear power, Dr. Blix spoke with EIR about the broader strategic crisis.

EIR: Dr. Blix, you've said that the world needs nuclear power to survive?

Blix: Billions of people around the world need electricity, and a way to respond to this need without risking the destruction of the Earth's atmosphere, is to let drastically more of the world's electricity in the future come from nuclear power. I've been to Chernobyl, and I will still tell you that the risk of putting all that CO₂ into the air is far greater. To those who say, "Okay, we should use neither fossil fuels nor nuclear," I reply, "Come on; you're not going to run a city the size of Shanghai, with 12 million people, on solar power." Peaceful nuclear energy could be the only thing to save us from a global catastrophe.

The United States had several great initiatives after World War II: One was the Marshall Plan, which helped rebuild Europe; another was President Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" program, under which the United States shared technology with other nations for peaceful development of nuclear power. This led to the creation of the IAEA, with two purposes: to promote peaceful development and use of nuclear energy, and to carry out inspections which would help prevent nuclear weapons proliferation.

After the end of the Cold War in 1989, we had a wave of international good will for nuclear disarmament. But, unfortunately, today I am not as hopeful as I was six months ago; Russia may not ratify the START II agreement, given the tensions between the United States and Russia. U.S.-Russian relations are not very good, and this is worrisome.

EIR: You said earlier these tensions started with the U.S. and British bombing of Iraq last year?

Blix: There were several incidents last fall where the U.S. and Britain were threatening to bomb Iraq if they did not allow UNSCOM [UN Special Commission] inspectors free range; as you know, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was able to forestall one crisis last year. Then, in November, we were



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only hours away from bombing, and in December, UNSCOM issued a report that Iraq had significantly violated its obligations.

The U.S. learned of the report, and without waiting for it to be received and discussed by the UN Security Council, and without informing the Russians, the U.S. and Britain then, with the express purpose of forcing Iraq to fully accept inspections, began the present bombing.

The result has been not only a rise in U.S.-Russia tensions, but also, that all the UN inspectors had to be taken out of Iraq. And the bombing, to this day, continues, although in the so-called "no-fly" zone, and to this day we have no inspectors in Iraq. So, there is a dilemma to solve.

Another problem, is that there have been serious complaints raised about U.S. intelligence using UNSCOM for its

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own purposes. Even the accusation has damaged UNSCOM, and perhaps all international verification. Countries which are to be inspected must be able to feel confident that they are inspected by institutions of the international community, and not by any national intelligence agency.

As to IAEA inspections, there can only be one-way traffic in these matters, in the sense that if U.S. or other countries’ intelligence agencies want to provide information to help UN inspectors do their job better, fine. However, UNSCOM and other UN agencies have promised confidentiality to member-nations about data they have obtained, or promised a limitation of inspections to—say, weapons of mass destruction. Then, we must be totally reliable in respecting this confidentiality, we cannot have unauthorized information traffic flowing in the other direction.

I fear that before it can function properly again, UNSCOM will need some reorganization. Perhaps it should have fewer personnel seconded from member-state government agencies, and engage more international professionals.

EIR: Then, the U.S. and Britain and NATO acted unilaterally again, without consulting Russia, and approval of the Security Council, to bomb Yugoslavia?

Blix: In my view, one should work with the Russians more, and use Russia to find the solution. This is a very difficult problem because, of course, we cannot stand there and let half a million refugees be created.

EIR: Did you know that the Russians were ready at Rambouillet to go in with a cooperative UN peacekeeping force, as they did in Bosnia under the Dayton Accords; and then, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright unilaterally announced that NATO was taking action, without Russia or the UN?

Blix: I had not heard that. I am skeptical about unilateral NATO action. I have also been skeptical about the whole idea of NATO expansion; certainly, I fully understand that countries such as Poland or Hungary, which were occupied by Russia, wanted to join, just to be protected in the future.

But, we have to look at it also from the interest in bringing Russia together with Europe and the industrialized world. They open up their economy and adopt a policy of cooperation with the West. They disband their own military alliance, the Warsaw Pact. And what happens? Suddenly they’ve got a bigger military alliance closer to their doorstep. I think they have taken it remarkably well.

I also wonder if it was very wise to go along with the demand for a referendum in Kosovo. If Kosovo is to remain part of Yugoslavia, there will be problems. With 90% of the population Albanian, the result is predetermined. How could one expect agreement at Rambouillet on such a basis?

EIR: There is an Anglo-American group seeking to demonize Russia, to speak of a “new Cold War.” Former CIA chief James Woolsey charged in Congress last month that Russia is now proliferating nuclear weapons to “rogue states” around the world.

Blix: This does not sound credible. NATO must find a way to continue to work with Russia. There is no danger of a Cold War threat from Russia, to the United States or other NATO countries. The Russians, for their part, have been quite eager to collaborate with the United States and the West. But, one should avoid being high-handed vis-à-vis Russia. At present, several Western moves have, in fact, promoted a new Russian nationalism. This is very negative.

EIR: China has also been vocal against this unilateral action by NATO.

Blix: The world cannot condone, and remain passive in the face of ethnic cleansing. But it’s also true that if one ignores the Security Council and state sovereignty today in the Balkans, it may be done elsewhere tomorrow. There is a precedent.

EIR: China has also been accused, in a major campaign in the U.S. press recently, of everything from stealing nuclear secrets to threatening to bomb Taiwan, or even Los Angeles.

Blix: The charges about bomb threats sound far-fetched. In my view, it is as important to bring China into the modern post-Cold War world, as it is important to get Russia in. There are good reasons to keep up pressure on human rights issues, but they cannot be the whole agenda. China’s economy is modernizing, which is of tremendous benefit to its population and to the world. They are seeking more than ever to join the community of nations.

I am more worried about security-related issues. China seems alarmed about the idea of the U.S. developing a theater missile defense [TMD]. While I recognize that North Korea’s testing of missiles is very worrisome, I fear that U.S. development and deployment of a TMD may be very negative for further disarmament. The Chinese may say that they would

be opposed to a nuclear threat without being able to deter it by risk of retaliation. In such circumstances, they may not go along with any restrictions in future stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

And, if China would not accept the proposal for a prohibition on further production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium for weapons purposes, I fear India would also refuse.

Further work on TMD and demand for modifications of the ABM [Anti-Ballistic Missile] Treaty will also upset the Russians. I fear the TMD could spark a new arms race. It is a factor leading me to be less optimistic about global cooperation on nuclear non-proliferation than I was six months ago.

EIR: The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency and House International Relations Committee claim that North Korea is now carrying on vast nuclear proliferation at more than a dozen secret sites. Do you believe this, or do you believe that the 1994 Agreed Framework between the United States and North Korea is holding up?

Blix: Claims by intelligence may or may not be true. Without any evidence presented, how can one know? What the IAEA knows is that in the declared and inspected installations, the D.P.R.K. [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] had re-processed more than once, and that they must have more plutonium than they declared. But it could be eight grams, or eight kilograms. Not very likely more. We have not seen

evidence of any other. If there is such evidence, let's see it.

The 1994 Agreed Framework is basically a fragile construction, but I don't see anything better. The North Koreans launching rockets last summer is worrisome, and certainly makes some peaceful accommodation on the peninsula even more urgent. I support the concept of four-party talks.

EIR: Lyndon LaRouche designed the original Strategic Defense Initiative for President Ronald Reagan in the early 1980s, to share technologies to develop a nuclear umbrella based on new physical principles with the Soviet Union, but they rejected it in 1984. Russian President Boris Yeltsin later, in 1993, proposed this same program under the name of "Trust." What do you think about collaborating with Russia and China in this way to reduce the threat of war under the Mutually Assured Destruction doctrine?

Blix: The world has scraped by with deterrence thus far, but as a philosophy, Mutually Assured Destruction is not the proper permanent solution. Détente, disarmament, and development is the better way, in my view.

It seems somewhat paradoxical to have nuclear weapons states jointly developing a program under which they can defend themselves vis-à-vis each other. If the reality is that they need protection against, say, North Korea, could it not be done more cheaply and with less damage to the nuclear disarmament efforts?

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