

bulletin

No. 59

January–March 2012

Half-truths, myths and lies

By Jerry Sommer

As was the case in Iraq, today a possible strike on Iran is justified with half-truths, myths and incorrect statements. Such statements by politicians as well as often one-sided, uncritical or even alarmist press coverage impede serious debate.

Myth No. 1: "Iran seeks nuclear weapons." People may believe this, yet there is no clear evidence for this assumption. It is not only the Iranian leadership who strongly deny any intention of wanting to have nuclear weapons. Even US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta assessed earlier this year: "Are they [Iran] trying to develop a nuclear weapon? No."¹

It is true that in principle, Iran would have the technology to build a nuclear bomb, James Clapper, Director of the US National Intelligence, declared on 16 February 2012² but Teheran has so far not decided to do so. According to US Intelligence, Iran halted its structured nuclear weapons program in 2003 and so far has not decided to restart it.

Myth No. 2: "Time is running out." Should Iran decide to build a nuclear weapon, inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), who are currently controlling all nuclear facilities of Iran 24 hours a day, would first have to be expelled from the country. US Defense Secretary Panetta stated in an interview that even if Iran decided to build it, it "would probably take them about a year to be able to produce [the nuclear material needed] and then possibly another one to two years in order to put it on a deliverable vehicle of some sort in order to deliver that weapon."³

Myth No. 3: "When Iran has the bomb, it will be an existential threat to Israel." An error of judgement, which is also strongly refuted by numerous Israelis. Dan Halutz, former Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces, for instance, stated in early February, "Iran poses a serious threat, but

not an existential one. The use of this terminology is misleading. If it is intended to encourage a strike on Iran, it's a mistake."⁴ The highest-ranking military officer in the United States, General Martin Dempsey, too, stated not long ago, "We are of the opinion that the Iranian regime is a rational actor."⁵

Any strike on Israel by Iran would lead to a devastating counter attack. It is true that the Iranian leadership violates human rights but they are not suicidal. Securing the regime is their top priority—especially the fact that they remain in power.

Myth No. 4: "By isolating and sanctioning Iran, one can force the leadership to give up uranium enrichment." The declared goal of the West so far is to make Teheran stop any uranium enrichment activities—even if they are merely used to produce nuclear fuel rods for civilian nuclear reactors. There is, however, a broad consensus in Iran not to relinquish nuclear technology. It is seen as a symbol for technological progress and national independence—even by the 'green' opposition. The latest US and European sanctions, which also forbid the purchase of Iranian oil, will not change this.

Such myths are used to make a strike on Iran (which in any case would violate international law) appear virtually inevitable. But this is also not true.

There is still time for diplomacy—but genuine diplomacy is needed. First, the unrealistic and maximalist demand for a general suspension of uranium enrichment in Iran has to be dropped. (Anyway, enrichment for peaceful purposes like nuclear fuel is a legal right resulting from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.) In return, Iran would, in a real *quid pro quo*, have to allow additional control and inspection rights for the IAEA and be prepared to agree on further limitations of its uranium enrichment activities, for instance, to just below five percent.

The chances for building trust exist. Iran should answer open questions by the IAEA on its nuclear program transparently. Also, it would be beneficial to take up Teheran's offer to completely stop its own production of 20 percent enriched uranium in exchange for a delivery of nuclear fuel rods by the international community that Iran needs for

its research reactor in Teheran where medical isotopes are produced.

On top, a real paradigm change should include security guarantees to Iran by the United States—as they have been offered to North Korea—and the prospect of a comprehensive normalization of relations instead of working towards a regime change. A policy of détente towards Iran could not only bring movement into the bogged down nuclear conflict but also open up new avenues for the democratic opposition in Iran.

If, however, the turnaround towards genuine diplomacy does not succeed, it is feared that calls for even more severe sanctions culminating in demands of a complete economic blockade of Iran will aggravate the current scenario until no other option but a military strike will seem to remain. Currently it seems likely that following the warnings of US President Barack Obama, Iran will not yet be attacked. But a war of aggression could draw nearer after the Elections in the United States if the logic of escalation to date is not broken.

- 1 Leon Panetta in CBS "Face the Nation," 8 January 2012; http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-3460_162-57354645/panetta-iran-cannot-develop-nukes-block-strait/
- 2 S. James Clapper, 16 February 2012: "Unclassified Statement for the Record on the Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community for the Senate Committee on Armed Services"; <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2012/02%20February/Clapper%2002-16-12.pdf>
- 3 http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18560_162-57367997/the-defense-secretary-leon-panetta/?pageNum=2&tag=contentMain:contentBody
- 4 <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4184670,00.html>
- 5 <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1202/19/fzgps.01.html>

Jerry Sommer is BICC Research Associate.

Extract from Jerry Sommer. 2012. BICC *Feature 2*: "Krieg gegen den Iran – Tickt die Uhr?" (in German). Available at http://www.bicc.de/uploads/pdf/publications/features/2012/feature%202_iran_d.pdf.

Bonn International Center for Conversion
bulletin No. 59

BICC (Bonn International Center for Conversion) is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting peace and development through applied research, advisory services and training.

This newsletter is published quarterly by

© BICC

Pfarrer-Byns-Straße 1, 53121 Bonn, Germany.

Responsible for this issue: Susanne Heinke,
Heike Webb (editing, layout).

Phone: +49-228-911960

Fax: +49-228-91196-22

E-mail: bicc@bicc.de

Internet: www.bicc.de

Staff Spotlight



Princess Mawuena
Amuzu

Princess Mawuena Amuzu first joined BICC in October 2011 as an Intern from the MA Development and Governance Program, University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany. She is currently the Research Assistant on the Small Arms and Light Weapons Team working on issues such as SALW control, DD&R and Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS).

Although her interests are wide ranging, her stint with peace and conflict studies began in 2007 during her National Service Year at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KA IPTC) in Ghana. This led to an MA Degree in International Affairs at the Legon Centre for International Affairs (LECIA), University of Ghana. Its product was a thesis on Human Trafficking in Ghana and an Assessment of Policy Responses. After this, she completed internships in the Governance Unit of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ghana and the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) and Gender Programs of the KA IPTC. With profound interest in conflict resolution, her Master Thesis at the University of Duisburg-Essen dealt with Peace Agreement Implementation and Conditions for Success (case study of the Mozambican Peace Process). Her academic foundation is a Bachelor Degree in Psychology with Sociology. During her stay at BICC, Princess also intends to explore issues related to peace education and natural resource governance in Africa.

Princess Mawuena Amuzu is inspired by her network of mentors, family and friends and is continually dedicated to her self-improvement. In Germany, she has rekindled her passion for crime fiction and hopes to improve her language skills. With more than just a stroke of the noted Ghanaian friendliness, Princess Mawuena enjoys a hearty chat and a good laugh. She also likes Sudoku, beading jewellery, and taking leisurely walks.

→ For further information, please contact Princess Amuzu at amuzu@bicc.de.

Socio-economic repercussions of oil investments in Upper Nile State, South Sudan

Which impact do oil operations have on a conflict society, in particular on communities located in the oil area, and how do people living in the proximity to oil production sites deal with this situation? Since August 2011, BICC researchers have been working on these questions in collaboration with ECOS (European Coalition on Oil in Sudan). The BMZ-sponsored project combines desk research with two field research journeys.

The world's newest state, South Sudan, has inherited most of the Sudanese oil fields, but also violence and poverty. Until recently, all oil was exported via pipelines through Sudan, and oil revenues contributed more than 90 percent to the budget of the Government of South Sudan. By their sheer financial volume, oil revenues could contribute significantly to development and peace in South Sudan. But, like in many other cases, oil wealth creates economic downturn and conflicts between different actors. While much research looks into this "resource curse" from the macro or national level, the BICC research project approaches the nexus between oil extraction, development and conflict at the local level. In particular, it looks into the development activities of the Chinese–Malaysian–Sudanese oil company Petrodar and the Government of South Sudan, investigates the relationship between Petrodar, the government, its sub-levels and the neighboring communities in Melut county, and studies the activities of the local inhabitants geared at solving oil-related problems on their own.

The BICC researchers successfully concluded a first four-week research journey to oil blocks three and seven in South Sudan's Upper Nile State in the end of 2011. They are now analyzing the data they gathered through interviews with representatives of the oil company, local communities, and government authorities. Preliminary results indicate that the history of civil war has left significant traces in the local society. Hostilities and distrust shape the relationship between communities and the staff of the oil consortium, between local sub-clans, between communities and the local government, the county commissioner, the state governor, and members of the National Assembly.

The conditions for research worsened in early 2012, because the tensions between Sudan and South Sudan escalated and led to the cancellation of oil extraction in South Sudan. Currently no oil

is being exported and South Sudan's national budget is under severe stress. ECOS researchers will conduct a second field visit, complementing the first study and investigating how the current developments affect the relations between local and state government and the communities in Melut county.

→ For further information please contact Dr. Elke Grawert at grawert@bicc.de



TERAS-INDEX Project

BICC is part of the TERAS-INDEX project, which is coordinated at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy of the University of Hamburg (IFSH) and financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). As a contribution to this project, BICC has just completed developing the first version of a comprehensive database on European foreign and security policy in the Middle East.

The database contains information on the foreign and security policy of five European countries (Germany, France, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom) in 18 countries of the Middle Eastern region (as well as Afghanistan and Pakistan). Drawing on a wide selection of sources, the database covers a ten-year period (1999–2009).

It is structured in accordance to three overall issues: 1) armament policies, including military aid and arms exports; 2) data on police and military missions (particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq); 3) foreign policy events, including development aid, trade statistics, official visits and statements. Access to the database is presently restricted to project partners of TERAS-INDEX.

→ For further information please contact Marc von Boemcken at boemcken@bicc.de

New BICC Publications

Marc von Boemcken (ed.). 2011. BICC brief 45. Commercial Security and Development. Bonn: BICC. December
<http://www.bicc.de/uploads/pdf/publications/briefs/brief45/brief45.pdf>

Jerry Sommer. 2012. BICC *Feature 2*. „Krieg gegen den Iran – Tickt die Uhr“ (in German). Bonn: BICC. March
http://www.bicc.de/uploads/pdf/publications/features/2012/feature%20iran_d.pdf

Elke Grawert. 2011. „State Building im Südsudan: Wie können Staatsaufbau und Friedenssicherung zusammenkommen?“ *Loccumer Protokolle 02/11* „Good Enough Governance. Wie kommt der Südsudan zu tragfähiger Staatlichkeit und funktionierender Verwaltung?“. Rehburg-Loccum
<http://www.loccum.de/protokoll/inhalt/inh1102.html>

Andreas Heinemann-Grüder. 2011. *Föderalismus als Konfliktregelung. Indien, Russland, Spanien und Nigeria im Vergleich*. Leverkusen-Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich.

Michael Ashkenazi/ Andreas Heinemann-Grüder (co-editors). 2011. „Sicherheit und Frieden 4“. (Thematic issue on the theme of security apparatuses in fragile and authoritarian states. The papers were initially presented at a BICC-organized symposium in 2010.)

BICC Notes

Under the leadership of the Vice President of the Republic of South Sudan, Dr. Riek Machar Teny, a High-Level Conference took place in Juba on 19 March 2012. It brought together the Republic's top leadership (Presidency, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Defense) and the security sector top leadership to discuss and initiate concrete and systematic arms and ammunition management activities (stockpile management) within the security sector. Marius Kahl, Technical Advisor BICC, supported the conference. The conference was funded by the German Foreign Office.

→ For further information please contact Marius Kahl at kahl@bicc.de

On Wednesday, 14 March 2012, BICC in cooperation with the Forum-One-World (FEW) Bonn organized a talk by Jerry Sommer on “War against Iran – Is the clock ticking?” followed by a discussion, which was facilitated by Peter J. Croll. Ahad Rahmanzadeh, FEW, participated in the panel with a keynote presentation.

→ For further information please contact Susanne Heinke at pr@bicc.de



On 29 February, BICC and Südwind organized a conference in Bonn on Artisanal Miners in the DR Congo and Peru: Which approaches can improve social and environmental conditions? Representatives from development organizations, industry, Fair Trade, and research as well as artisanal miners from the DRC and Peru discussed this topic. The conference was based on findings from a research project of both institutes, which is supported by Misereor, the Protestant Development Service (EED), the Stiftung Umwelt und Entwicklung NRW (SUE) and the Stiftung Internationale Begegnung of the Sparkasse in Bonn.

→ For further information please contact Marie Mueller at mueller@bicc.de

On behalf of KfW German Development Bank, Wolf-Christian Paes and BICC consultant Jens Hahne conducted a pre-feasibility assessment on possible German support to the civilian component of the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) in February. The team traveled to Addis Ababa and Nairobi and met with representatives of the African Union, the United Nations, donor governments and the humanitarian community.

→ For further information please contact Wolf-Christian Paes at paes@bicc.de

On 27 January 2012, BICC and the magazine “Wissenschaft und Frieden” organized a lecture on Climate Change and Security: Conflict potential and Cooperation in the Mediterranean by Prof. Dr. Jürgen Scheffran, Leader of the Research Group Climate Change and Security (CLISEC), Hamburg.

→ For further information please contact Susanne Heinke at pr@bicc.de