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Nuclear Conflict with Iran—Which Paths Lead to De-escalation?

By Jerry Sommer

As was to be expected, Iran rejected the demands of the UN Security Council to suspend its uranium enrichment activities by 31 August 2006. However, it did declare its willingness to negotiate and agree to extensive international controls on its nuclear program in a detailed reply to the offer made by Russia, China, the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany to settle the dispute over the Iranian nuclear program.

It is now time to depart from the logic of escalation and to start negotiations in order to reach a compromise which is acceptable to both sides. The 'red line' for Iran must be that it should not produce nuclear weapons, and not that it should not conduct a uranium enrichment program. The only possible compromise must be to allow Iran to use nuclear energy for civilian purposes, including uranium enrichment activities, in accordance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty, perhaps following the temporary suspension of such activities. In return, Iran must agree to extensive international controls as well as to a limit on its autonomous nuclear activities through the internationalization of the fuel cycle to guarantee that the peaceful use of nuclear energy does not turn into a military use.

The West should introduce the following changes in its policy to enable successful negotiations:

- It should drop its demand that Iran must halt its uranium enrichment activities before negotiations can begin. These activities have been extremely limited so far. Iran will not fulfil this maximalist demand—and it is not necessary to prevent an Iranian atom bomb in the long term. Negotiations with Iran on the offer put forward by the Six Powers must begin as quickly as possible.

- The negotiations must aim for the temporary suspension of and a limit on uranium enrichment in Iran. The West should focus its attention on the demand for the faster implementation of comprehensive international controls on the Iranian nuclear program in accordance with the Supplementary Protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
- The Six Powers should clarify and expand a number of points in their offer. This must clearly state how the United States' sanctions policy against Iran, which is also hindering or even preventing European exports, can be partially or fully terminated.
- Iran's security problems should be taken seriously. The United States should declare, as it has done with regard to North Korea, that it does not intend to attack Iran with conventional or nuclear weapons. The Europeans should call upon the United States to act accordingly. The objective of a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East, as was already offered by the EU 3 last year, should be included in the package of offers proposed by the Six Powers.

Along these lines, a comprehensive negotiating compromise can be achieved. A continuation of the current policy, on the other hand, carries the threat of an escalation with no end in sight. Confrontation, isolation, threats of force, etc. serve to strengthen the hard-liners in Iran and hamper or prevent the desired democratization of Iran and the appeasement of the already tense situation in the Middle East.

The alternative to negotiations could be a dynamic escalation which might be very difficult to halt: First of all 'mild' and then perhaps stronger sanctions whose effects are dubious—providing they could even be approved unanimously—, counter-measures on the part of Iran, which could even go so far as to leave the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and ultimately even possibly a war against Iran, led primarily by the United States, with or without legitimation from the UN Security Council.

It must be strongly doubted whether the sanctions which are currently being discussed would have the desired effect on the Iranian leadership—the suspension of uranium enrichment activities. At best, they threaten to be ineffective and probably even counterproductive. Ultimately a solution can only be found through negotiations.

In other words, de-escalation should be on the top of the agenda. Here the EU together with China and Russia can play a significant role as mediator. Relations between the United States and Iran are historically strained. Hard-liners both in Teheran and Washington have little interest in a compromise. It is particularly important to start negotiations between Iran and the Six Powers (or an extended forum) immediately. Maximalist, unrealistic and unnecessary preconditions should be dropped, either implicitly or explicitly. On the other hand, the demand for transparency in Iran's nuclear program must take center stage very soon.

At the same time, a comprehensive negotiating compromise requires the normalization of relations between the United States and Iran. The EU Member States in particular should call upon the United States' government to give Iran security guarantees and also to begin direct talks, as was recently demanded in a public statement by 21 former US generals and politicians¹. A strategy of involving Iran would appear to be more promising than a strategy of isolation and confrontation.

¹ Glantz, Aaron. 2006. "Bush Must Negotiate to Make America Safer, Say Former Generals". *OneWorld US*, 18 August.

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Staff Spotlight



Elvan Isikozlu

Elvan joined BICC in September 2005 as an intern from Project Ploughshares sponsored by the Government of Canada. She was subsequently hired as a Research Assistant for the Training and Education on Small Arms (TRESA) project, and is currently engaged in BICC's capacity-building project for small arms control in South Sudan.

After having completed an honors bachelor degree (B.Arts Sc.) that combined both the arts and sciences (and everything in between), Elvan decided to pursue her passion for peace and conflict studies. In 2004, she obtained an MA in International Affairs from the Norman Paterson School in Ottawa, specializing in conflict analysis and conflict resolution. During her studies, she joined the Mine Action Team at Foreign Affairs Canada, where she supported the Canadian Government's leadership role in the global effort to ban landmines, also known as the Ottawa Convention. Through this experience, Elvan developed a keen interest in disarmament issues and, having witnessed the incredible progress made on the landmines issue, decided to shift her attention to another daunting threat—small arms and light weapons.

Nowhere is this threat more potent than on the continent of Africa. As part of BICC's South Sudan project team, Elvan's responsibilities include developing a training curriculum for civil society on small arms control, strengthening local partnerships and delivering training workshops for civil society participants.

When she's not glued to her computer, Elvan enjoys going for early morning jogs along the Rhine and testing out what Bonn culture and cuisine have to offer. She also loves to take advantage of living in a country that borders nine others and takes every opportunity to see as much of Germany and Western Europe as possible.

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Arms Export Documentation Service

The German discussion on arms exports often suffers from a lack of information on the situation of the recipient states. This often starts with general data which are easily accessible, such as the economic situation, then becomes more difficult with political topics such as human rights and finds its peak in data on the military sector which can only be found in specific military- and security-related journals and statistical databases.

With its database at www.bicc.de/ruestungsexport/, BICC provides two types of *information sources*. On the one hand, a large database offers solid political, economic and security data on 170 countries and examines how they meet the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports. Its aim is to improve the information basis in the discussion on German arms exports and to make German arms exports policy more assessable. For this purpose BICC supplies basic information on armaments, the military and the security of important states receiving German military goods. In order to classify each country, BICC pools a number of different data sets, for example from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the World Bank, the United Nations, or Freedom House.

On the other hand, the website includes detailed country reports in PDF format on 16 selected recipient states of German arms exports outside of NATO. The reports are only available in German language and were last updated in Spring 2006.

The project is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), which has become an important actor in German arms exports through its membership in the Federal Security Council (*Bundessicherheitsrat*) and is interested in a broad dissemination of solid and reliable arms exports data.

In the project extension phase of Autumn and Winter 2006–2007, BICC will update the database and the 16 country reports. It is also intended to expand the data scope by some new indicators as well as to provide country specific evaluation and cartographic presentation of the data via GIS technology.

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SALW-Control Training in Southern Sudan

In late 2006, BICC facilitated a series of workshops with representatives from civil society, legislators, local government, police, military, the South Sudan DDR Commission (SSDDRC) and the international community in South Sudan. Over 130 participants took part in the training courses, which took place in the towns of Juba, Yei, Bor and Ayod.

The security situation in South Sudan almost two years after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) is still fragile. Implementation of the CPA is slow, the mistrust between the different parties considerable. The planning and implementation of the DDR process (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of former combatants) and the disarmament of civilians, whose success will be decisive for the progress of peace and stability in the country, is still at the very beginning. The lack of reliable and well-trained police forces in the country, the abundance of SALW (Small Arms and Light Weapons) and insufficient SALW control measures are adding to the problem.

The training workshops addressed these problems by transferring knowledge on SALW control and DDR and by discussing local solutions to the specific local problems related to small arms control, armed violence and DDR. The training course for the legislative assembly focused mainly on legislative processes. The courses targeting civil society concentrated on developing awareness-raising activities on SALW control and challenges involved in the reintegration of ex-combatants. The courses outputs included the joint development of SALW control programs for a boma (village) or specific project ideas that might be implemented by local partner organizations, thus ensuring sustainability beyond the duration of the training project.

Given the high need and demand for training courses on SALW control and DDR, BICC aims to continue and expand its training activities in South Sudan in order to build capacities in all 10 states and with all relevant stakeholders in SALW control.

→ For further information please contact
→ Julie Brethfeld at jb@bicc.de

BICC staff wishes you all a Happy New Year

New BICC Publications

paper 51:

Christopher Fitzpatrick. 2006. *The Economics of Small Arms Demand: Polarization and Rent-seeking in Haiti and Latin America*. November

paper 52:

Redaktion: Jerry Sommer, Autoren: Karim Sadjadpur, Götz Neuneck, Bernd W. Kubbig, Oliver Meier, Tim Guldemann. 2006. *Iran: Wege aus der nuklearen Sackgasse Optionen, Barrieren und Chancen für eine Verhandlungslösung*. August

paper 53:

Michael Brzoska. 2006. *Analysis of and Recommendations for Covering Security Relevant Expenditures Within and Outside of Official Development Assistance (ODA)*. December

Handreichung:

Burghardt, Diana and Tobias Pietz. 2006. *Themenbereiche und Konfliktfelder zivil-militärischer Beziehungen*. November

forthcoming

focus 3:

Christine Beeck. 2007. *Re-paving the Road to Peace—Outlook for Lasting Peace in Aceh Province, Indonesia*. January

BICC Notes

The Ministry for Inter-Generation and Family Affairs, Women and Integration (MGFFI) and BICC are holding an international workshop on "Conflict factor or crisis management? The Role of the African Diaspora in Conflicts" on 15 January 2007. The workshop will discuss how and to what extent the African diaspora living in Germany contributes to conflict development in the home countries.

→ For further information please contact Julie Brethfeld at jb@bicc.de

The President of the Philipps-University Marburg, Professor Dr. Volker Nienhaus, has approved of the unanimous proposal of the selection committee, to give the Peter-Becker-Award for Peace and Conflict Research 2006 to Professor Dr. Herbert Wulf, founding director of BICC (1994–2001). This award is granted to work or projects that foster academic knowledge on the causes, development, and management of conflicts and make a practical implementation of such knowledge possible. The award ceremony will take place on 9 February 2007 at the University of Marburg.

→ For further information please contact pr@bicc.de

On the occasion of the UN Human Rights Day, Parliamentary State Secretary at the BMZ, Karin Kortmann, opened the BICC photo exhibition "Millennium Development Goals 2015—Acting globally in the fight against poverty, for development and peace". The exhibition was open from 7 December 2006 until 5 January 2007 in the foyer of the BMZ in Berlin.

Further venues in the year 2006 were Hanover (City Hall), Mainz (Theater) and Dusseldorf (MGFFI).

→ For further information please contact pr@bicc.de or www.bicc.de/mdg/

From 30 November until 1 December, Julie Brethfeld participated in the workshop "Integrating Small Arms Measures into Development Programmes" in Oslo, organized by the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers. Presentations and discussions focused on to what extent SALW control elements are and should be integrated into development programs, on challenges involved, as well as on lessons learned. A paper of Michael Ashkenazi on "Using local skills to assess the impact of small arms projects" was presented on the second day.

→ For further information please contact Julie Brethfeld at jb@bicc.de or www.prio.no/page/Forsiden_detaljer/PRIO_news_brief_2006/9222/48997.html

For the third time now, BICC opened its doors for visitors, this time on 22 November. Various projects were presented in a comprehensive program of talks. The closing events were a private view of the exhibition "Impressions of the Western Balkans" with photographs taken by Tobias Pietz and the panel discussion "The Balkans on the way to new instability?" with Dr. Bettina Burkart (Deutsche Welle), Dr. Bruno Schoch (Hessische Stiftung für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung) and Tobias Pietz (BICC).

→ For further information please contact pr@bicc.de or www.bicc.de/events/

From 27 October to 15 November Christine Beeck traveled to Aceh, Indonesia, where she collected data and conducted interviews with a variety of national and international stakeholders involved in the ongoing Aceh peace process for the BICC study "Analysis of the implementation of DDR (Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration) in Aceh Province, Indonesia", which is being led by Ms Beeck.

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