

**THE EU NON-PROLIFERATION AND  
DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE**

KEYNOTE SPEECH

FRIDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2012

**HANS BLIX**  
DIRECTOR GENERAL EMERITUS OF THE IAEA

## Opening Remarks

### **Mark Fitzpatrick, IISS**

Welcome to this dinner. Our keynote speaker, Dr Hans Blix, has kindly agreed to join us tonight to share more of the words of wisdom that he has been parcelling out throughout the day. The rule here at this conference is that we do not read long biographies, but we just introduce by title. In the case of Dr Blix, however, one never knows exactly which title to use. Does one say 'Mr Minister', 'Mr Director General' or 'Mr Chairman'? One time I was in Stockholm where he was being introduced with all of these titles, yet he is the easiest dinner speaker to invite because he is so humble. He said, 'No, I am no longer the foreign minister, I am not the chairman, I am a former director general. I have no rank. Just call me Private Hans Blix'. So, Private Blix, I urge you to take the podium and thank you very much for joining us.

## Keynote Speech

### **Hans Blix, Director General Emeritus, IAEA**

In all humility, I am now going to sing for my supper. I am happy to have the opportunity to speak to so many experts on non-proliferation and disarmament, and to see so many old friends. I must start, however, by joining my expansion of sadness that one strong and intelligent voice is missing – Thérèse Delpech. We all respected her clear thinking and had great fondness for her. She was a member of the College of Commissioners of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), the Iraqi inspection team, and she played a great role there, being upright, forceful and intelligent. I welcome a specifically European caucus on non-proliferation and disarmament. Of course, much of the thinking on these subjects is common the world over. Nevertheless, we come from different experiences – even within the EU. If we want the Union to be an important voice in the world, we need to discuss what that voice could and should be. For instance to Iran, 'Hopefully very soon in Istanbul'.

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union was a common threat to the Euro-Atlantic community, making united stands under US leadership natural in areas of non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control. The cohesion remains and US and European ambitions in this field have mostly continued in healthy harmony after the end of the Cold War. There are, however, also differences, for instance, on the ratification of the CTBT.

Differences in outlook became conspicuous during the unilateralism that blossomed under the Bush Jr administration. A famous line by Robert Kagan told us that Americans are from Mars and Europeans from Venus. Americans act and fight, Europeans – not least in the EU – talk endlessly. If true, is it that, after many centuries of war, we – and the Russians too – do not have the stomach for more weapons and fighting? My personal conviction is that Europeans would still rally to armed action, if needed, for self-defence, but they would do so also rarely and reluctantly in other cases – as in Libya.

Will European states today join in a war against Iran? In the Iraq war, several European countries joined to eradicate WMD that did not exist. Are European governments ready now to join in the eradication of Iranian WMD intentions that may or may not exist? I have no doubt that most Europeans would wish Iran to stop uranium enrichment and condemn wild and populist statements about wiping Israel off the map, but Iran has not launched an attack on anybody, nor does any attack seem imminent on their part, and nor will the Security Council authorise the use of armed force. Armed action now against Iran would not be pre-emptive but preventive and in disregard of the UN Charter.

Lord Hannay made this point in the morning, and he commented that, when they come to start war, they do not always look at international law. However, after the Iraq war, we have had a very good and serious discussion about the legality of the war. There has been a strong argument, not simply among lawyers but also in politics, and notably in the UK.

I doubt that the Obama administration or the Pentagon wants a third war – a preventive war—in the Middle East. I feel less sure about the still significant forces in the US that favoured the unipolar world and shared the attitudes of Mr Kagan. The difference between those attitudes and the European views were well reflected in declarations of 2003, and the Europeans were quoted this morning. In the European Security Strategy of 12 December 2003, I find the following statement:

...The fundamental framework for international relations is the United Nations Charter. The United Nations Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Strengthening the United Nations, equipping it to fulfil its responsibilities and to act effectively, is a European priority.

In the same year, the Basic Principles of the European Strategy against Proliferation of WMD, I find it stated that: 'The best solution to the problem of proliferation of WMD is that countries should no longer feel that they need them. If possible, political solutions should be found to the problems which lead them to seek WMD.' By contrast, in the US National Defense Strategy of 2005, I read: 'The end of the Cold War and our capacity to influence global events open the possibility for a new and peaceful system in the world.'

In the same year, leading political figures in the US left no doubt they thought the UN was useless. An article by Newt Gingrich, now a presidential candidate, had the title 'A limited UN is best for America'. The article made it clear that 'failure' was not an option for the US but could be for the UN.

Even though President Obama did not mention the UN in his recent State of the Union message, he lost no time after his election in 2008 to bring the US government back to positive attitudes to multilateral cooperation, to the UN and to internationally legally binding agreements on arms control and disarmament. Europe and the world were enthusiastic, when Obama and Medvedev met in London and declared that they wished to put the Cold War definitively in the past and even supported the aim of a complete elimination of nuclear weapons. We remember Obama's speeches in Prague and Cairo, and the relative success of the NPT review conference in 2010.

We do not doubt that the continued wish of the Obama administration is to tackle more issues on the disarmament agenda and I am sure that Europe welcomes many steps actually taken by it, most recently, for instance, regarding the Code of Conduct for Space Faring Nations. We had a discussion on that subject this afternoon and I think there was some hope that the European draft on outer-space guidelines could once again become relevant for an international discussion. However, we are bound to note that the ratification process for START in the US Senate showed the difficulty of getting any proposal for arms control and disarmament through that body. This, of course, is what currently stops the CTBT.

We are also bound to note that, as the global superpower, the US has wider security and military interests than European states; for instance, in the non-proliferation problem of North East Asia, a matter that is interesting but hardly directly engaging the EU. This afternoon, I think the Europeans' position was described as 'constructive bystander', which I think was an apt description.

While recognising that the US must tailor the size and composition of its military might to cope with interests over the whole world, one may query whether the size of the US defence budget – even after the proposed cuts – is not excessive. It cannot be explained by the need adequately to meet what we are often told is the greatest threat to the US and the world – a threat we are not inclined to belittle; namely, nuclear proliferation and terrorism.

As the US seems to be practically writing off the risk of a military conflict with Russia, must we not conclude that it is concern about the rise of China and the ever-present influence of a powerful military-industrial complex that lead both to the huge budget and to scepticism about restrictions in the field of arms control and disarmament? Regrettably, the size may be triggering an undesirable expansion of defence budgets in several other countries. Asia is getting richer, which we welcome; it is also getting richer in weapons.

Most European governments are not expanding their military budgets. They do not have the same wide interest as the US and are not subjected to quite the same pressure as the US government. They govern in countries tired of the history of centres of war and weapons expenses. Some of them have nearly shelved the idea of territorial defence. Most European states allocate less than 2% of their GNP to military expenses and are basically unsympathetic to expenses for armament and basically positive to arms control and disarmament.

The lone US superpower that remains ready so far to pay dearly to retain its global military supremacy clearly looks with some dismay at the Europeans. Before leaving his post as former secretary of defense, Mr Gates warned NATO allies about spending too little on defence and said that future American generations might 'turn away from spending so much to defend its wealthy allies in Europe'. I imagine many Europeans would simply ask, 'Defend against whom'?

US naval deployments in Asia-Pacific and the Middle East – not least in the Persian Gulf – is increasing greatly and in areas beyond direct European interests and influence. I see a new US 'containment policy' being developed vis-à-vis China. Many Europeans may have doubt about this policy and regret some of its cost. Some who are concerned about proliferation were dismayed about the exception for India when the US pushed through the NSG to secure its nuclear alliance with India. Different views were expressed this morning about it, and I certainly feel that it was a very strong push that was very hard for other governments to resist. Many of these Europeans would feel that Pakistan's current blocking of the CD and of the negotiations on the FMCT has been a sad result of that.

Personally, I would only hope that this traditionalist US balance-of-power policy will be accompanied by a policy of inclusion and regard for legitimate Chinese interests. There is some risk otherwise of an arms race in the region. The absence of an FMCT could also trigger a sad nuclear race involving India, Pakistan and China. No doubt China, on its part, could also contribute to détente. Questions relating to Taiwan and to the border with India call for prudence.

Many differences in the Far East relate to maritime borders and small islands, like the Spratley Islands in the South China Sea. It would be a very good thing if all concerned, including China, rather than relying on their negotiating power, agreed to refer such differences to the International Court of Justice or other judicial settlement. I recall that the UK and France, a number of years ago, settled a longstanding dispute they had about some islands in the English Channel – the Minquiers and the Écréhous. Norway and Denmark also settled a very big dispute about the sovereignty of eastern Greenland – a big chunk of land

that came under Danish sovereignty. The judicial settlement of these disputes can be an excellent mode of doing away with the problems of maritime borders and islands, without any loss of prestige on either side.

Let me conclude by reverting to relations with Russia. It was the termination of the massive Soviet military threat over 20 years ago that opened up an era of détente and disarmament in the world. A wave of welcome actions rolled in during the first half of the 1990s. The new wave that we saw coming in 2009 and 2010 stagnated last year, as David Hannay remarked this morning. It will require prudent policies by the biggest military powers to handle the risks of nuclear proliferation in North East Asia and in the Middle East, and to handle their own interrelations to allow this wave to resume its force. Mutual economic dependence (MED), rather than familiar MAD, may help to prompt such prudence.

Europe is not the main actor in this new act of the drama but it still has an important part to play, not least to help consolidate good relations with Russia. As I said earlier I think the US has largely and rightly written off the risk of war with Russia. They now only talk about one big war at a time in the new proposed defence budget. Despite some qualms caused by the uncertain movement toward democracy in Russia, the US seeks to complete this historical turn. A 'reset' is sought to remove irritants, achieve détente, positive cooperation on Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea and a further reduction in nuclear arsenals beyond START. In all these ambitions, I am sure European states are supportive.

The result so far has been mixed. At long last Russia has been eased into the WTO. It has a nuclear cooperation agreement with the US. Russia is allowing military US transports to Afghanistan. On the other hand, the Russian intervention in Ossetia, and what was in part an overreaction to it, shows that we need further training in good neighbourly relations on the European continent. It is a pity that the entry into force of the amendments to the Conventional Forces Agreement in Europe (CFE) remains blocked and that NATO has not yet agreed to remove militarily useless tactical nuclear weapons from Europe.

More serious is that a follow-up on the 2010 START is blocked. The shield against intermediate-range missiles poisons the atmosphere. I confess that the controversy puzzles me. I do not understand the Russian demand for a legally binding declaration that the shield will not be used against Russia. What real assurance would be attained from paper guarantees? I also do not understand why the shield should be necessary. Are Europeans really worried – or should they be worried – about a threat of missile attacks from Iran and North Korea? Would not the prospect of solid retaliation suffice to deter any temptation in North Korea or Iran to attack Europe?

Mr Chairman, fellow talkative citizens from Venus, let us raise our glasses to our continued discussions and to our new European caucus on non-proliferation and disarmament.