

The Politicization of the IAEA

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Dangers of nuclear power and the room off the IAEA

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What I wish to talk about today

- Politicization of Iran's nuclear program not unique
- It is a part of a broader problem for UN agencies, in general
 - The ICC, OPCW, UNESCO, UNHRC, for example
- I will discuss a couple examples
 - Chemical weapons inspections in Syria under OPCW
 - Human Rights reports on Israel
- Specific instances in the IAEA
 - Iran nuclear deal and the US-India nuclear deal
- Proposals to reform the IAEA

Politicization of international agencies a serious problem

- Political pressures affect all UN agencies, and the ICC, etc.
- Influence and pressure from powerful UNSC members, especially the U.S., severely limit the independence and objectivity
- Unfortunately, the constant US demand for so-called “UN reform” is a smokescreen to keep the agencies in line

Redlines are drawn for high-level agency officials, which they're not to cross

- Particularly true for the UN secretary general and heads of UN agencies like the UNICEF, UNHRC the IAEA and the likes
- Two Secretary Generals who fell afoul were Boutros Ghali and Kurt Waldheim
- Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, who later became the UN Human Rights Commissioner
- IAEA Director, Mohammed El Baradei

Besides the IAEA, there are other Examples

- Selective prosecution for war crimes
- Outright Suppression of reports, or findings from inquiries set up to investigate violation of human rights by countries like Israel
- The report of the independent commission on the Israeli war on Gaza in 2009 and 2014
- Investigation of the chemical weapons attacks in Syria in August 2013

A recent UN Report finds Israel of practicing apartheid

- Under pressure it is withdrawn from the UN website
- Jordanian diplomat Rima Khalaf resigns in protest



Investigation of Chemical Weapons Use in Syria

- Independent commission of inquiry on Syria was set up in 2011 by the UNHRC with a broad mandate
- Paulo Sergio Pinheiro is the Chair. One of the members is Ms. Carla del Ponte
- According to MS. Del Ponte, the commission was hearing testimony that rebels were using chemical weapons
- She planned to travel to Syria, but the incident at Ghouta took place on August 2013. She could not go

UN quickly set up another inquiry after Ghouta to investigate chemical weapons attacks

- Sidelined the Phiheiro-Commission
- UNSG Moon selected Ake Sellstrom, a Swedish chemist, to head the new investigation
- It was under pressure from the US and allies to fix the blame on Assad
- It issued a report that was heavily influenced by U.S. and British intelligence community
- It clearly lacked integrity
- But Secretary General Moon used this flawed report to all but pin the blame on President Assad
- A similar attempt was made after the recent attacks in Khan Sheikhun in Idlib

A little historical background on IAEA

- 1957- 1961 First DG, US Congressman Cole W. Sterling Cole
- 1961- 1981, Dr. Sigvard Ecklund, a scientist from Sweden
- 1981- 1997, Hans Blix. former Foreign Minister of Sweden
- 1997- 2009 Nobel Peace laureate Mohamed ElBaradei from Egypt
- 2009- Present, Yukia Amano from Japan

Controversies at IAEA

- Controversies to dog IAEA from the beginning
- USA undermined the agency by concluding bilateral agreements with other countries
- The first thirty years also marked by the East West rivalry, but perhaps less controversial
- The situation changed after the collapse of the Soviet Union

Post-Cold war Rise of Political Influence

- The first twenty years the agency was headed by a scientist and it mostly provided technical help to member states
- IAEA maintained good relationships with member states during this period leading up to the signing of the Nonproliferation Treaty of 1968.
- IAEA continued to operate without much controversy after NPT came into force dividing the world into nuclear- haves and have-not's.
- Maintain good relations with those states that were in the position of nuclear weapons and those that didn't. It was particularly true of those countries that had undeclared weapons programs

UNSCOM a turning point

- in April 1991, the Security Council set up the UN Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM)
- It gave two mandates to the IAEA:
 - To uncover and dismantle Iraq's clandestine nuclear program
 - To develop and monitor an Ongoing Monitoring and Verification (ONV) plan
- UNSCOM was a watershed moment for IAEA transformation
 - from a primarily scientific and monitoring-organization to a policing-organization

Changed focus

- Setting up a huge Iraq operation took resources away from other pricing needs like nuclear safety
- More emphasis on safeguards and compliance meant more reliance on outside intelligence from member states
- It created undue influence on the agency from external intelligence agencies, particularly from the western countries

Change of culture

- This change of culture was taking place during the latter half of Hans Blix's tenure
- The Iraq issue brought the DG's office in conflict with powerful member states like the USA
- The conflict became intense after ElBaradei took over. His attempt at independence almost cost him a second term
- Leading up to the US/British invasion of Iraq, ElBaradei refused to support the false claims by the U.S. about WMD in Iraq
- Hans Blix, at the time head of UNMOVIC, expressed reservation

The US-India Nuclear Deal

- A bilateral civil nuclear cooperation agreement signed in 2005 and ratified in 2008
- In the case of the US-India nuclear deal, which was signed in 2005, Mr. ElBaradei was quick to embrace it
- India awarded Mr. ElBaradei the prestigious Indira Gandhi Peace Prize soon after the deal was ratified

Continuing political influence at IAEA - the US-India deal and the JCPOA

- Both were examples of a high degree of political influence on the organization.
- Double standards
 - India is a non-NPT state that had a secret weapons program for a long time
 - Iran is an NPT-state, which is also an advocate for a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East
 - IAEA treated India as if it were a NWS and designed a “India-specific” safeguards protocol for its declared civilian sites

IAEA and the JCPOA

- Soon after Bush declared the “Mission Complete” in Iraq, the US and Israel turned their attention to Iran’s nuclear program
- IAEA was the focal point
- IAEA inspections were reminiscent of the UNSCOM days in Iraq
- As long as Mr. ElBaradei was the DG, IAEA maintained a degree of objectivity
- This has not been the case with Mr. Amano

The so-called “possible nuclear dimension” (PND)

- IAEA opened an investigation of nuclear weapons activities in Iran
- It based a lot of its analysis on PND with the help of information obtained from a laptop computer that was allegedly smuggled out of Iran by western intelligence agencies
- The information was never authenticated
- It was kept open until the very end clearly as a bargaining tool against Iran for years until the end of the JCPOA negotiations

Reforming the Agency

- Many reform proposals are on the table
- Vision 20/20 Report commissioned in 2008
- Obviously, IAEA's main mission "Atoms for Peace" is open to serious reexamination
- Nuclear renaissance has not arrived
- Much more research and vigilance needed on old nuclear plants that are on life support
- Independence from political influence not feasible under the present set-up in the UN