

RESPONSE TO THE IRAN/US CRISIS - PROPOSAL FOR AN EU POLICY
ACT NOW TO CONTROL THE GLOBAL NUCLEAR RISK TODAY AND TOMORROW
FRANCK BIANCHERI @ [4/17/2006](#)

This proposal results from the central objective of democratising the EU, and hence giving European citizens a say on crucial subjects, such as this one, which touch all of them collectively. This motion sets out to achieve the objectives of peace and collective prosperity that are at the heart of the European project for the last fifty years, as well as the desire to preserve vital common European interests (peace, political and economic security in particular).

The current Iran/US crisis has to be treated as a key moment in a general crisis of the current international system, and in particular in the obsolescence of the nuclear non-proliferation policy practiced since 1945. It marks the end of the order established after 1945. The current crisis is a direct confrontation of two logics that have become outdated: that of Iran's leaders, who ignore the collective global interest, focusing on their short term national interests, and that of the US, which believe that their own interests are those of the rest of the world. The policy of nuclear non-proliferation inherited from after the second world war is in crisis, as illustrated by: the growing number of nuclear powers which have not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; by the current crisis with Iran, a country which has however signed the treaty; by the continued development, notably in the USA, of new types of nuclear weapons such as "mini-bombs"; the role of Pakistan in illegal proliferation; and the recent US/Iran agreement which completely ignores the Treaty.

Seen in this context, the US/Iran crisis cannot be looked at as an exceptional case. It has to be managed by placing it in the context of a long term vision, founded on new methods adapted to the realities of the XXIst Century.

The European Union has seen how these logics lead to a dead-end with its tragic past. Thanks to its success in building a peaceful continental system in the last decades, the EU must from now on assume a leading role in building an international system for the XXIst Century. The EU must play an exemplary role, seeking both to satisfy Europe's common interests, and the collective global interest. It is only in showing by its own example that such a policy is possible that the EU will contribute effectively to the promotion of global peace, global democratisation, and collective prosperity, whilst at the same time preserving vital European interests. It is more than urgent that Europeans act, and put on the table new objectives and instruments, instead of seeking to develop new methods that serve obsolete objectives.

Therefore EU leaders have to take responsibility and to reflect in their declarations and deeds the expectations of the vast majority of European citizens, as well as the hopes laced in Europeans by the whole of the planet's population (cf. BBC opinion poll – GlobeScan). Europe's action ought to be developed along the lines of three axes:

1. The EU should engage with the international community to handle the global nuclear threat more effectively, by initiating a reform of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty;
2. The EU should reinforce its role as a motor of the resolution of the Iranian crisis, posing a series of precise objectives and speaking with one voice, and not in the name of Germany, France and Great Britain

3. The EU should create the necessary alliance to build a real international strategy, aimed at bringing together all international actors which share this vision and these objectives.

I- The EU should engage with the international community to handle the global nuclear threat more effectively, by initiating a reform of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

The EU ought to put a proposal for reform of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and all the instruments which it covers on the international table as soon as possible. It has to be adapted to the reality of the XXIst century. Scientific advances and reduced costs make it ever easier to make use of nuclear technology today. As a result, it is difficult to distinguish between the civil and military instruments and business sectors (one only has to look at “dirty bombs” for example). This means that we today can count about forty admitted or hidden nuclear and quasi-nuclear powers, which could possess nuclear arms rapidly (as against 5 at the time of the NPT’s inception). In addition, we have gone from a world which knew that nuclear deterrence could in certain cases guarantee peace (Cold War), to a world where the major worry is the possession of nuclear arms by “infra-state” organisations (which threaten nuclear terrorism).

The new NPT must also draw on the changes that have taken place in the international order since the 60’s. The EU could therefore already suggest three promising paths of reflection in this matter:

- handle the development of civil and military nuclear capacity as a single whole. Access to the Nuclear Club should no longer have as its sole objective to stop the development of military nuclear capacity by offering the authorisation to develop civil nuclear capacity instead. Rather it should seek to convince members of the uselessness of development of military nuclear, or at least to put it in a framework of balanced regional or global deterrence if this cannot be done.
- define the rules of access to the Nuclear Club, no longer basing it on the arbitrary rule of the powers which are already members of the Club, but on a transparent process of membership, including clear rules that are internationally recognised and a multilateral control of their respect, once a member of the club. The examples of the process for joining the European Union or the World Trade Organisation could be used as useful sources of inspiration for the definition of a “political-nuclear acquis” which defines the conditions of access to nuclear capacity in its entirety. Inter alia it should include the necessity of internal democratic political evolution – free elections, political control of the military -, the signature of regional security agreements linked, if possible to regional economic and commercial agreements.
- rethink a number of the fundamental hypotheses of the NPT, which have now been rendered void by history. It must integrate the new dimension of possession of nuclear arms by non-state entities, in order to prevent this possibility and to define the strictest possible sanctions for it. In parallel, one should abandon the hypothesis that in all circumstances the possession of nuclear arms is a destabilising factor. Indeed, European history in the second half of the XXIst Century brought the proof that this affirmation was false. Balanced deterrence can also bring peace when it is impossible to obtain the creation of non-nuclear zones (which will nevertheless remain the main objective of any policy seeking to control nuclear risks).

II- The EU should reinforce its role as a motor of the resolution of the Iranian crisis, posing a series of precise objectives and speaking with one voice, and not in the name of Germany, France and Great Britain.

In the case of Iran, and given the general reforms planned for nuclear non-proliferation, the EU has 3 objectives :

- reinforce peace and prosperity of the region
- reinforce global peace and prosperity
- support political democratisation of the region

The ideal solution would be the general denuclearisation of the Middle-East. It is, alas, an illusory goal in the decades to come, given the refusal of powers such as Israel and Pakistan (nuclear powers non signatory to the NPT) to get rid of their nuclear weapons, or for the USA and for Russia to cease to intervene in the region, or on its direct frontiers. Given that it is impossible to suppress nuclear weapons in the region, it is imperative to reassure non-nuclear powers that they have nothing to fear. This objective can only be achieved in two ways: a series of global guarantees assuring that any user of nuclear arms will face immediate collective and military sanctions; and the opening of a political process allowing acquisition of nuclear weapons in the very precise framework of a renewed NPT. Any attempt to pursue the nuclear path (civil or military) without entering into the renewed NPT process will immediately face sanctions from the international community. This approach will be much simpler than in the current framework, as there will not be any doubts possible: with acceptance of a renewed NPT, there will be controlled access to all nuclear technologies, without acceptance of the renewed NPT, there will be a total technological embargo.

That means that, within a delay of one month, Iran will have to pronounce itself for or against the European offer of a renewed NPT along the lines previously described. In addition, this acceptance implies Iran stops the totality of its nuclear operations (including those authorised by the current NPT) and on the other hand, the launch, for a maximum of two years, of an international conference for renewing the NPT. Pushed forward by the Europeans, in function of the objectives stated, this treaty will enter into force once more than half the states on the planet have signed it.

If Iran refuses this option, Europeans would have to recommend a total embargo of the country, including of its oil. This type of sanction will equally be applied automatically to all states having contributed to disseminate nuclear technology to non-state actors.

III- The EU should create the necessary alliance to build a real international strategy, aimed at bringing together all international actors which share this vision and these objectives.

The diplomatic objective of the EU ought therefore to be to define internally the main lines of the renewed NPT as soon as possible, and then to search for strategic partners to put into place an international process which leads to the renewal of the NPT and to its adoption by a majority of countries. In this case, the EU should act as it did with Kyoto. Seek to convince its partners rapidly, without wasting time with States that are not interested or are opposed to a reform of the NPT in the direction wished for by the Europeans. If China, India or Russia are interested, and the US opposed, then that is the way it is. This process must be forward, not backward looking!

An international conference on this theme could be called in Berlin at the end of April, with a proposal for an international working document in May.

The current Western strategy includes a major risk of giving birth to one of three futures which are contradictory to the objectives of peace and stability pursued:

1. Neither Iran, nor the US cedes, and the EU, by its weakness, follows the US into a military confrontation with Iran. This situation would immediately lead to a conflict with catastrophic global repercussions and with the definitive destabilisation of the Middle East, which is already in crisis after the invasion of Iraq.
2. Iran is finally forced to cede by non-military, but restrictive means (embargos etc.). In this case (relatively unlikely as nobody has a credible option here for the moment), as with 1) above, a non-nuclear Iran, is humiliated, and will let loose reprisals of all sorts in the region and the rest of the world. In parallel, in the explosive context that the Iraqi invasion has generated in the Muslim and Arab worlds, one would see all sort of anti-Western violence again coming to the fore.
3. The European Union, by its weakness would accept the Iranian fait accompli, without an alternative long term plan proposal, and allows the enrichment of uranium by Iran, whilst knowing full well that there is no reliable means of limiting the use of these technologies to civil use alone. The result would very probably be a nuclear Iran, convinced that only the logics of force and confrontation now count, and giving a disastrous example for all hopes to organise international society in the XXIst century on the basis of the rule of law rather than the rule of the jungle.

The worst case is not a nuclear Iran in itself, all depends on the international process that accompanies it; but rather there are several scenarios that could lead to the worse case, i.e. the collapse of the whole international order based on the rule of law, and the temptation to return to the law of the jungle, and brute force. It is up to the Europeans to show that they can open the way to another global future than this disastrous option, and this Iran/US crisis constitutes the gateway to a global future that leads to shared prosperity, without which the concept of democracy will be a masquerade, and only then able to carry with it the will of the majority not to cede to the sirens of violence, may they be States or terrorist groups.

FRANCK BIANCHERI – 17/4/2006

(This proposal has been adopted by a majority of 86% of members throughout the European Union territory inside the New Europeans movement founded by Franck Biancheri in 2000.)