

30 October 2012

*BBC Monitoring European has taken over my article published in the newspaper &quot;L'Unità&quot;.*

*For the readers of my site, here is the text.*

Text of report by Italian newspaper L'Unita on 29 October

[Commentary by Pino Arlacchi, former UN under-secretary general, serving European MP for Italy's Democratic Party: &quot;Iranian Nuclear, There Is Not Just Military Solution&quot;]

The disinformation with regards to Iran's nuclear programme has in recent months reached worrying levels. The party supporting war on Iran is more active than ever in the United States, Israel, and Europe. Given that every war is based on a lie - be it great or small - it is important for the public to know about the main features of the lie that is being concocted in order to repeat, 10 years on, the disaster of the war in Iraq.

Many people are convinced that the Iranian Government is pursuing the building of nuclear bombs, and that the only way to stop it is to overwhelm it with sanctions, isolate it, threaten it with military attack, strike at it with the targeted killings of scientists, and with an IT war. According to this way of reasoning, other methods are destined to fail, because the ayatollahs have no intention of engaging in serious negotiations, and only wish to buy time to allow their scientists to make progress towards the building of the bomb.

In the last three years, the US Government, with the complete support of the EU, has been spreading this view of the matter, which has been uncritically endorsed by the Western media and ignores the Iranian position, and downplays or conceals any information on the proposed alternative solutions.

And yet such proposals have indeed been put forward: Two years ago, Iran agreed to a plan by Turkey and Brazil, whereby these countries would receive nuclear material from Iran, which was to be enriched within the limitations of civilian use, and would then return it to Iran. But Obama, after endorsing this proposal, made a shameful U-turn after the Israeli lobby in Washington went crazy. The EU did not say a single word, and when I publicly asked Ms Ashton [EU high representative for foreign policy] about this attitude, all I got was a vague response.

Last year, Russia put forward a plan that imposed restrictions on Iran with regards to enriching uranium, along with more probing inspections on the part of the Vienna-based nuclear agency [refers to IAEA]. Iran was willing to discuss this project, but nothing came of it because the Obama administration's priority was boosting international pressure on Tehran in order to pass new sanctions. There is no report about any European stance on this proposal, all that is known is that the EU has adopted the sanctions called for by the United States.

The result is that Iranian extremists have had an easy task in continuing with their suspicious enrichment of uranium, which has now reached 20 per cent [not further specified]. So, from now onward, any new diplomatic agreement is forced to include ever more invasive monitoring, with an early warning system placed inside Iran's nuclear establishment. This further requisite is essential, because it introduces a breaking point beyond which Iran knows that tougher sanctions will be triggered, as well as military attacks.

But any agreement that includes this requisite must also include a list of very well defined steps that Iran must make in order to obtain the lifting of sanctions. This is what the UN did with Iraq after the first Gulf War, and this agreement worked until the United States decided that its real goal was regime change.

Over the years, Iran has repeatedly offered to accept a regime of invasive inspections, which go deeper than the ones routinely carried out by the UN's atomic agency. Mousavian, until recently the head negotiator, suggested an enrichment threshold equal to 5 per cent, and agreed not to stock on Iranian soil any enriched uranium in excess. In exchange, the United States and its allies would have had to acknowledge Iran's right to enrichment technology, a right that is one of the key points of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and to gradually dismantle the sanctions.

Have any of our readers ever heard this story being mentioned, if only vaguely? Nothing has ever been known about it because the United States and the EU have obstinately refused in the last three years to seek a negotiated solution with Iran. The negotiations that failed in the spring and the summer demonstrate that if the West has nothing to offer, but is held hostage by the party supporting an armed clash, then after the US presidential elections the world risks finding itself again in the fog of war.

*Source: L'Unita, Rome, in Italian 29 Oct 12*