

Why Iran Can't Be Trusted

By [David Harris](#)

November 20, 2011

The  Moscow Times

The Nov. 8 report from the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA, presented disturbing findings.

“The IAEA has serious concerns regarding possible military dimensions to Iran’s nuclear program. After assessing carefully and critically the extensive information available to it, the agency finds the information to be, overall, credible. The information indicates that Iran has carried out activities relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device.”

The report confirms what many have been saying for years, that Iran is determined to achieve nuclear-weapons capability and also delivery capabilities, as evidenced by the longstanding ballistic-missile program that it doesn’t hide.

Yet all along, Iran has been able to count on those who, for their own reasons, have rushed to defend it. They’ve claimed Iran is misunderstood, yearning only for peaceful nuclear energy.

It will be interesting to see how Iran-struck spin doctors react to the latest IAEA report. I

wouldn't hold my breath given past statements.

Consider this gem, expressed a few months ago by Mohamed ElBaradei, who was the IAEA head from 1997 to 2009, but never took the issue all that seriously:

"During my time at the IAEA, we haven't seen a shred of evidence that Iran has been weaponizing, in terms of building nuclear-weapons facilities and using enriched materials."

Or, two years ago, from Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, whose country is particularly critical to the Iran equation: "We have no information on Iran's work on nuclear weapons."

Or from the Iranian supreme leader himself, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei: "Building or using nuclear weapons is against Islamic law."

And while I'm no expert in Islamic law, the IAEA seems to think the Islamic Republic of Iran must have transgressed it just as Pakistan has and as Iraq, Libya and Syria were trying to do at various points in their recent history.

Or the view of Amr Moussa, when he was the secretary general of the Arab League and who is now a leading candidate to become the next Egyptian president: "The Iranian nuclear energy is completely peaceful and is threatening no one. It is a right for all the world's countries."

And my favorite quote among U.S. journalists is from New York Times columnist Roger Cohen, who wrote in June: "The nuclear bogeyman obsession has been a distraction from the need to try to tease out a relationship with Tehran, see Iran as it is. ... Iran is characterized by ... 'administrative chaos.' ... That's not how you make a nuke."

The misreading Cohen is in a way eerily reminiscent of the famous U.S. essayist Walter Lippman, who in 1933, commenting upon Hitler's denunciation of war in a speech before the Reichstag, wrote: "The outer world will do well to accept the evidence of German goodwill and seek by all possible means to meet it and to justify it."

Do ElBaradei, Putin, Khomeini, Moussa, Cohen and others really believe that Iran has no interest in nuclear-

weapons capability, notwithstanding the latest meticulous IAEA report?

This report sends yet another clear warning of Iran's goal, at least for those prepared to see the truth as it is, not as they might wish or pretend it to be.

One of the more common objections is that other countries have nuclear weapons, so why shouldn't Iran be permitted the same right? And didn't the world survive the Cold War nuclear era?

The difference, of course, is that during the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the United States were sufficiently rational actors to understand that a nuclear strike by one side would mean the annihilation of both sides. That prevented the use of nuclear weapons.

But is Iran, driven by Shiite theology that is little understood outside, a rational actor? Can it be counted on not to use nuclear weapons, for example, against Israel, whose destruction it

has called for, or neighboring Sunni countries? Could it be trusted not to share its weapons with allies like Venezuela or terrorist groups as Hamas or Hezbollah?

The answer is clear. Iran cannot be trusted. Its bellicose, apocalyptic rhetoric, matched by its destabilizing actions in the region and far beyond, explains why.

The international community, led by the five permanent United Nations Security Council members, must ratchet up the political and economic cost of Iran's continued defiance of binding UN resolutions and IAEA rules on its nuclear program. Otherwise, the world will become a far more dangerous place.

David Harris is executive director of the American Jewish Committee.

The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/11/20/why-iran-cant-be-trusted-a10890>