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INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

Brunei

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INTRODUCTION

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the organization within the United Nations (U.N.) that is responsible for dealing with one of the most prominent matters of international security in the modern era: the development and deployment of nuclear weapons. As such, all of the topics being discussed this year are very important.

First, Brunei believes that nuclear terrorism is a serious problem, and that the IAEA needs to recognize that, in these times, security is much more important than funding reactors. The IAEA should be given much more discretion to ensure that proper security and safety procedures are being followed at reactors around the world.

Second, Brunei, as a major oil-producing nation, believes that nuclear reactors, as they currently stand, are too dangerous and too expensive to seriously consider as replacements for fossil fuel energy. However, the IAEA should fulfill its mandate and ensure that countries with the appropriate security apparatus - Brunei among them - but which cannot afford to pay are still able to access reactors that would be used for *medical* and research purposes.

Third, it is the position of the government of Brunei that the Islamic Republic of Iran is a dangerous pariah state that will endanger international peace and the safety of Sunni Muslims everywhere if it gets its hands on an atomic bomb. As such, Brunei believes that the JCPOA signed last year does not go far enough into ensuring that Iran *never* gets a nuclear device, especially after the first ten and fifteen years of the agreement.

TOPIC 1: ADDRESSING THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR TERRORISM

Fears of antagonistic groups hijacking and using nuclear weapons for nefarious purposes has been a problem ever since there have been nuclear weapons; ten years after the explosion of the first nuclear device in combat, over Hiroshima in 1945, Ian Fleming released perhaps his best work, *Moonraker*, in which (very much unlike the movie) Bond fights a group of Nazi sympathizers who have infiltrated the British nuclear weapons program and plan to send one of the brand-new missiles into the centre of London.¹ Brunei believes that the IAEA, established in only two years after *Moonraker*'s release, needs to make major changes to adapt.

Nuclear terrorism is no longer simply the goal of people trying to infiltrate national missile programs; the main threat is now non-state actors and individuals getting their hands on illegal materials. It's not even so much the threat of an atom bomb or hydrogen bomb detonation that is clear and present; it's the threat of a "dirty bomb" that uses chemical explosives to disperse radioactive materials over a wide area.

Therefore, in the view of the government of Brunei, the IAEA needs to change in several ways to meet this new threat. First of all, the IAEA's mandate needs to be modified so that it prioritizes ensuring safe handling of nuclear waste and the recovery of missing fissile materials over the construction of new power complexes. This element of the mandate makes the IAEA especially vulnerable to industry interference, and it should be greatly reduced.

¹ Ian Fleming, *Moonraker*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955.)

Next, the IAEA's responsibilities should be expanded so that it can supervise the safety of all nuclear materials, whether in civilian plants or in Iranian reactor centres. (Yes, the Brunei government would consider the Iranian program to be a serious terrorist threat - see Part 3, below.) This is especially relevant in countries like Pakistan, which have nuclear weapons and power facilities but do not necessarily have the proper resources to defend them, or to ensure that the waste is securely disposed of so that terrorist groups cannot get it.

The IAEA also should be mandated to create task-forces to accompany United Nations personnel into regions where the threat of nuclear terrorism is present, and to train local agencies on the proper ways to dispose of nuclear waste as well as ways to respond to a terrorist attack. The IAEA should also start to fund research into cheaper radioactivity detectors that could be put into public places, alerting authorities if fissile materials are present.

TOPIC 2: NUCLEAR ENERGY AS AN ALTERNATE SOURCE OF ENERGY

Brunei believes very strongly in using nuclear energy as a secondary fuel source behind naturally occurring fuels like oil and natural gas. While its government acknowledges that there are some things that only nuclear reactors can do, it is reluctant to go all-in on alternative sources of energy. Furthermore, it believes that the only way to increase the usage of alternative fuel sources - including nuclear power - is to have international subsidies. Brunei believes that the IAEA would be a good organization to organize funding for nuclear power research.

Nearly 96% of Brunei's exports are oil, a fact which drives most of Bruneian life and policy. The country may be brought to the brink within a few years, as almost all of Brunei's oil reserves have been tapped. While Canada's oil reserves have 100 years left, Brunei's have just 22.² Brunei is the only ASEAN nation to be in recession for the past three years, largely due to the deadly combination of increasing oil prices combined with diminishing production.³ Understandably, then, Brunei has been reluctant to move to new sources of energy. The ASEAN Centre for Energy reported that, in 2012, non-renewable sources made up 100% of Brunei's electricity production. ("0.05% was generated," the authors say in a footnote, "by the solar power plant Tenaga Suria Brunei.")⁴

However, as it currently stands, the capital costs of a nuclear power retrofit are also prohibitive for a poorer country like Brunei. In a 2009 paper for Boston research

² Nathan Vanderklippe, "Brunei's oil-fuelled economy running on empty," *The Globe and Mail*, 02 February 2015, accessed 30 October 2016.

³ Arno Maierbrugger, "Brunei Bracing for Tougher Times after Oil Joyride," *Investvine*, 05 December 2015, accessed 30 October 2016.

⁴ "Brunei Darussalam," *ASEAN Centre for Energy*, 2012, accessed 30 October 2016.

firm Synapse Energy Economics, researchers David Schlissel and Bruce Biewald found that the cost of a 1,100 MW nuclear plant was between \$6 billion and \$9 billion (USD).⁵ Even though Brunei's current total power generation capacity is only 708 MW,⁶ the entire Bruneian government only budgeted \$4 billion U.S. dollars for the 2016 fiscal year.⁷

The Bruneian government recognizes that the country will have a big problem in the coming years. As of January 2015, the government was in talks with the IAEA to begin the construction of peaceful nuclear reactors in the country, with the primary goal being for medical and research applications.⁸ However, without new funding, it is unclear how Brunei can pay for this (life-saving) investment. For its part, the IAEA suggests international capital markets as a source of funding.⁹ However, it is unclear how an East Asian country like Brunei, with high risk of natural disaster, government corruption, and which does not even have a credit rating assigned to it would be able to raise \$9 billion in capital markets. (Nor is it worth contemplating the kinds of strings that would be present on such a deal.)

Therefore, Brunei strongly supports Article III, Part A, Section 1 of the IAEA mandate, "To encourage and assist research on, and development and practical application of, atomic energy for peaceful uses throughout the world."¹⁰ However, from

⁵ David Schlissel and Bruce Biewald, *Nuclear Power Plant Construction Costs*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Synapse Energy Economics, Inc., 2009.)

⁶ Azman Ahmad and Hilda Maya Othman. "Electricity Consumption in Brunei Darussalam: Challenges in Energy Conservation," *International Energy Journal* 14 (2014): 155-166.

⁷ "Brunei Darussalam General Government Total Expenditure," *Quandl.com*, 31 October 2016, accessed 31 October 2016.

⁸ Rachiel Thein, "IAEA ready to help Brunei with nuclear power," *The Brunei Times*, 30 January 2015, accessed 31 October 2016.

⁹ "Funding and Finance," *IAEA*, n.d., accessed 31 October 2016.

¹⁰ "The Statute of the IAEA," *IAEA*, n.d., accessed 31 October 2016.

Brunei's perspective, the IAEA is not fulfilling this mandate because the costs of entry into the nuclear market are too high for fission power to be realistically considered for the country's power needs.

Therefore, the IAEA's budget should be expanded so that small-scale, safe, secure, nuclear reactors with focusses on creating medical isotopes can be installed in small (but developed) countries like Brunei. These reactors could be life-savers for thousands of Bruneians, but, without the help of the international community, there is not enough money to pay for them.

TOPIC 3: MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT AND ENFORCE THE NUCLEAR PROGRAM IN IRAN

Middle-Eastern relations, including the Iran nuclear crisis, can really only be seen accurately through the lense of the Sunni-Shia conflict that has dogged Islam for the past several centuries. Briefly, after the Prophet Muhammad's death in 632 A.D., there was a great dispute as to who should have been considered his rightful successor. Some believed that Muhammad's close friend, Abu Bakr, was the first *caliph*, while others believed that that honour fell to Muhammad's cousin, Ali. Sunnis - who comprise 85% of Muslims today - believe that Abu Bakr was the rightful heir, but that there was no true second Prophet. Shia - who comprise the remaining 15% - believe that Ali was the second Prophet, and that his teachings are vital to Islam.¹¹

Brunei's Muslims make up 78.8% of the total population, and fall into the Sunni category. Under the Bruneian constitution, even though other religions are to be permitted with "peace and harmony," the official religion of the country is the Shafi'i school of Sunni Islam, and that all children born to Muslim parents must attend Islamic high school.¹²

Of note, the country's government has also become more and more religiously severe in the past few years, enacting a three-phase Sharia Penal Code (SPC). According to the State Department's report on Brunei,

¹¹ John Hall, "Sunni and Shia muslims: Islam's 1,400-year-old divide explained," *The Independent*, 4 January 2016, accessed 3 November 2016.

¹² Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour. *Brunei 2014 International Religious Freedom Report*. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2014).

Phase one of the SPC primarily involves offenses punished by fines or imprisonment. It expands existing restrictions on drinking alcohol, eating in public during the fasting hours of Ramadan, cross-dressing, and propagating religions other than Islam, and it prohibits “indecent behavior.” It applies to both Muslims and non-Muslims, including foreigners, with non-Muslims exempted from certain sections. It states that a determination of whether a person is a Muslim will be made through general reputation.¹³

The same report goes on to state that phases 2 and 3, which have yet to be enacted, will include punishments such as death by stoning and the amputation of hands and limbs.

Iran is the largest country in the world whose Muslim population is Shia, and is the only major one. Iran’s policies since the ascendance of the current Islamic government in 1973 have been very anti-Sunni, with many of the country’s highest clerics believing that Sunnis do not count as real Muslims. As recently as last January of 2015, news made it out of Iran of further police persecution of Sunnis in the country. On January 22, 2015, the *International Business Times* correspondent Peter Tatchell reported that “[i]n recent months, there has been a wave of arrests of Sunni Muslims. Dozens are currently on death row and at risk of death by the sadistic Iranian method of hoisting on cranes and slow strangulation by hanging.”¹⁴ And it’s not only right-wing news outlets like *Frontpage Magazine* that believe that “[Iran’s] nuclear program can have no other purpose except to expand its power and territory” against Sunnis.¹⁵ As early as 2006, the *New York Times* was reporting that many worried that “the Iranians might actually use nuclear weapons if they get them. ... Sunnis in Saudi Arabia and

¹³ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, 2014.

¹⁴ Peter Tatchell, “Sunni Muslims living in fear in Iran as state-sponsored persecution ramps up,” *The International Business Times*, 22 January 2015, accessed 3 November 2015.

¹⁵ Daniel Greenfield, “Why the Iran Nuclear Deal Will Mean War,” *Frontpage Magazine*, 8 September 2015, accessed 3 November 2016.

elsewhere fear that the Iranians might just use a nuclear bomb against them.” (I believe that Brunei would be considered as part of the “elsewhere.”) Author Noah Feldman went on to state that the proliferation of the acceptance of suicide (through *jihad*) throughout Islamic culture renders less effective the idea of the deterrent that has prevented the use of nuclear weapons since 1945.¹⁶

Therefore (though I could not find any official statements on the subject), it would be my educated prediction that the Brunei government is against the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) signed by China, France, Germany, Russia, the U.K., and the U.S. with Iran in 2015. Brunei shares the view of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, and Israel, that Iran can not be allowed to have any nuclear programme because the threat to international security and religious freedom within Islam is too severe.

There are several problems that Brunei sees with this agreement:

1. No mention is made of ensuring social reform within Iran to ensure the religious freedoms of Sunni Muslims, and the Iran government shows no signs of liberalizing its governmental institutions in good faith.
2. The deal goes too far in lifting pressure on the Iranian government from sanctions and releasing funds that can be used for terrorist purposes. The *Los Angeles Times* cited estimates ranging from \$100 billion to \$32 billion in funds that were previously locked away from the Iranian government in foreign bank accounts.¹⁷ The fear is that this money could be used to fund terrorist

¹⁶ Noah Feldman, “Islam, Terror, and the Second Nuclear Age,” *The New York Times*, 29 October 2006, accessed 3 November 2016.

¹⁷ Matt Pearce, “Where are Iran’s billions in frozen assets, and how soon will it get them back?” *The Los Angeles Times*, 20 January 2016, accessed 3 November 2016.

organizations like Hezbollah. A State Department report from June of this year found that Iran was still the no. 1 state sponsor of terrorism in the world.¹⁸

3. There is no provision for sanctions to “snap back” automatically unless the individual countries approve of it. This means that the coalition that enforced the sanctions that lead to the agreement could fall apart very easily in the face of Iranian aggression, especially after fifteen years and a day. This is especially true for European nations, many of whom view Iran as an attractive alternative to the Russians and the Gulf states for oil. (Incidentally, Brunei has benefited from Iranian oil being kept off of the market for the past years.)

Brunei therefore believes that the Iranian government needs to commit to much larger, permanent, reductions in its nuclear capability. (Under the JCPOA, Iran’s number of centrifuges and access to nuclear materials becomes unrestricted after 15 years.)¹⁹ Iran should also, as a measure of goodwill, tell the international community where the unfrozen funds are going. Iran should also take steps to ensure freedom of religion within its borders, especially for its Sunni Muslim population.

¹⁸ Ryan Browne, “State Department report finds Iran is top state sponsor of terror,” *CNN*, 2 June 2016, accessed 3 November 2016.

¹⁹ Kelsey Davenport, “Restrictions on Iran’s Nuclear Program: Beyond 15 Years,” *Arms Control Association*, 25 August 2015, accessed 3 November 2016.

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