

Disarming Iraq

By Hans Blix

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The war against Iraq divided opinion throughout the world and generated a maelstrom of spin and counterspin. The man at the eye of the storm, and arguably the only key player to emerge from it with his integrity intact, was Hans Blix, head of the UN weapons inspection team.

This is Dr. Blix's account of what really happened during the months leading up to the declaration of war in March 2003. In riveting descriptions of his meetings with Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, and Kofi Annan, he conveys the frustrations, the tensions, the pressure and the drama as the clock ticked toward the fateful hour. In the process, he asks the vital questions about the war: Was it inevitable? Why couldn't the U.S. and UK get the backing of the other member states of the UN Security Council? Did Iraq have weapons of mass destruction? What does the situation in Iraq teach us about the propriety and efficacy of policies of preemptive attack and unilateral action?

Free of the agendas of politicians and ideologues, Blix is the plainspoken, measured voice of reason in the cacophony of debate about Iraq. His assessment of what happened is invaluable in trying to understand both what brought us to the present state of affairs and what we can learn as we try to move toward peace and security in the world after Iraq.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Disarming Iraq By Hans Blix Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1625846 in eBooks
- Published on: 2004-03-09
- Released on: 2004-03-09
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
Disarming Iraq is an insider's account of the diplomatic and inspection efforts leading up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Though a bit dry, the book is logically presented and gives an excellent background on the inspections process and the politics surrounding it. Hans Blix, who came out of retirement in 2000 to lead the inspections effort, was often bashed by American politicians and journalists, but he does not use this forum to strike back. Instead, he allows the evidence to do the talking, only occasionally offering his own opinion. Blix stresses that he never trusted Hussein and that inspectors were often misled and stonewalled, but he also points out that they never found any evidence of weapons of mass destruction either. Though Blix welcomes the end of Hussein's brutal dictatorship, his removal was "neither the avowed aim nor the justification given" for the war—-WMDs were the issue. Therefore, he believes the invasion was unnecessary and possibly counterproductive in the long run and is disappointed that they were not given enough time to complete their task. "Containment had worked," he writes. "It has also become clear that national intelligence organizations and government hawks, but not the inspectors, had been wrong in their assessments."

Blix blames "monumental" intelligence failures on the part of the U.S. and Great Britain for most of these errors. In particular, he questions America's reliance on Iraqi defectors over their own intelligence agencies. He further wonders why the U.S. dismissed nearly all of the inspection agencies' findings over the past decade, in essence depriving themselves of a valuable source of information. He concludes that inspections are a worthwhile and effective method of containing potentially dangerous regimes and he believes that too high a price was paid for the war: "in the compromised legitimacy of the action, in the damaged credibility of the governments pursuing it, and in the diminished authority of the United Nations." --*Shawn Carkonen*

From Publishers Weekly
Blix reluctantly came out of retirement in 2000 to lead the U.N. weapons inspections team in Iraq because he was the only man everyone could agree on for the job. Three years later, those clamoring for military intervention grumbled at his inability (or, as they saw it, refusal) to present evidence of weapons of mass destruction, but he reminds readers that his assignment was to assess and report on the available evidence. Although his instincts told him Saddam was probably "still engaged in prohibited activities and retained prohibited items," as he dryly puts it, hard evidence never materialized. This play-by-play account of the months of diplomacy and inspection efforts leading up to the war is almost always strictly professional in tone, and though it does take us behind closed doors for meetings with world leaders, nothing here will radically transform the historical record or the ongoing debate. Blix doesn't have any scores to settle; while noting that Condoleezza Rice was never bashful about expressing her opinion, for example, he notes that she never tried to exert undue influence over him. He even laughs off some of the sharpest barbs from the conservative press (though not the *New York Post*'s unflattering comparison to Mister Magoo). When he does, near the end, shift emphasis from facts to opinions, he suggests the American-led drive to war was led at least in part by "a deficit of critical thinking," and that the much-ballyhooed WMD threat probably doesn't existâ€"but he doesn't lament Hussein's overthrow. His sober account probably won't sway hardline critics, but it offers insightful perspective on how the Iraq situation snowballed into a geopolitical crisis.
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From The New Yorker
The former chief United Nations weapons inspector has been called everything from an Iraqi stooge to a Western spy, and his judicious account of the prelude to the Iraq war is punctuated by anger. Blix feels that he was caught between two sides that had lost touch with reality. The White House, ready for war, made

"absurd" demands; the Iraqis, consumed by resentment, seemed not to realize the seriousness of their situation. Initially, Blix's "gut feelings" were that Iraq was hiding something; later, he was haunted by the idea that there was nothing to find and dismayed by the paucity of evidence. On the other hand, he writes, "considering how misleading much of the intelligence given us eventually proved to be, perhaps it was a blessing that we did not get more." He now believes that the weapons were probably destroyed years ago—in other words, that inspections worked. In any case, Blix is glad that he and his colleagues resisted endorsing the hawks' position: "What would the reputation of international inspection be today if we had simply said ‘amen'?"
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jorge Eaton:

This Disarming Iraq book is simply not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book will be information inside this e-book incredible fresh, you will get data which is getting deeper an individual read a lot of information you will get. This kind of Disarming Iraq without we understand teach the one who reading it become critical in imagining and analyzing. Don't end up being worry Disarming Iraq can bring when you are and not make your handbag space or bookshelves' turn out to be full because you can have it in the lovely laptop even phone. This Disarming Iraq having very good arrangement in word in addition to layout, so you will not sense uninterested in reading.

Christina Pena:

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