

## Hans Blix's Allegiance

Hans Blix, the former UN weapons inspector, has at last openly **declared his allegiance to Saddam Hussein**.

No doubt he does not think of himself as having done that, but then, what Hans Blix thinks has never been a good guide to what is so. He thinks he has been fairly explicit in siding *against* Saddam:

"What's positive is that Saddam and his bloody regime is gone,"

But there's a 'but':

"but when figuring out the score, the negatives weigh more," the former chief U.N. weapons inspector was quoted as saying in the daily newspaper Jyllands Posten. "That accounts for the many casualties during the war and the many people who still die because of the terrorism the war has nourished," he said. "The war has liberated the Iraqis from Saddam, but the costs have been too great."

But this is identical to Saddam's own position on this matter. Saddam probably did not, even in the privacy of his own mind or within the inner circle of the Ba'ath Party, hold up his killings and tortures and repression as being *benefits* of his rule. He would have called them necessary evils, worth it on balance because the alternative of stepping down would, in his view, have precipitated an even worse outcome.

Blix, in endorsing Saddam's view of why it would have been better if Saddam had stayed in power and continued his aggressive, **mass-murdering** tyranny, has sided with Saddam.

Tue, 04/06/2004 - 17:59 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permalink](#)

## Popper thought

Popper thought an idea should be criticised on it's content not on who held it.

So, does **The World** have an argument for why Blix's position is wrong?

And if Irag becomes an Islamic Republic rules over by a Grand

Ayatollah, will **The World** admin that Blix was right, and that it was wrong?

by a reader on Wed, 04/07/2004 - 08:59 | [reply](#)

## sheesh

oh come on. **The World** was not disputing Popper, they were just assuming their readers were opposed to Saddam and his murderous regime.

you want an argument for why that's a good idea? because he was murderous. the side-effects of fighting evil are the fault of the evil people who had to be fought, not something to blame on the good guys.

-- Elliot Temple  
<http://www.curi.us/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Wed, 04/07/2004 - 11:34 | [reply](#)

## Kebab

Sadam was murderous, but he has been murderous for a long time. The West chose to side with him against Iran because a murderous fascist regime is less dangerous than an Islamic Fundamentalist one. Sadam, if left in power, would have killed many of his own people, but he would have been unlikely to want to nuke Manhattan or set bombs on the London Underground.

During the cold war all sensible people knew it was necessary sometimes to side with evil people, and ignore their deeds, strategically, while fighting a bigger evil.

If Iraq falls to the Islamists then this invasion will have been a huge strategic blunder, and your desire to kill bad people, even when unstrategic, will be revealed as naïve in the extreme.

Thatcher would have known that, as would Churchill.

by a reader on Wed, 04/07/2004 - 14:44 | [reply](#)

## A Simple Point

This piece was making a simple point: that Blix's position on the issue of whether Saddam should have been allowed to carry on doing what he was doing, and why, is the same as that of Saddam himself. It argued for this point simply by stating both positions without the logically irrelevant details (such as Saddam's Ba'athist ideology, or the disclaimer preceding Blix's 'but') and noting that they are identical. This argument did not address, and does not depend on, whether this common position of theirs is right or wrong.

by **Editor** on Wed, 04/07/2004 - 15:11 | [reply](#)

## Iraq and terrorists

'Sadam, if left in power, would have killed many of his own people, but he would have been unlikely to want to nuke Manhattan or set bombs on the London Underground.'

Saddam funded terrorism, which made him a legitimate target of the War on Terror. He might not have set a bomb on the Underground, but some of the terrorists he funded might have.

'During the cold war all sensible people knew it was necessary sometimes to side with evil people, and ignore their deeds, strategically, while fighting a bigger evil.'

That is true and that is why we are allied with Pakistan at present.

'If Iraq falls to the Islamists then this invasion will have been a huge strategic blunder, and your desire to kill bad people, even when un-strategic, will be revealed as naive in the extreme.'

No. If Iraq falls to the Islamists then somebody somewhere along the line has made a mistake about the country's security arrangements. However, that has not happened and probably will not happen at all.

by [Alan Forrester](#) on Wed, 04/07/2004 - 15:18 | [reply](#)

## Re:A Simple Point

And there was not the slightest hint that having the same opinion as Saddam implied some guilt by association, or was prima-facie evidence of badness. This was a simple piece with no sub text whatsoever. Any subtler meaning was entirely in my own mind I am sure.

by a reader on Wed, 04/07/2004 - 15:49 | [reply](#)

## A Simple Point

I have to agree with "a reader" that this post seems designed to argue against Blix's position by associating it with Saddam, and that this is an appeal to emotion rather than reason.

I think Blix is wrong, but the fact that Saddam would have made a similar argument is irrelevant to that. And, while Saddam might have expressed a similar argument, I'm sure his considerations weren't *identical* to Blix's. I suspect that the fact that it was *he* who was in power would have entered into his thinking on the matter.

Saddam is a murderous bastard. And I think that if someone agreed with him about everything, then that would be good circumstantial evidence that he was similarly immoral. But a single identical conclusion is evidence of precisely nothing.

**Gil**

by [Gil](#) on Thu, 04/08/2004 - 18:19 | [reply](#)

## Re: A Simple Point

It's not the conclusion, it's the argument, based on the judgement that Iraq under Saddam was 'on balance' better off than it is after liberation. Not everyone who opposed Saddam's removal made that argument, because not all of them share that judgement, and the underlying moral values on which it is based. That Saddam and Blix both do share that judgement and those values even though they differ in other judgements and values is, I think, undeniable and also significant. It reflects badly on both of them as people. (BTW I agreed with Oliver Kamm's take on the broader issue at the end of [this](#) piece.)

That Saddam would have made other arguments as well is undoubtedly true. And he would have been superhuman if his own future had not figured somewhere in his private deliberations. But it seems highly implausible that his personal benefit was the decisive argument in his mind: first, because millions of other people who are not Saddam approved of his rule too; and second, because if he had not approved, on balance, of the way he ruled, he would have ruled differently.

by [David Deutsch](#) on Thu, 04/08/2004 - 20:00 | [reply](#)

## Not The Same Argument

I'm sorry, but I don't think it's credible that Blix and Saddam believe anything like the same argument.

I don't think Saddam weighs the harm caused by either his own murders and tortures or the harm to casualties of the invasion as heavily as Blix does.

And, I can't know for sure, but I suspect, that Saddam would disagree with Blix both about whether the invasion and transformation of Iraq, if successful, would help or hurt terrorism; as well as about whether international terrorism is a bad thing.

And, I don't understand the "second" point above. How does Saddam's approval of the way he ruled argue against his personal benefit being a decisive argument in his mind? Isn't his personal benefit likely to be part of *why* he approved of his rule? I suspect that if he had been a victim of another tyrant ruling identically, he wouldn't have approved as much.

**Gil**

by [Gil](#) on Thu, 04/08/2004 - 21:00 | [reply](#)

## Not 'Allegiance'

I agree that 'allegiance' is not a fair description of what Blix has shown Saddam. But I think 'siding with' *\*is\** a fair description. They share the relevant values of undervaluing the freedom of Iraqis and being blind to Saddam's instability and menace. Because of those

shared values, they agree about who should currently be ruling

Iraq, despite their differences in other respects.

by [David Deutsch](#) on Fri, 04/09/2004 - 13:53 | [reply](#)

## Siding with one Evil

Good point. **The World** would then - in making any statement on which evil was greatest - necessarily (by its own words) "side" with one of the two evils.

Indeed, by the logic of **The World's** own argument: Whenever there are two opposed evils, and you make any judgement about their badness, you always side with one of the evils - which is still an evil - and are therefore always to be identified with that evil as if you had perpetrated it yourself.

by a reader on Fri, 04/16/2004 - 11:48 | [reply](#)

## Re: Siding With Evil

If you judge that one of two evils is greater than the other, and it is, then surely you have done nothing wrong. If the difference between the two evils is slight or subtle, then you may not have done anything wrong either. If, in judging between two evils, you favour the one which is in fact an enormously greater evil, then your judgement is morally wrong. If, in making the judgement, you assist the cause of the much greater evil, then you have done wrong. If you did this because you share some of the evil values, then you are to that extent 'identified' with the evil.

Is any of that controversial?

by [David Deutsch](#) on Fri, 04/16/2004 - 14:19 | [reply](#)

## The controversy

Then I think it would be better to question Blix' judgement, rather than to tag it with "Saddam" and guilt-by-association. So your case is a good one, Mr Deutsch, though the original case was poorly stated.

by a reader on Mon, 04/19/2004 - 07:06 | [reply](#)