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Considering the Options: U.S. Policy toward Iran's Nuclear Program

Conference Proceedings

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NOTE: This document has been slightly edited and redacted from a transcript of an event held on October 9, 2003, before Europe and Iran reached an agreement for Tehran to sign the Additional Protocol and suspend uranium enrichment. In addition to the speakers named throughout the text, attendees included a small number of Iran experts and U.S. government officals.

FEATURED SPEAKERS

Ladan Boroumand is director of the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation for the Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in Iran and a 2003–2004 visiting fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy.

Patrick Clawson is deputy director of The Washington Institute and senior editor of *Middle East Quarterly.* Among his many publications is the coauthored book *Iran under Khatami: A Political, Economic, and Military Assessment* (The Washington Institute, 1998).

Michael Eisenstadt is a senior fellow at The Washington Institute. A reserve officer in the U.S. Army, he served on active duty in 2001–2002 at United States Central Command (USCENTCOM). He has published widely on Middle Eastern military and security issues, including *Iranian Military Power: Capabilities and Intentions* (The Washington Institute, 1996).

Reuel Marc Gerecht is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Previously, he served as director of the Middle East Initiative on the Project for the New American Century, as a Middle Eastern specialist for theCIA, and as a political and consular of ficer for the Department of State.

Rose Gottemoeller is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where she focuses on issues of nuclear security and stability stemming from the breakup of the Soviet Union. Previously, she served as deputy undersecretary for defense nuclear nonproliferation and director of the Office of Nonproliferation and National Security at the Department of Energy.

Geoffrey Kemp is director of regional strategic programs at the Nixon Center. Previously, he served as director of the Middle East Arms Control Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. During the Reagan administation, he served as special assistant to the president for national security affairs and as senior director for Near East and South Asian affairs on the National Security Council staff.

Lt. Gen. (ret.) Thomas McInerney (USAF) is founder of Government Reform Through Technology (GRTT), a consulting firm that works with high-tech companies to introduce advanced technology into the public sector. His thirty-five years of experience in the U.S. Air Force included service as a pilot, commander, and strategic planner.

Danielle Pletka is vice president of foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute. Previously, she served as a senior professional staff member for Near East and South Asia with the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Dennis Ross is director and Ziegler distinguished fellow at The Washington Institute. His two decades in government service included tours as special Middle East coordinator in the Clinton administration, director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff in the first Bush administration, and director for Near East and South Asian affairs on the National Security Council in the Reagan administration.

Henry Sokolski is executive director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center. Previously, he served as deputy for nonproliferation policy in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. His many publications on proliferation-related issues include *Best of Intentions: America's Campaign against Strategic Weapons Proliferation* (2001).

Ray Takeyh is director of studies for the Near East and South Asia Center at National Defense University. Previously, he served as a fellow in international security studies at Yale University and as a Soref fellow at The Washington Institute.

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INTRODUCTION

Patrick Clawson: I'm Patrick Clawson, the Deputy Director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. I would like to thank all of our guests for attending this event today.

If I could just take a couple of minutes to explain what our intention is in organizing this event, and then we can plunge right in, after we go around the table and everyone introduces themselves.

We thought it would be useful to look at U.S. policy options toward Iran's nuclear program. We do not particularly want to look at what is the state of Iran's nuclear program or discuss how Iran is proceeding or where it's likely to get with its nuclear program. We want to discuss U.S. policy options toward a nuclear program that seems to be making quite a bit of progress.

We thought that the most useful way for us to encourage that discussion would be to look at the different policy options. We have tried to enumerate what we saw as all of the available policy options, and we would be very interested if, in the course of the day, people would identify fundamentally different policy options that we should also consider—that would be very useful.

We wanted to have for each of these policy options someone to explain why this policy option makes good sense, what is a good case for this policy option, and then a commentator who points out the problems with this policy option.

We recognize that many of the people who are speaking may feel that the particular policy option they're talking about should be combined with some of the other policy options. Indeed, one of the things we urge both speakers and commentators to do is to reflect on how this policy option interacts with others. For instance, in today's *New York Times*, Tom Friedman in his column argues that the tough U.S. policy toward Iran to date has made possible a U.S. approach toward Iran for a strategic deal, which is what he argues should happen. Indeed, he quotes one of our speakers this afternoon, Ray Takeyh, in his argument as to why there should be a strategic deal. So, at least in Mr. Friedman's judgment, a tough approach has made talk of a deal easier.

Michael Eisenstadt: To our presenters, in making the case and in trying to make the best case for the position that you have been asked to talk about, I don't think anybody should assume that you necessarily personally believe or adhere to everything that you're saying. I think this is an important point.

MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY

Mr. Clawson: Our first session will discuss multilateral diplomacy. I described this issue to our speaker and commentator as being a matter of what we are doing at the moment, putting heavy emphasis on the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and working closely with the Europeans, indeed, with the Europeans in many ways taking a lead on this issue.

Geoffrey Kemp: Thank you very much, Patrick. I will try to make the case as best I can. But let me preface it by saying that, as I see the problem in Iran right now, we have what I would term a two-track problem. We have a fast-track potential crisis on nuclear weapons, and we have a slow-track political problem; that is to say, Iran, in my opinion, is making progress toward ultimately reforming its institutions. But that process is going to be slow, there are going to be setbacks, and there is no guarantee that at the end of the day we will have a regime that does everything we want it to. Anyway, it is the fast-track issue we have to deal with now.

If these tracks were reversed, if the political process was going very quickly and the nuclear issue was bubbling along in the background, it would be a very, very different set of issues we would be discussing, and the conversation would be very different. You could say that, under those circumstances, if the political reform was proceeding and the bomb was ticking away in the background, it would be a "Code Yellow," to use Homeland Security's terminology. You know, serious, but not overwhelmingly so. Today I think we have a "Code Orange" problem because, clearly, this is an immediate issue that we have to deal with.

A second sort of perfunctory remark I would make is that, in theory, I think the United States unilaterally could stop the Iranian bomb within, either by air strikes, or by physically occupying the country, or by sort of extraordinarily sophisticated covert operations. Alternatively, we could resolve this problem unilaterally, in my opinion, by essentially offering them a deal they could not refuse, sort of what our friend, Henry Sokolski, sometimes calls the "groveling" option; that is to say, we walk back on a lot of the things we have held against the Iranians and make it very difficult for them to turn us down.

Now, I don't think any of these options are likely. I mean, I don't think the unilateral military option is likely, and I certainly don't think the big concessions option is likely. So we are left with the reality: that to deal with this problem in real time, we have to take the multilateral route. That is what we have been doing for the last six months.

I would argue that, at this point in time, we have been more successful than anyone imagined, because we have brought the Russians, the European Union (EU), and all the members of the Board of Governors of the IAEA together in issuing the Iranians a unilateral consensus document that says they have to comply with a whole string of requirements by October the 31st. So at this particular moment, multilateral pressures have proven quite effective in getting the Iranians' attention.

Now, of course, the problem is that these sorts of coalitions do not last forever. It would be very pleasant and nice if we could continue this sort of consensus and get the Iranians to comply with everything that everyone wants. But, of course, different people want different things. The American agenda is different from the Russian agenda, which is very different from the agendas of many of the members of the IAEA, who primarily want Iran to comply with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and IAEA safeguards requirements and are less concerned about its nuclear fuel cycle.

So the reality is that we have to look for a coalition of the willing, countries that are prepared to work with us who have approximately the same agenda, and then take it from there.

I would argue that if we could get the Russians to agree to everything we want, then that would be the most formidable coalition of all. I think a joint U.S.-Russian clear position on the Iranian nuclear

program would first get the cooperation of the European Union, and then Japan and other key countries in this arena, and I think we would be in business. However, my sense is—and others can comment on this—that the Russian agenda will diverge, at least initially, from the American agenda because of the issue of Bushehr and their desire to have a commercial relationship with Iran's nuclear industry.

So in going through all these sort of default options, I come to the conclusion that it is really the European Union that we have to work with and that this is the most practical route to pursue, at least in the short run.

Now, why do I say this? First, in the last year or so, the European Union, in different ways, has taken its responsibilities toward Iran much more seriously, both in terms of engagement and in terms of laying down benchmarks as to what sort of behavior on the part of the Iranians they are willing to tolerate.

The most obvious example of this is the trade and cooperation agreement that is currently being negotiated by various European representatives with various parties in Iran. Just to quickly review what this means for those of you who are perhaps not familiar with it, the trade and cooperation agreement could offer Iran a lot of very attractive economic concessions in this growing, huge market, which will be very much to Iran's advantage. The economic agreement, the trade component, however, will never be signed, according to the EU, unless four sets of benchmark issues are dealt with.

The four benchmarks are human rights, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and the Arab-Israeli peace process. These benchmarks are really quite extensive, and even in the case of the weapons of mass destruction (WMD), it goes beyond the nuclear issue. It gets into chemical weapons as well as missiles.

But as far as we're concerned here today, the one benchmark that the EU is on record with—which Chris Patten has said—quite explicitly is to fulfill the WMD component, the Additional Protocol must be signed.

If you think about what the Europeans are saying they want from the Iranians in these four areas—again, human rights, WMD, the peace process, and terrorism—it is pretty identical to American policy. I mean, this is what American administrations have been saying for years, that these are the big four issues.

Now, the wrinkle in the debate, of course, with this administration is there are those, perhaps not necessarily in the administration, but certainly talking to and influencing the administration, who go further. They say there has to be a fifth condition—regime change. So when it comes to regime change, we part company with the EU, which is not in favor of an explicit goal of regime change. Since our own policy on this is so fuzzy, and I think unformed, I think there is room here for continued cooperation without making the regime change issue a serious trans-Atlantic spat.

Now, why is this important? I think it is important not only because I think we share very similar goals, but also the Iranians are very concerned about what has been happening. There is evidence about the anger and fury that the Iranians have displayed in seeing the Europeans, the Americans, the IAEA, and the Russians all gang up on them in Vienna. I think they were taken by surprise when the resolution and the letter was issued, which I think we have attached to the documents here. That, it seems to me, is a good example of how cooperation and compromise—because clearly there were compromises in the language—nevertheless got the attention of the Iranian regime in a way that they simply do not like.

I think this parallels, from what I can pick up, a much tougher view in Europe toward the nuclear program. I think it would be fair to say that a year ago the people in French intelligence and British intelligence shared pretty much our views on what the Iranians were up to. It is only recently, however, that German intelligence has been persuaded to come on board. I think there is now a consensus that what the Iranians are up to is not good, that it is going faster than anyone anticipated—and this is the key point here—that I think for the first time there is now the realization in Europe that this is on their

door-step, not ours. If you combine the missile program, the bomb program, and the proximity issue, then the Europeans, I think, are taking this more seriously than they have ever done before. Of course, thinking a little bit into the future, they are now musing over Turkey's potential entry into the Union, which would put Europe literally on the border with a nuclear-armed Iran, which is not something you can brush aside and say that's America's problem.

So I think for a host of Eurocentric reasons, Europe is going to remain deeply concerned about Iran's nuclear program and, indeed, the broader problem of proliferation in the region, irrespective of what Washington says or does. I know we're not going to do this today, but I think all of us are aware that if the Iranians get the bomb, then we have to reassess a whole string of other security issues in the region: what will the Turks do, what will the Saudis do, what will the Egyptians do, and what will Israel do—all issues that have immediate and profound effects on Europe as well as the United States, and as well as the region.

So, with that in mind, it clearly is in America's interest to work as closely as we can with Brussels to make sure the differences we have are minimized and that we speak with one voice.

Now, this will come to a test, it seems to me, fairly soon, because while I preface my remarks by saying that the short-term prognosis has been very good and that there has been cooperation throughout the summer and now, there are a number of options that emerge at the end of this month where we need to think through what it means.

Let me start with what seems to me to be the easiest option for the Europeans and Americans. It's going to be if the Iranians refuse to comply, walk out of the NPT in a fit of pique, and just be defiant. Then I think you will have a united front and then I think the chances of taking the case to the Security Council with pretty unanimous support would be high.

I think the more difficult case, even in the context of U.S.-European relations, is if and when the Iranians do comply. They say, "Fine, we accept all your arguments. We will sign the additional protocol; we will answer all the questions the IAEA has asked us. But now that we have met everything you have asked of us, we hope and wish to continue with our fuel cycle, and we'll expect help to do so," because, after all, that is what is permitted under the current terms of the NPT. At that point, then I think you can see a much more vigorous debate between the parties who signed the consensus document in September.

As I understand it, the European policy on this issue, like ours, goes further than mere compliance and signing the additional protocol. Certainly the French, the British, and the German foreign ministries are saying, quite explicitly—and I think European Union High Representative Javier Solana has said quite explicitly—"no enrichment." In other words, it's not just enough to meet the IAEA NPT requirements; you have to end the enrichment program. I simply don't know how much further they have gone up to this point in time concerning separation and heavy water. Certainly the uranium enrichment facility at Natanz is out of bounds as far as the Europeans are concerned.

I think the argument then is that—if the Iranians are to have any remote chance of accepting a second set of conditions, which they are not even required to do under the treaty—then they have to be offered something. In other words, there have to be "carrots" in this package. We can spend a lot of time discussing what those carrots should be. One suggestion is that they will indeed be permitted to have nuclear energy facilities for the generation of electricity, but all the fuel will have to come from outside sources and will have to be fully safeguarded throughout its cycle.

There are also other things you could put into the package. The Iranians need a great deal of help with their oil and gas facilities, which are woefully under-invested. And they are exporting virtually no gas at all and it's the world's second largest depository of natural gas. Their energy program is a mess and they need help. They could get it if they are prepared to walk away from the enrichment option. That is certainly one option.

Why I would argue this approach and these sort of options are important to discuss. And why the United States should be cooperative with the Europeans in putting them together, is because I do not think we have yet made up our own mind as to what is ultimately going to be acceptable to us. If there is a forceful and clear European position, it will force the debate here. The "super hawks" versus the "hawks" will have to make a decision. You know, are we going to go this alone or are we going to work out a compromise that we can agree to with Brussels.

Second—and I think this is important—because this alliance, if it holds and if it comes up with options that include "carrots" as well as "sticks," will influence the debate in Iran. We can debate whether or not there is a debate in Iran. But some of us believe that there is still time to influence the debate in Iran, which essentially goes along the following lines: we want to have the technology; we do not want to be told we cannot have the technology, but we need to think very, very hard and fast before we cross into a nuclear weapons program. If you can influence that debate by having a united front, I think it will conceivably lead the Iranians to defer and delay the decision.

Which comes back to my original point, that the longer you delay the nuclear weapons program and you get it off the fast track, so to speak, the greater the chances that the political track will move in the right direction. I don't want to go into all the things that that has to mean for us, in terms of terrorism and everything, but I think that's pretty clear.

The alternative, if we don't go this route, is that if we just part company with the Europeans on this issue, we will certainly get no consensus with the Russians. We will have nobody supporting our position, with the possible exception of Israel and even the Israelis are a little skittish about getting too far out on a limb when it comes to unilateral or bilateral U.S.-Israeli action against Iran.

If we are alone and we can't do—for the reasons that I think we will discuss today—either the military option or the groveling option, then I think the Iranians will be in a much stronger position to divide, conquer, and proceed, and we will be in a deeper mess than we are today a year from now.

Mr. Clawson: By the way, Henry Sokolski says that the debate about what to do about these problems, whether in North Korea or Iran, tends to gravitate toward one of two options: bomb or grovel. He does not like either option.

Danielle Pletka: Just by virtue of the fact I'm commenting, I have a supermarket list of the things that you have said and my comments on them.

In fact, I agree with a lot of what you have said.

Could we stop the Iranian bomb? You said this in your introductory comments, and I understand that this issue will be discussed later today. I actually disagree that we have that clarity of options. I don't think there is before us an option of "bomb them and stop the program." I don't think we know enough about the program, where it is, or exactly what it is. I also wonder—even if we knew where it was and could figure it out—whether we could sufficiently disable it and, to boot, even if we were to disable it, whether we have a really good bead on the consequences of those actions, not just in Europe, where I have a better sense of what the consequences might be, but in Iran.

You say that the multilateral route is the only option. I guess the question that begs is the meaning of multilateral. What I think you really mean is that we need to work with the European Union. But what you said is Europe and then you said Brussels, using both interchangeably with the IAEA.

First, I'm not sure that Europe exists, and that's a problem for us. The second problem for us is, of course, Brussels. Is our interlocutor Chris Patten in Brussels or is our interlocutor each of the individual European countries? This fuzziness bodes ill for the future, and you outlined some of the potential problems.

The truth is that Brussels is not a monolith. Yes, in terms of the trading cooperation agreement with Iran, that's absolutely right. I think they can articulate that conditionality as a union. But when it comes

to the national security question, as they found in so many other cases, we're going to end up seeing a lot of divergence among the parties. So I think that's a problem.

You're right, we have thus far been more successful than anyone could have imagined. I have been surprised that we have been able to make the kind of progress we have been able to make. The Iranians were foolish enough to underestimate the IAEA and underestimate the technology we have to figure out what they're up to. I certainly was surprised by ElBaradei and others' willingness to confront them.

So I think you're right, that we've gone further than we ever would have gone, but we still haven't defined our goal. What is our goal? Is our goal the additional protocol? Is our goal the disarmament of Iran? Is our goal regime change? Are disarmament and regime change indivisible? The sharper you are about defining the goal, the more difficult the multilateral option becomes, because you end up walking half way down the cliff and then falling off and dying.

I would take your whole exposé and step back a second and say, if we are process oriented—and I recognize there are many in the U.S. government and outside, to use your formulation, who are very process oriented—then I think we're well on the road to a process. The real question is, what is at the end of that process? I think there is zero agreement on that, not just in the United States but certainly among the European countries, which is a major problem.

We see that already our agendas differ from the Russians, our agendas differ from the IAEA, and a lot of that has to do with the end game. We need a coalition of the willing, you asserted, and I think that's absolutely right.

Now, we have this coalition of the willing, and I think it has worked well thus far. But what about the letter from the British, the French, and the Germans, saying, "Well, if you sign, let's let bygones be bygones, and everything will really be okay. And we'll make sure that atoms for peace is really robust and good, and you'll get everything you need." Do we sign up for that? Was that a coalition statement, an IAEA statement? I'm not sure, and someone else may know better than I, on whether we were even told about it?

Speaker: If I could just interject, I was told by a European diplomat that in the original letters there was not a promise necessarily of nuclear cooperation. It was kind of like high-tech cooperation.

Speaker: Actually, it's even better than that. They said you have to do more than sign the protocol; you have to stop trying to complete the fuel cycle.

Ms. Pletka: I haven't seen the letter. I understand the British were very reluctant at first to go along, and I gather this was a German initiative to start with, which is no surprise given the Germans' attitude on WMD.

A complete aside: You mentioned that the Russians are going to be the key because the Russians are going to be the most difficult, because they are—as the French like to say—the most interested party in the sense that there's some money at the end of the road for them.

This raises an interesting question about the payoff. I only raise it as an issue because you were talking about "carrots." This appears to be another point of divergence as we move multilaterally; in other words, who has the deep pockets to pay them off, are we willing to pay them off, and, if so, who are we going to be paying off next? The precedent setting will be very unpleasant to us, although the Europeans are more comfortable with that. But I do think that as we talk about these things we need to keep in mind that there are costs associated with victory and that those costs may, in fact, be costs that we are not interested in bearing, even with a multilateral option.

All of the things you laid out about the EU and the cooperation agreement are spot on. Quite surprising, I think the European standards about meeting some of their demands are a little bit less than one might hope. On the WMD side, they may be more positive. I think you will find on the terror and human rights side they are less positive. So again, it's a step in the right direction, but I'm not quite sure

they are the greatest thing since sliced bread.

You commented a little bit about the similarity between the EU statements and the United States, and then this other option out there: the regime change option. That is a big difference with the EU.

This issue, and differences over it within the Bush administration, goes to the major problem, which is that, in order to have agreement with others on a multilateral option, we need to figure out what our own policy is. This is a huge, huge problem. We have our own multilateral policy. You know, we have a Defense Department policy, a State Department policy, and a White House policy, and perhaps that can pass for multilateralism. But this is an enormous problem that will only be exacerbated as we take further steps and attempt to act in concert when, in fact, we are incapable of deciding—notwithstanding the proximity of this hanging—on our own policy. Because the mixed messages don't just go to the Iranians; they go to the Europeans as well.

I'm going to move more quickly through just a couple more points.

What happens after October? This is obviously the great test. If the Iranians walk out of the NPT, I don't agree with you. I don't think that will result in unanimity. I still think we're going to have problems. Others are persuaded in the Security Council that the Chinese will go along in order to make up for not cooperating with us in North Korea and that the Russians will go along because it will simply be so embarrassing to them not to go along. I think we're going to have a lot more problems than that.

In fact, I think that we are going to reach a crunch in this coalition of the willing and our attitudes very quickly, and that clarity from the Iranians, even negative clarity, will not necessarily be helpful. Because the truth is, again, we're not goal oriented. We're only process oriented and the process basically ends. Of course, even if we do agree, then we really only kick the ball down the road half way because we don't know what we want to do in the Security Council. There is no particular prescription for what we need to do.

As we have seen in North Korea, we can do nothing, or we could do any variety of things that might involve sanctions or may involve some of the usual "pablum" we come out with in the Security Council.

Last, and this is a bit ad hoc: You mentioned in passing that it's unclear to us what the Israelis, the Turks, et cetera, would do. Setting aside the region—just because I think they're unlikely to be decisive in the process—I do think that we need to have a firmer grip on what the Israelis are thinking about this. I think that is going to affect the multilateral process a lot more.

The Israelis keep quietly hinting to people that they're going to attack Iran. And then when you confront them and ask them, they say we're absolutely not going to attack Iran. But what the Israelis do is important, and what they think they're going to do and what they threaten they're going to do, all of the above is enormously important to us. I don't think it's been enough of a factor in either the unilateral or multilateral thinking. We need to get a much better grip on what the Israelis are about on this because, otherwise, we may find ourselves in agreement with everybody and in disagreement with them, and that's going to be a bit of a problem if they choose to act.

Mr. Clawson: Geoff Kemp and Danielle Pletka both pointed out that many times the Europeans are process oriented. How are we going to force a decision soon, and what do we do about the danger that this multilateral diplomatic approach will keep on going for several years and, meanwhile, the Iranians make dramatic progress toward a nuclear weapon? That's question number one.

Question two, I would be interested in both of your judgments on whether the positions of the British, French, and Germans are good enough for us? Would we accept the end of the Natanz plant, but the completion of Bushehr, with the risk of the Iranians building a clandestine reprocessing facility from which they could extract plutonium from the spent fuel at Bushehr?

This administration spent several years fixated on the Bushehr problem before Natanz was discovered. Are they going to accept just the end of Natanz and allow completion of Bushehr, or are we going

to get a multilateral diplomatic consensus that no, Bushehr can't be completed?

Mr. Kemp: I think this is exactly what we have to decide. I think both Danielle and I agree on one issue. The U.S. government has not yet decided what it wants. In other words, the three foreign ministers' letter, which from what I understand was very, very tough, goes further in more explicit demands of the Iranians than we have made, except the overall statement "no nuclear facilities at all," which I think is a nonstarter.

I think that what we have to decide among ourselves as the U.S. government is can we accept Bushehr—with the fuel safeguarded and provided by the Russians, the dismantlement of the enrichment facility, and the monitoring that would then come from the additional protocol? Is that a risk we can take? Or if we go for broke and say they can have no nuclear facilities, period, how do we enforce that? Who's going to support us?

Mr. Clawson: Implicitly, what I'm hearing you say is that you don't think there's going to be a multilateral diplomatic consensus against Bushehr?

Mr. Kemp: No, I do not. I think we're going to have to compromise on Bushehr. Robert Einhorn and Gary Samore made a very persuasive case for compromise. Ideally, of course, no Bushehr, but tell me how you achieve that result?

Mr. Eisenstadt: On that one, I think the main hope of the administration was that there would be—as a result of the IAEA visits here—sufficiently strong evidence of a blatant violation that would galvanize the international community to get the IAEA to refer the issue to the Security Council, which would then pass a resolution that would make it very hard for the Russians to veto. And that would entail a cutoff of nuclear cooperation with Iran, which would prevent completion of Bushehr. That's really the only way, I think, politically, that it's doable.

I think we have the irony that, politically speaking, the IAEA stumbled onto the program too early and that there weren't thousands of cascades up in running and enriching uranium.

Mr. Clawson: Geoff Kemp is implicitly assuming that the Iranians are going to do sufficient things to prevent that king of scenario you're describing. The administration seems to be implicitly assuming that the Iranians are going to be stupid enough that they are going to make it possible for us to achieve that consensus.

Ms. Pletka: All evidence would point in the direction of the Iranians being stupid enough to do that.

Mr. Clawson: So you're actually optimistic that we could achieve multilateral diplomatic consensus?

Ms. Pletka: No, I'm not. I'm just optimistic about the Iranians being stupid. I'm never optimistic about multilateral consensus.

But what do you think is the threshold? What is the outrage factor? I mean, is it 3,000 in the cascade but not 1,000? It would be nice to have a sense of where that outrage meter would tip onto the other side. Because I agree with you. That's what you want. If you want something as a matter of policy, you want the end to the nuclear cooperation. I don't know what it is. But there are things out there we don't know as well, and that the IAEA does know.

Speaker: I'd like to comment on the Russians. You may remember a year ago, in July of 2002, the Russians came out with their strategic plan for cooperation with Iran, which had a range of industrial cooperation in it. But part of it—and what really halted it, at that point, some momentum in the U.S.-Russian discussions on this matter of Bushehr—was that the Russians laid out a plan for six, eight,

however many new reactor units based not only at Bushehr but at a second site as well.

In the past year, there has been a sea change on the Russian side with regard to this issue, for two reasons: one of which is that many in the Russian establishment—including the Ministry of Atomic Energy establishment—were taken by surprise by the extent of the illicit facilities, the Natanz facility, and the fuel cycle facilities that were secretly constructed and felt that they had been essentially hoodwinked by the Iranians. So they personally take it very hard. I have heard from the Minister on down about this.

So I think there is not that sense that there was in Russia, that cooperation with the Iranians on constructing more nuclear facilities is an unblemished good. That has been a sea change in the past year.

The second thing that is clear is that there is disagreement between the President and Minatom on the matter of when to really pull the plug. At the G8 meeting in Evian, Putin took the position that if the Iranians would not sign the additional protocol, then Bushehr would not be fueled. I was in Moscow at the time. I was summoned to Rumyantsev's office and he told me, "Oh, no, no, no. The President made a mistake. What the President really meant to say was the bilateral fuel cycle deal, or the fuel supply deal, rather, the special bilateral protocol by which we will supply material to Bushehr and take it back again. That's what he really meant to say."

Well, since then, Minatom has been increasingly mouse trapped because Putin has stuck with his G8 position. Minatom has increasingly taken the position and extended it that, well, it's kind of a good thing that the Iranians are messing around now with the bilateral deal, and we're not really in a position now to conclude the bilateral fuel services deal. The Iranians are putting conditions on it anyway, and that's a good thing. Which leads me to believe that increasingly they are being whickered toward the President's position, even though they might not like it.

I don't want to imply there are not nuclear enthusiasts still in their industry who want to build more units, but I believe the time is ripe essentially for them to now back away from their July 2002 position and say that, at this time, for the time being, we will build no further units than the current unit that has been constructed.

So, I would be willing to talk more about the Russians, but that's my view of where their heads are at the present time.

Speaker: Regarding Israel, about three months ago, I was briefed by Mossad, and the national security planners and strategists will tell you that Iran is the biggest threat—not Hizballah, not Hamas, but Iran. Mossad is tracking very closely everything that goes on in Iran day-by-day, so they have a very good feel for the progress and the move to any threshold that would be acceptable or not acceptable.

Mr. Kemp: I don't believe that. Let me tell you something that former U.S. ambassador to Israel Sam Lewis said at the meeting that some of us attended yesterday. In 1981, he was the guy to whom Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin came to with the bad news about Israel's strike against Iraq's nuclear program site, Osirak. "Sam," Begin said, "we have just bombed Osirak," and he had to tell Ronald Reagan. Even Secretary of State Alexander Haig was a little upset.

This time around, Sharon would never do anything like that—ever. To launch an attack on Iran without clearing it with Bush is not going to happen. Therefore, it would be seen as a joint American-Israeli strike. We would be implicated up to the hilt.

I would not say it can't be done, and I would not say it's not something we should think about. But I'm just saying that I think it's very difficult to foresee a situation where this Prime Minister would jeopardize his relationship with this President over something as dramatic as this.

Speaker: Well, I think that with what you have seen with Syria now, you're going to find a more

aggressive Israel. They are prepared to do it, and they can do it. Now, how they would clear that with us, that's a question to be answered. The only thing is that I raised it as a strong option. It could be done because it is the greatest threat to Israel, and they have all the right to do it for the protection of their own country. So all I say is it's a stronger option than we may think.

Ms. Pletka: The truth is, even though I think there are many of us who would disagree with some of the points, the more of this that goes on and the less they see progress in the international community by the end of October, the more they may actually persuade themselves that this is something they need to do.

Mr. Kemp: Natanz is much more difficult. I think Natanz has to go, or something has to happen to it. I'm not sure—I haven't thought through what "it has to go" means, because there's a huge investment there. But it has to be cocooned or monitored by—

Mr. Clawson: It could develop technical problems that could prevent it from ever being completed.

Mr. Kemp: Right. It can be delayed. Now, I don't know whether that would be enough or whether we should also have benchmarks for all the other fuel cycle operations as well. The question then is: at what limit will the Iranians just sort of say "to hell with this"?

Mr. Clawson: Geoff, how about the timing issue? Is multilateral diplomacy going to act within a short enough time frame that it's going to be effective at stopping something like the Natanz facility from being completed, or is multilateral diplomacy going to take quite a long time? EU processes strike some of us observers as being markably lengthy. Are we going to achieve action?

Mr. Kemp: Look, I don't know. I mean, all I'm saying here—and Danielle Pletka and I are in complete agreement—is that people are surprised at how motivated and speedy the action has been since this issue became a front-page issue last February. There has been a lot done between February 2003 and September 2003. So, presumably, that momentum can be kept up. Then I think there are sort of secondary issues.

Obviously, what happens in the Korean case will have some bearing on the Iranian case. If we're successful in Korea—whatever that means—the Iranians will have to think loud and—

Speaker: Let me ask both of you, can we accept a nuclear Iran?

Mr. Kemp: Well, yes. If the regime has totally different policies, is friendly in diplomatic relations, and has an ambassador in Jerusalem.

Speaker: Look, we live with a nuclear India, a nuclear Pakistan.

Ms. Pletka: The truth is that what we all keep avoiding are real questions about the NPT, about the reality of whether or not it works, and what do we find acceptable.

I agree with Geoff Kemp. I actually don't think there's any question that Iran will end up with nuclear weapons. We may be able to slow them down, but they want them. I'm not persuaded that, whoever the good guys are in Iran, they don't want nuclear weapons.

Speaker: Can we live with that?

Ms. Pletka: The answer is not Iran nuclear or not nuclear. The answer is who in Iran will control the nuclear weapon: a decent democratic government, or the mullahs. At the end of the day, we're not having this meeting about India because we are not terribly concerned that India is going to be (a) using its nuclear weapon and (b) proliferating it to God knows who.

Mr. Kemp: Let me make your point even stronger. If we woke up tomorrow and there had been a coup d'etat in Pakistan and radical Taliban elements of the ISI Inter-services Intelligence directorate had taken control of the country and the nuclear program, we would be talking about Pakistan in this room, not Iran.

Speaker: Well, we should be talking about Pakistan. Pakistan is on the IAEA Board of Governors, Pakistan is a member of the Security Council, and it's one piece in the strategy that I think is always missing. The focus is traditionally on Moscow and Beijing, and it's not on Islamabad. So it's not only the possibility of a coup d'etat in Pakistan, it is this government in Islamabad that we need to get through to if there's any prospect of multilateral diplomacy.

Two other points, briefly. You also pointed out the NPT is critical. We have had several meetings recently in Europe, and there is movement among the Europeans on Iran. But I think when push comes to shove, with the NPT to survive—speaking about this administration particularly—is that something there is unanimity about is the NPT surviving politically for us. I think that's a question mark that a lot of us have. So I think the question is going to be a little bit less on what Iran is being urged, per se, but what it says about the present value of the NPT.

Speaker: I think with regard to what's tolerable, generally, national security is not based on banking on cascading uncertainties, working in your direction. The reason why nuclear proliferation is such a hot topic for so long is that it generates enormous uncertainties.

The idea that we, as humans, can get on top of and project what the regimes are going to be like with this kind of weapon at their disposal is the reason why we have national security councils, military, and people like us to try to prevent the generation of these uncertainties. What is at stake ultimately—again coming back to these comments—is this government and governments like us are anxious to promote a standard that will make that clear to the rest of the world.

Speaker: Just a quick comment again on the NPT. I think that gets to the real heart of this issue between us and the Europeans. Do we want the NPT to survive as it is, or would we like to see it changed? And are the Europeans going to go with the NPT as it is?

I have wondered if the Iranians haven't zeroed in on precisely that gray area. I think if they have, then it may be a possibility that they're going to throw everything on the table by October 31st—that is to say, they're willing to sign the additional protocol, they're willing to put the enrichment facilities under IAEA safeguards, that kind of thing, and they'll negotiate about it. But it is an attempt to drive a wedge between us and the Europeans.

I think, in that sense, the issue of getting our goals firmly in mind in advance is crucial, because this is coming down the pike. We could be faced with this in a matter of weeks.

Speaker: Let me just get into the discussion on the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. We had a very large conference in Moscow a couple of weeks ago where we had represented Israelis, Iranians, South Asians, Indians and Pakistanis, as well as many Europeans. I wanted to let people know that, in my view, based on this group—which was a group of experts from around the world, many of them in and out of government—there is a wide-ranging, I would say, discussion now of the necessity of thinking again about Article IV, and thinking about the approaches that would be related perhaps to internationalization of the fuel cycle, for example. We were hearing proposals from Israelis. We were hearing interest from the Iranians. We had a fairly high level of representation. Mr. Sotani Phonetic, the foreign ministry official responsible for relations with the IAEA, came to Moscow. So I think there is a lot of ferment.

I actually agree that the Iranians are trying to split the United States and the Europeans on this point, but I think in a way the debate has advanced beyond that. People are thinking in terms of, all

right, how do we need to improve the nonproliferation treaty? I don't hear anybody saying, at least in these circles, it's time to simply ditch the nonproliferation treaty. But, how do we take it to a new stage, how do we improve it, how in particular do we correct the problems that have flowed from the promises inherent in Article IV?

Mr. Eisenstadt: It goes to the question before about time phasing and how long will it take—the negotiation of an agreement between the Europeans, the Americans and Europeans, the Russians and Iran. There are two factors. How long will it take the Iranian government to ratify and approve an agreement? They have said they have their own process. Even one official said it could take up to four years.

Mr. Clawson: Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said that.

Speaker: When you look at the timeline that some people have thrown out, they could have a bomb in three to four years. It's just an interesting correlation there.

Then looking at any kind of effort to fix the NPT, if we look at '93 plus two, the plus two was supposed to be done within two years. In '93, the initiative was put on the table. By '95, in the NPT renewal conference, it was supposed to be passed. But, if I'm correct, it took about five years, if I remember, more or less, to get '93 plus two accepted. It's still in the early phases of its implementation. NPT took ten years. So—

Speaker: I just wanted to introduce that there are several different time factors here, timelines here.

Speaker: Well, delay by the Iranians, I think, is a very real empirical situation.

Mr. Clawson: So, what is the prospect that we can achieve some kind of multilateral consensus on the idea of some kind of an enhanced NPT with Iran as the test case? In other words, can we achieve consensus on the idea that there's going to be new country-neutral rules that we're going to introduce and that Iran is going to be the test case for this?

Mr. Kemp: You mean for an NPT without Article IV?

Mr. Clawson: At the most mundane level, it might be possible to achieve multilateral consensus that, in addition to inspections, we have to have real-time monitoring with some of the technologies that were not available when the NPT was negotiated thirty years ago. Thirty years ago, you couldn't imagine having a real-time monitoring facility.

It might be possible to reach agreement that we're going to do that from now on as a country-neutral rule which starts with Iran. Perhaps there are other things about fuel cycle that we could agree on, for instance, freeze the number of countries that have a full fuel cycle at its current levels.

Speaker: Your suggestion, more modest suggestion of just prohibiting withdrawal treaty, some kind of UN resolution, is a kind of winner.

Mr. Clawson: One of the suggestions I have made is that we should go to the Security Council and say that any country that is not complying with the NPT in the judgment of the IAEA is forbidden to withdraw from the treaty and is forbidden to acquire nuclear weapons, that only if you're a country in good status can you withdraw from the treaty or can you acquire nuclear weapons. And if you're a country that the IAEA board says is not in good status, then you cannot withdraw, or the Security Council would make legally binding upon you the requirements of the treaty.

Ms. Pletka: I'm betting that would not be very appealing internationally for us, if I had to say so.

Mr. Clawson: It's a relatively modest step. But, it says that if you're violating the agreement you

can't withdraw from the agreement, or the treaty is binding. At least we could say, "you're a bad boy," okay? You know, you can't pull a North Korean trick and say I'm withdrawing from the treaty and therefore I'm no longer bound by it. What's the possibility we could achieve some consensus on some of these kinds of things?

Mr. Kemp: Look, I think that you probably can, but, again, it's on a different track than what we're talking about here. I mean, this is going to take a long time.

Ms. Pletka: I agree.

Mr. Clawson: What can we do in the short time we have on the multilateral diplomacy front? We can achieve agreement that Iran is a bad state, that's nice, but then what do we do?

Mr. Kemp: Remember, my bottom line was that if we have a joint position that we can live with and the Europeans can live with, which is clear and explicit, it's going to get the Iranians talking to themselves about this, too.

Speaker: But this gets to what you said before, Geoff Kemp. The U.S. government, it seems, has not even made up its mind.

Mr. Kemp: That's right. We'll make up our minds, and then we'll go to the U.S. government, okay?

Ms. Pletka: You're still talking about process.

Mr. Clawson: If what you're saying is at the end of the day there's not going to be a consensus on doing anything about this, why should the Iranians be concerned about it?

Speaker: You're saying that the near term issue is preventing fuel from being delivered to Bushehr, so it can't be diverted to extract plutonium. What I hear one of our colleagues saying is that multilateral diplomacy is creating a climate where Russia doesn't want to deliver the fuel.

Ms. Pletka: Russia may not want to deliver the fuel, but the Iranians are in the process of creating their own fuel cycle.

Speaker: What I heard was that the near term threat is diversion of the fuel. The argument about the mid-term or long-term threat is where they think we're getting the times to work. So what I hear is that multilateral diplomacy creates a climate where Russia is not going to deliver the fuel.

Speaker: What if they come to a deal—the Russians and Iranians—which they're still working on?

Speaker: I think my view is that the Russians will continue to look for ways to delay delivery of the fuel to Bushehr, because Putin himself has basically ascribed now to the G8 position.

It follows on. The Russians also have—even Minatom has deployed the talking point since Evian, which is, if the international legal situation changes, we will change our position on delivery of fuel to Bushehr. If there is a consensus at the end of October and it gets into the UN Security Council, I believe Russia will put the brakes on, period. That's my view.

Ms. Pletka: It's extraneous, but we really haven't talked about North Korea at all. I do think that as we think about the Europeans and their different policies, and we talk about the United States and its own internal divergences about what to do about Iran, we have to recognize that people have derived very different lessons about the success or failure of the agreed framework, and ask ourselves whether or not those kind of lessons work.

Someone brought out the question of mothballing—what do you do with Natanz? Is it sufficient to

mothball it? Do we install cameras and IAEA seals perhaps, or do we need to see it dismantled?

All of those things are extraordinarily important in how we think about what happens on November 1st. The fact that we have all derived very different lessons about the success or failure of the agreed framework would be to me an indication that we're going to have more problems than perhaps our current consensus would indicate. Because I don't think we could even necessarily agree—and I'm pointing at either of you on the Natanz mothball question—I don't think we can necessarily agree on what we would want to do with it even if we agreed we needed to do something about it. That's a problem as well. So it's just something to keep in mind.

Mr. Kemp: What's interesting, Patrick Clawson, is I haven't heard anyone around the table condemn what we're currently doing. There are doubts about whether it's going to work, but everyone seems to think that this has been a very productive diplomatic effort in the last six months. The debate really is where do we go from here, what is our bottom line, and will everything fall apart on October 31st? It seems to me a case for multilateralism has been made.

Mr. Clawson: This has been a success story multilaterally. I think there is broad agreement on that issue.

Speaker: I would add that it will probably look even more successful down the road when we discover that if the pattern of the Iranian program over the last 15 years continues to hold true, that the 2006 worst case assessments from Mossad and others probably will never happen. In fact, we have more time for the multilateral process to work than we might feel here in the room.

Mr. Clawson: In other words, if Iranian technical incompetence matches their diplomatic incompetence, we will have much more time. On that optimistic note, we can switch to our discussion of the next topic, which is the question of the potential for military action. I think from the earlier discussion that we noted there is also the issue of Israeli military action and the questions that poses as to what the U.S. attitude would be.

PREEMPTIVE MILITARY ACTION

Lt. Gen. Thomas McInerney: Well, I have the military option that I would like to discuss. Fundamentally, I do not believe that the United States can allow Iran to have nuclear weapons. That's a flat statement. How we get there to prevent it I think Geoffrey presented a very interesting case. But, whatever we do, the bottom line is the United States cannot accept an Iranian nuclear weapon.

Now, why do I say that? Because I think Iran is part of the threat in the war on terror. It has three characteristics as a threat to us:

One, they're a rogue state, which the Iranians are with their leadership; two, they are working on weapons of mass destruction; and three, they support terrorism. Of course, everyone is very familiar with Iran's support of Hizballah and fundamentalism and spreading fundamentalism throughout the region.

The nations that come under this particular category, in my opinion, are Iran, North Korea, Syria, Libya, Sudan, and the potential—I say the potential—of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. This, in fact, is a web of evil. It's more than an axis of evil; it's a web of evil. There are a large number of them and we must, in fact, accept that they are threats to us.

Now, Iran and North Korea are co-equal threats and must be dealt with the same amount of urgency. There are different ways to deal with them. And since we're not here to discuss North Korea, I will only say that that is as serious to me as Iran, maybe more serious.

Let me backtrack on one thing. I think the Carter administration letting fundamentalism take place in '79, when they let Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini back in, was probably one of the most serious mistakes the United States made in the last half of the 20th century.

I was in Iran in 1977 on a CENTO Central Treaty Organization exercise, Shiraz '77. If you can imagine these last twenty-five years when CENTO was still an operative organization and the stability we would have had in the region, I think we would be much happier. The CENTO military chiefs came down—I was a full colonel at the time and I had eighteen airplanes down at Shiraz. Looking at the cooperation in that region, I would love to have it today. I do believe—without spending too much time looking in the rear-view mirror—it was a huge mistake for us. What we got with Iran is a leader in fundamentalism and terrorism in the region.

Now, what are the options that we have? I firmly believe that we cannot let Iran go nuclear because those weapons will get in terrorist hands and they will end up in the United States. They also have the capability with long-range missiles. The Shahab-3 that they're developing can strike Israel. And as one of our colleagues said, the Israelis clearly think, and rightly so, that Iran is the most serious threat in the region, without a doubt.

So what are the options? I agree that the multilateral approach that Geoff talked about is an important approach, if it can be successful. The problem we find with multilateral approaches and processes is you finally reach a "crunch" point. You put on all these caveats and conditions, benchmarks, which I think are very worthwhile.

But when you can't get them, what do you do then? We saw that a year ago when we couldn't really get the UN to do anything despite seventeen Security Council resolutions. When it came to bite the bullet time, they were not willing to do it. They wouldn't stay together. So if we are forced into that particular position, and if Russia, in fact, doesn't stop the refueling of the reactor at Bushehr, then I think we have to seriously look at a military option before Iran gets the weapons.

But prior to that, we ought to be working on a far more aggressive, covert operations program. In some cases, it ought to be overt. In some cases, we ought to—and I wouldn't consider this "groveling"—but perhaps seriously looking at relieving sanctions, economic sanctions. The last thing the

Europeans want to see is Jeep Cherokee diplomacy in Iran. The Iranians have such a huge desire for our goods that it would have a major impact on the economy. We have great difficulty in understanding this because it goes against certain other problems, and it isn't an easy decision. But it could be part of the lower end of groveling that we could hurt financially. But it could, in fact, speed the process, the slow process that we're hoping Iran will move to. It also could be used in certain, that is, open covert operations. There are other ways in which we should help those people in Iran that want to move toward democracy.

If time is going against us the part that concerns me is the military. There are two options on that. Number one, we could support the Israelis, covertly, and let them do it. They can do it without us supporting them, and are prepared to do it and can execute it very well. But we have certain things we can do so much better than they do, with Stealth, and we could make it far more successful. Because five or ten B-2's can do what the whole Israeli Air Force could do, if they could ever get it there, which they can't do. So we have extraordinary capabilities militarily to hit Bushehr and Natanz.

But the worrisome thing is that they have these enrichment facilities spread throughout the country, and I'm not sure we have a good grip on exactly where they are. So it's more than just two sites. That is the worrisome part about it. Taking those two sites out, would that have an impact on the program? Yes, it would. If the Israelis did it, what would be the repercussions versus we doing it? There is no question that Sharon would not want to do it without having our approval. But, at the same time, the options facing the President in certain situations—it might be easier to let them do it versus having us do it. We could discuss that.

But five B-2's can hit those two places very adequately—and other locations where there are some enrichment facilities. The information that we were given is, when they finish, they will have 20,000 centrifuges upon completion, which would enable them to produce fifty nuclear weapons per year.

So from a military point of view, if we, in fact, took out those two facilities, plus others that we were able to do, and put a time delay into the program, what is our concern now of how the Iranians would respond? Because I'm not talking ground operations. I don't think that's required.

The Iranians are not a very formidable force. It's a vast country, but militarily they are not a very formidable force. They are less capable than the Iraqis and, you know, what more do I need to say? So they're not going to do things overtly, attack our forces in Iraq. They are probably going to covertly attack our forces in Iraq anyhow. They are, in fact, doing it. The question is how much more they would elect to do that.

Let me quickly summarize here. We cannot let Iran go nuclear, that's a line in the sand. We must execute, I believe, aggressive overt and covert activities to speed that process. And as a last resort, we must destroy—if the fuel is delivered or we see the potential of it—Bushehr and Natanz, plus the other enrichment facilities that we know of.

Mr. Eisenstadt: I think Tom McInerney did a really good job by getting us off on the right foot, by asking the right question at the outset, which is basically before deciding whether preventive action is desirable, or a doable or viable course of action, you have to ask what are the implications of not acting preventably.

I would expand on his list of alternative futures, first by saying that if you believe maybe the diplomatic deal is doable, you will probably be less inclined to look at the preventive option with any degree of urgency. If you believe that Iran will inevitably acquire nuclear weapons, and if you believe the time frame is short, prevention perhaps takes greater urgency and you discount the diplomatic option that preventive action has greater urgency.

If you feel Iran's effort is riddled with inefficiency and bottlenecks, technological material and likewise, then at least the urgency of addressing prevention is not as great.

Finally, there is the issue of what are the implications of a nuclear Iran. What impact would pos-

sessing nuclear weapons have on Iranian behavior? There is one school of thought that says nuclear weapons incline countries to caution and prudence. They point to the Cold War, the behavior of the United States and Soviet Union, although there's the countervailing example of the Cuban missile crisis and several other cases—the '56 Arab-Israeli War, the '73 Arab-Israeli War—where there was a nuclear element to the crisis.

On the other hand, people say, well look what happened after Pakistan demonstrated its nuclear capability, where you had the Kargil crisis in 1999. And then Saddam Husayn. After the Iran-Iraq War, with his chemical and biological programs maturing in the '88–89 time frame, at a time when people thought he would turn inward and focus on reconstruction, he became more aggressive and activist. Therefore, if Iran was to acquire nuclear weapons, it's possible that they would be more aggressive and activist.

There is also the issue of terrorism that Tom McInerney brought up, and also the issue of additional proliferation in the region. Would the Saudis opt for a nuclear weapon? Would the smaller Gulf States perhaps try to acquire it, or use their petro-chemical industries to develop chemical weapons? The issue is what happens if there's widespread instability in Iran? What happens to a nuclear stockpile in such a case? If it's the providence of the Revolutionary Guard, and they believe the revolution is going down the tubes, would they lash out against the people who they believe are behind the domestic unrest? And then there's also the impact on the NPT that we talked about before.

So the risks of preventive action—are they less daunting than the risks of inaction? That's the first question you have to ask. And then there's the issue of is effective preventive action possible, and what's your measure of success?

First, with regard to the issue of measure of success, I would argue that preventive action probably cannot stop a determined proliferator. It could, however, substantially delay a program. Therefore, I would argue that the principal goal of U.S. action would be to delay Iran's nuclear program long enough to allow for the possible emergence of a new leadership in Tehran, either willing to eschew nuclear weapons, freeze its nuclear program short of the production of fission material, or at least act responsibly should they acquire nuclear weapons.

So again, even in the context of prevention, it is still contingent upon the political dynamic in Iran. There has to be simultaneous effort on the political plane to encourage political change in Tehran. You know, this is a discussion for this afternoon, but I would argue that we have limited tools in order to accomplish that. But again, the two aspects are linked in my mind.

First of all, with regard to the efficacy or the doability of preventive action, there are the intelligence challenges that Tom brought up. There is no doubt that preventive action puts a premium on detailed, accurate, and complete intelligence.

That being the case, if we look at our experience with North Korea, with Iraq, and with Iran, the precedents are not encouraging. Time and again we've been surprised by the fact that these countries were able to hide large parts of a nuclear program from us for years. Therefore, it is a question of whether we have the detailed and accurate intelligence required in order to impose a delay.

Keep in mind, it's not just enough to hit either the plutonium route or the uranium route. You have to hit every route so that you have delayed the date in which they produce their first nuclear weapon. If you hit four out of the five routes, and in the end they still produce their first nuclear weapon on the same day that they would have produced it otherwise, it's quite possible you will pay a very high price—and I'll discuss that in a moment—without having any tangible benefit in terms of the delay you're trying to accomplish. So there is a very high demand on the intelligence side.

On the other hand, the fact that there is information about the program leaking out raises the possibility that we might get lucky, and we might get a windfall of intelligence that might make prevention a viable option. So there is two sides to this, and we may get lucky.

There are technical challenges. While plutonium production usually relies on reactors, which are highly visible targets that have large signatures of all types and are usually targeted, the uranium route is much more difficult—especially when you're talking about centrifuges—because of their low electricity requirements and the fact that you could disperse a centrifuge program making them difficult to detect. So there are technical problems in both gaining the intelligence on a uranium program that's based on centrifuges and then targeting all its aspects—the workshops that produce the centrifuges, the enrichment facilities. You know, there might be a large number of workshops, and there might be multiple enrichment facilities.

And then there are political challenges. I would argue that should the United States act preventively, it must do so in a way that ensures that such action does not poison the reservoir of pro-American good will among young Iranians or derail the movement for political reform, thereby complicating efforts to encourage political change and improve U.S.-Iranian relations in the future.

This might be squaring the circle, I have to admit. I'm not sure there's a way to act preventably without having a negative political impact. I mean, that's a fact, a trade-off you might have to have at the end of the day, to decide what's more important for you in the end.

On the other hand, it also raises the possibility of other actions, such as allied action, such as by the Israelis. Again, as Tom and others have said, I think in the end, we'll be seen as the hidden hand behind Israeli action and in the end we will probably pay the same political price if the Israelis act as if we act on our own.

There is the issue of covert action, which makes it much more difficult for the Iranians to retaliate, since it may not even be clear to them whether the results of covert action were an industrial accident or overt action. I have a whole laundry list of things we could do, which I will leave for now.

But the bottom line is, I would point out, because of the nature of covert action, the impact is not likely to be as dramatic as overt military action. If you introduce systematic flows into the design of centrifuges so that they go ballistic when they're spinning at high speed and produce fratricide with other centrifuges around them, you might damage one centrifuge facility. But maybe there's two, three, four, or five others elsewhere that haven't been damaged in such a way, because maybe other production facilities were producing components for those centrifuge plants.

The Israelis, from what we know, tried covert action before bombing Osirak, and at the end of the day they had to bomb Osirak. I suspect, even if we were to try covert action, in the end I don't think it would obviate the need for military action at the end of the day.

And then there's overt U.S. action, military action. Again, to me, it's probably doable if we have the necessary intelligence. But the main problem, I think, is political. There, it's the issue of mitigating an anti-American backlash among the erstwhile pro-American Iranian public, largely pro-American Iranian public, and the problem of strengthening the hand of hardliners and taking action that could prompt retaliatory action against U.S. interests in the Gulf or elsewhere.

In the end, it might be possible to deter overt retaliation, such as attacks on U.S. naval elements in the Gulf, but I don't think we could deter a terrorist response at the end of the day, especially if they were to support, say, al-Qaeda elements who for their own reasons are trying to act against the United States. It might be hard for the United States to detect the Iranian fingerprints on such an activity, although I would say, in the end, in the past I think we have done a good job of figuring out when Iran was behind such action, such as Khobar Towers and the marine barracks bombing in 1983. So it's not clear to me that they will be able to obscure their action.

In conclusion, I would say the bottom line is that the successful use of preventive action requires exceptionally complete intelligence, near flawless military execution, in-depth post-strike diplomacy to mitigate anti-American backlash to deter retaliation, and most importantly, to ensure that military action does not poison pro-American sentiment or derail the movement for political change in Iran.

Again, I think that might be trying to square a circle, and there might be painful trade-offs we're going to have to make if we decide to take preventive action.

Because the difficult trade-offs here not only underscores the importance of exhausting the diplomatic option before going down the preventive route, I would also say from a timeline point of view, from a timing point of view, we probably have time because there is also a danger, just as there was a danger diplomatically of discovering the Iranian program too early, there's a danger of striking it militarily too early. Because if you're hitting only empty buildings or buildings that are only partially full, you don't get much of a payoff. It's better that we hit programs that are mature and on the verge of going online than to hit a program too early, so we probably have time in this regard, although again, our intelligence may not be very good.

I would also say that we have to supplement any preventive action in Iran with efforts to halt North Korea's nuclear program. Even if we succeed beyond our wildest dreams in destroying a nuclear program in Iran, if they can buy the stuff from North Korea at the end of the day, what's the point? So we have to walk and chew gum at the same time. We have to be able to deal with both of these problems.

Nonetheless, despite all of my qualms about preventive action, I believe it must remain on the table as an option—I wouldn't say qualms. I would say analytical qualifications, which means personally I have no problem with the idea.

But we have to keep the option on the table, both as a spirit of diplomacy by the international community and as a recognition that there might arise certain circumstances in the future in which preventive action might become a viable option. If we get an intelligence windfall, should covert action or sabotage become possible as a result of the recruitment of well-placed agents? Or should Iran be found responsible for encouraging or commissioning an act of anti-U.S. terrorism that results in significant loss of U.S. life, in which case we will feel compelled to retaliate for the terrorist act, and while doing so, it might make sense to also hit the nuclear targets as long as we're paying the price of retaliation for terrorism?

Mr. Clawson: Are there things we ought to be doing to make it clear that the military option is on the table? In other words, should we quietly leak plans that we have? Or are there things we should do to make it more apparent to Iran that this is one of the options that we reserve for ourselves? Or is there just simply the assumption in the international community that the U.S. military can do this sort of thing and, therefore—

Lieutenant General McInerney: I think it's very important that we do certain things, which ought to be orchestrated, and that we have a "focused national policy."

Diplomacy and the multilateral approach will not be successful unless there is a threat. I want very much to be successful multilaterally. The Iranians are a society that's moving in our direction, and I think we need them on our side if we're going to win this war on terrorism.

Michael, you mentioned an important thing that I want to comment on. If Iran goes nuclear, the rest of the region is going nuclear. I mean, they have all got to keep a Middle East strategy so that hegemony doesn't swiftly fall to Iran. Saudi Arabia will go, Syria is trying to go anyhow, and others will go. So I think that's why we cannot let Iran go nuclear.

Mr. Eisenstadt: I agree that in order for the option to be seen as being on the table we have to get it out and convey that the planning is being done, or whatever. But we have to be very careful. Because, in the current diplomacy, I think it's very important that we avoid creating a situation where at least some people would see an Iranian decision to withdraw from the NPT in response to these threats as justified. Therefore, we have to avoid creating a situation where we give them a pretext. So that if they do withdraw, it's clear that they're withdrawing because they are trying to evade living up to their obligation to the NPT and answering the hard questions that the IAEA has asked and not because

they're reacting to a legitimate—from their point of view—threat to their national security on the basis of American threats.

Again, there is a balance that has to be struck here, and it has to be very subtle, whatever hints that are put out.

Lieutenant General McInerney: I want to make sure that people do not misconstrue my point. I do not want leaks from the U.S. government. I want a public discourse by former officials like myself who can go out and talk about it. This should not be that it's covert; it should just be the facts.

Speaker: That would be fine, except for the fact that the administration seems to be conducting this rather nefarious, back-channel discussion with the Iranians, with former and sort of former but somehow empowered officials whom the Iranians believe are actually speaking for the U.S. government. So, in fact, you run the risk of going over Mike Eisenstadt's line and giving them a justification if everybody starts racing out there and talking about this.

Speaker: What is the most interesting about the presentation, and what would really be worth thinking through, is can you really bomb a little without really just going to war? If you're going to war, who are you going to war against, and for what purposes? Really, when you talk about bombing these facilities, to what extent aren't you really walking into a major conflict with Iran, with the purpose of overthrowing the government—which is okay. But then you have to do the rest of your homework, and maybe it will involve ground troops. By the way, it might be useful to start talking about that, too, at least in here.

Also, this comment about North Korea, this has really inspired me. We've got to worry about North Korea. I guess we've got to worry about Pakistan. To what extent are we willing to up the ante to compete against them in some fashion, to keep them from assisting Iran after or even before our attack?

I think this really raises the discussion to a level that is something worthy of our talents, because these are general things, and these are not the general points that tend to get focused on when you talk about preemption. Instead, it's all this tactical stuff, which frankly gets very tricky.

Speaker: I don't want to be facetious, but I wonder how many Russians we are going to kill.

Speaker: It's mostly Ukrainians.

Lieutenant General McInerney: Not as many as in Vietnam is the answer. Not too many.

Speaker: Look, there's a huge difference between thinking about a military option if we have an agreement among ourselves, our allies, and the UN that Iran is in noncompliance with its treaty obligations and is building the bomb—as distinct from a unilateral—American or Israeli—decision that, no matter what the status of their relationship to the IAEA and to the UN and the NPT, we are not going to permit them to open this reactor at Bushehr and continue with the enrichment process.

So the question is, do we really need to discuss the risks of the military option? I think the risks to the former option, where we would have support, are still formidable. I think our colleague is right. This is a war against Iran. I think the risks of the unilateral option are enormous and that's what should be discussed.

I would like to hear more about the military risks. Is this just a piece of cake and we don't suffer any losses? Is there no retaliation against us that counts?

Lieutenant General McInerney: We have a pretty long track record of bombing Iraq, and they never attacked us, of hitting targets in the Sudan and hitting targets in Afghanistan. But you always run the risk.

Now, if Iran is rather prudent, we only have five and a half divisions on their border right now. A

year ago, it would have been a more difficult option. But in answer to your question, if Iran wants to attack our forces, then they can do that.

But that's not going to happen, in my opinion. I believe that as long as we put out why we will not accept Iran having nuclear weapons because of support of Hizballah, of support of terrorism, and the actions they have done against us. Again, remember, this preventive action is done at the end of the day when the IAEA has failed, the EU has failed, and they didn't meet the benchmarks.

Speaker: With all due respect, sir, it does not seem credible at all to compare the Sudan with Iran, and the other two examples are precisely the point I'm trying to raise. Iraq and Afghanistan and North Korea raises the specter again, that we don't just go in half way. We have to be prepared for not just a pin prick of the sites you see, or even the sites you don't see, but take on the country that is competing with you in a fundamental security fashion to put them out of business. That means the government, and that is, at a minimum, at least a very serious cold war after you do the bombing, and maybe a hot war to continue. But it's not something like the Clinton effort against the Sudan.

Mr. Clawson: Let me intervene. In 1988, when the U.S. Navy decided to attack an Iranian oil rig, from which the Iranians were launching small boats that scattered mines in the Persian Gulf, the U.S. Navy had not prepared for Iranian retaliation. It found itself by the end of the day in the largest surface naval combat since the Korean War.

So the last time that we, in fact, engaged in an attack against the Iranians, we were confident they would not respond. They did, and they lost half their navy. But we were still in, as I said, the largest surface naval combat that we had had in some thirty-seven years.

Lieutenant General McInerney: Which was how much?

Mr. Clawson: Oh, six ships. They lost six ships.

Lieutenant General McInerney: Give me a break. That's piddling.

Speaker: This question is for Michael Eisenstadt, on a closely related subject. Iran has a defense strategy that is highly centered on deterrence and retaliation. They've already made their deterrent threats about what would happen if there were strikes against their nuclear infrastructure. You suggested that one of the ways they might retaliate is by giving WMD to terrorists, which, as I understand what you said, they haven't done yet.

Have you looked at what their chemical and biological warfare (CBW) capabilities are and what the impact of some sort of retaliation that's based on unconventional delivery of WMD would be, given that the credibility of all their deterrent threats would then be at stake?

Mr. Eisenstadt: Actually, on that one, if I mentioned giving WMD to terrorists, I didn't mean that. I meant simply supporting terrorist groups, whether it be those that are traditionally associated with Iran, such as Hizballah, or those who are not, such as al-Qaeda, although they apparently have a presence there.

My feeling is that they've had significant success by supporting groups that engage in conventional terrorism—and that would be their preferred route—because of the Marine barracks bombing and Khobar Towers—I'm not sure they could point to a success there—but certainly the Marine barracks bombing. Look, I think there's a good chance this would initiate a terrorist campaign that could last a very long time. It could be global in scope. Potentially involving CBW.

Speaker: I don't understand why the General assumes this is going to be—I hate to use the term because it has an echo—a "cake walk" to fight Iran. He said it would be easier than Iraq, this would be no problem, and it wouldn't surprise or upset anybody. I just have strong disagreement on all counts.

Iran has not been humbled for so many years the way Iraq has, and also has not been observed as closely over all these years the way we overflew Iraq every day repeatedly with perfect target sets.

Lieutenant General McInerney: And also doesn't have nearly as stupid leadership.

Speaker: It doesn't have as stupid a leadership, that's quite true. But I also don't think the Iranian people are going to rise up and welcome this kind of thing. I just don't see it. The assumptions here seem to be, once again, terribly wrong.

Lieutenant General McInerney: Let me ask you, do you want them to have nuclear weapons and give them to terrorists that end up in the United States?

Speaker: I would question all of the assumptions you have in that sentence. How do you know they will give them to terrorists that would wind up in the United States? The same thing was said about Saddam Husayn and it was wrong.

Lieutenant General McInerney: The fact is, the terrorists have a goal, and their goal, which they've been articulate to state it, is to destroy the United States and Israel, and the free things that we harbor.

Mr. Clawson: Can we agree that the degree of risk is a major factor in considering whether or not the military option is appropriate?

Speaker: I don't want to have any illusions about an attack on Iran that would precipitate a war. This is a big country, a very nationalistic country, and to think we could just bomb the nuclear installations and go away and then continue as we were the day before, I think is a grave error. Maybe the risk of them getting nuclear weapons is more grave than for us to destroy the pro-American sentiments of a few hundred thousand Iranian twenty year olds. Maybe that's true. But it doesn't look to me like they will greet us with flowers, as we have also referred before. We just have to understand that this is what it's going to mean, that's all

Speaker: With respect to an air campaign to degrade the nuclear capabilities, it's exactly what Mike Eisenstadt said it is. It can degrade but it can't destroy it. Some of it is hardened deep underground and you're not going to get to those nodes.

The question that I have is, would bombing produce the axis of evil effect, which surprised me, and that was that the moderates said we don't want to be a member of the axis of evil, let's modify our behavior so we don't have to be part of that, as opposed to let's go oppose the United States. Or do you get the effect that I think precipitated the Islamic revolution, or at least helped sell it, namely, that bombing is a violation of Iranian sovereignty? My point is, what will be the reaction is a larger question. It has to be considerable when you put the military option on the table. I think it has to be on the table, but you have to consider the unintended consequences.

Lieutenant General McInerney: Absolutely. But all I ask you is, do you want Iran to have nuclear weapons?

Mr. Clawson: A fair number of the negative consequences that people are pointing out if we engage in military action, such as the potential of WMD terrorism—The interesting question is if you think Iran would potentially do that, then you have to ask yourself well, would they do that if they got nuclear weapons?

If your evaluation is that Iran might just sponsor WMD terrorism against the United States, then you have to ask yourself, doesn't that also mean that I think Iran having nuclear weapons may be a very risky thing? So many of these worst case scenarios in the event of military action I would suggest. If

you believe that's the kind of hostile country that we're faced with, then that also raises the risk of them getting nuclear weapons.

Lieutenant General McInerney: Absolutely.

Mr. Clawson: So what we may be seeing here is that we are underestimating the risk of Iran having nuclear weapons and we're underestimating the price we may have to pay in order to stop them from doing it—that this is a more expensive crisis than we thought. But it doesn't necessarily change the calculus. It's just whether or not we can engage in military action. It just suggests that this is going to be a lot more costly than we thought it was.

Speaker: Patrick, you're leaving it out there as a question: What do we think the Iranians are going to do with nuclear weapons? It's such an integral part of the decisionmaking about whether the military option is the right one, that it would seem to me, that addressing it as a "maybe" is dangerous. And that it would be interesting, even for five minutes, to hear a range of opinions about whether people actually think Iran would be more responsible or less responsible.

People often underestimate the soft side of nuclear proliferation and the softer challenge versus the hard challenge.

Speaker: I just want to challenge the assumption that just because they were considering using weapons of mass destruction in retaliation that means it's already a threat that they would do that use nuclear weapons first. I don't think that's actually a parallel structure. They may be developing nuclear weapons so they can ship them to New York in containers and blow the city up.

But I think that's a very different cost-benefit analysis, or even an ideological calculation on their part, than just assuming they would do that from the get-go.

I would just point out our mirror image looking at us. We weren't going to conquer Afghanistan and clean it out prior to the September 11 attacks, but something happened and it changed the way we thought. We acted in a much different way than anybody expected, including what already most of the commentators here said. So I think it's an unfair assumption.

Speaker: It seems to me that if we start thinking about a military option, and we know there are possible retaliatory actions that Iran can take, we should take a step back and think about how to minimize their tools for retaliation now.

First of all, it's a "two-fer." Let's think about Hizballah's worldwide reach. We do nothing in terms of Hizballah's reach in the triborder area, or we don't really pay attention as we should in terms of their assets worldwide. So we think about the actions they could take afterwards, specifically on Hizballah.

We should start acting now to cut the legs out from under those potential actions, regardless of whether we take military action or not, because frankly they're good for us anyway. But, I don't see a lot of focus on that.

Mr. Eisenstadt: That's a good point.

Speaker: I would like to go back to the issue of timing and the use of military force under a scenario that I still think has got some possibility, which is that the Iranians, between now and October 31st, or very shortly thereafter, do say they're going to come into compliance, and they will sign the additional protocol. They will put the reprocessing facility on the table as well, and there are some negotiations about that.

Meanwhile, the Russians go ahead and decide to fuel Bushehr. So we have this process going where the Iranians are still moving along, and yet, in effect, you have this international, multilateral process underway.

Now, in relationship to your question, do we want the Iranians to have nukes? We know that if this

process continues, the possibility is clearly there, that they will get them. But when do we intervene along that scenario, along that line? It's one thing if tomorrow the Iranians say "we're going for nukes." That's easy enough then to make that decision. But if they're in this process, when do we make that decision as to where we're going to hit them?

Mr. Eisenstadt: A different route might have different levels of maturity, and the optimal time for hitting one route may not be the optimal time for hitting another route. You know, you might have only one chance to do this for political reasons. You know, is there a sweet moment when it's optimal for hitting all the different routes simultaneously?

Lieutenant General McInerney: It's a very good question, and I don't have the answer to it. In fact, the question is when is danger imminent? When was September 11 an imminent threat? Was it at 7:00 or 6:30 on September 11, or was it back on 9/01, or was it 9/88? The fact is, that's a difficult problem.

Our intelligence guys, because of the laws we operate under, operate between an "F" and an "F-plus." We have wonderful people in intelligence. We give them laws that do not allow them to operate effectively against some very formidable threats. When it moves to nation-state, and it may only be four guys in Iran that want to do this—I'm not saying the Iranian population, it's the four guys.

Speaker: Is it when the fuel goes that you have to do something, or is it when you find out their reprocessing facility is being built?

Mr. Eisenstadt: The short answer is I don't know, although there is an assumption that we have to hit it before it goes critical. If I remember correctly, in the planning in Korea, with regard to hitting Yongbong, I think they came upon a way that they thought they could hit it after it had gone critical, so there might be technical ways of doing this.

Speaker: You mean their processing facility?

Mr. Eisenstadt: I was talking about Bushehr. I was talking about the reactor itself. I don't know. I haven't thought about it enough really.

Speaker: Maybe it would be worth our while to arrange a diplomacy not to allow this opportunity to arise in the first place, which is to say, if you open yourself up to allowing a multilateral sideshow, you are going to get sucked into an inability to get traction to make the decisions that you're thinking we ought to make in the first place. I think that point bears some reflection and some homework.

Speaker: When you talk about the sentiment in Iran, and you keep saying Iran is not like Iraq, when people say that only 100,000 people demonstrated in the streets and so on, what is to say that's the only negative sentiment against the government? I will go to the words of the person who was recently here from Iran, Husayn Khomeini, who actually said he didn't think the Iranians would be very much against the military action, but he understood the Americans don't want to do that.

The other issue I wanted to ask about is Israel. There is always the issue that if Israel does go and do a limited strike—Again, Iran is not like Iraq. There is not one facility Israel can bomb that would be the end of it. But if they start something, how would that reverberate for us? How would we respond to that?

Mr. Clawson: Can I ask you to rephrase that question, if you don't mind? Are there advantages to the United States of encouraging Israel to do it while the United States remains in the background?

Mr. Eisenstadt: Yes. In the end, it will still be seen as the United States as the guiding hand behind it.

Speaker: Yes, because it relieves pressure on the U.S.-Russian relationship. There is already a trilateral dance going on among Israel, Russia, and the United States on this matter. If there was plausible deniability, at least, that the Israelis had gone off and done this on their own, then I think Moscow could, with anger and sorrow, acquiesce and move forward with the United States. If it was the United States that took the action, clearly then we would be in, I think, a long-term, very difficult situation with Russia, assuming that the fueling has taken place, or that it is in-train.

Speaker: We should not expect Iran to remain in limbo while we make our own decisions here as to what we are going to do.

I would suggest probably we have seen something from them already. Part of it is because our forces really have Iran surrounded right now. In the last six months, we have seen the former President Rafsanjani, we have seen President Khatami, and we have seen their Foreign Minister all make public overtures to the United States. You know, this has been beyond any secret meetings that we've had. They've all made overtures to get closer to the United States.

Granted, we may think this may only be over economics and diplomatic relations, but I think they feel that as far as the government of Iran, as a nation, they're under a real U.S. threat right now. So I would expect we will see more of this, and this may lead us into a morass.

They will accept the additional protocol, probably delay things a little bit more, so that by October, November, and December, we may still not have clarity as to what their position will be as to doing away with their enrichment facilities.

Speaker: The region does not want a nuclear Iran.

Mr. Clawson: Can I ask a question? In your statement, you were suggesting that the presence of large-scale U.S. forces in the vicinity of Iran makes Iran feel vulnerable, and therefore, may make Iran more open to some kind of a multilateral diplomatic solution on the nuclear issue.

I would be interested if anybody here would take the contrary position, which says that because of the presence of the United States in the region, Iran feels more threatened and, therefore, feels it is more urgent that it develops nuclear weapons and is less prepared to come to some kind of diplomatic solution.

Many strategists think that the reason Iran is acquiring nuclear weapons is because of the American threat. And yet, some people suggest that, in fact, the American presence around Iran may make Iran more prepared to negotiate about this nuclear program.

Is there anybody here who thinks that our presence in the region, in fact, makes Iran less willing to give up its nuclear program and more determined to proceed no matter what?

Lieutenant General McInerney: There are certain officials in the Iranian government that use that logic and, in fact, are saying we must go nuclear. It's a very small number. It's not the population, and it's not a large group of Iranian people. But, there are some decisionmakers. I believe there's a debate within their government, and some will sit at the table and argue that position. There are others who will sit at the table and argue the exact opposite.

Mr. Clawson: It's intriguing because in much of the strategic discussion there is an assumption that if the threat to Iran goes up, then Iran is going to need a nuclear weapon more. Now we're suggesting that, as the threat goes up, actually that has a rather contradictory impact.

Speaker: The point is it's a long-term project. It started long before September 11. It's just that what we have done in the region has focused more attention on it. I don't think, one way or another, it has an effect.

Mr. Clawson: The question is, what effect does U.S. presence have on their willingness to come to

a diplomatic solution about the nuclear program?

Speaker: It's probably elected officials—and I contrast those with regime officials—who are the ones that hold the true power and are the decisionmakers, at least up to this point in time.

Over time, I would expect that maybe they will give a little and bend a little, but that's years down the road. Like one of our colleagues said, it's a time problem.

Speaker: I'm wondering if Israel didn't have similar discussions before they attacked in '81, and wouldn't it be helpful if we had some input as to what those discussions were and the way they resolved some of their issues before they decided to attack.

I think that might be helpful from just a historical point of view. And also, perhaps, that makes us more comfortable with what the actual results were based on, what they were thinking, and how they went about their process. I just believe in using history and using other people's experience to help us in our decision process.

Lieutenant General McInerney: I think the thought process, at the time they felt imminent danger, was the completion and not knowing exactly—although they have a little better intelligence in that region than we do. They then made that decision that they could not take the risk.

Clearly, according to the former Iraqi military that I have talked to in that time frame, Saddam was building a force to be able to attack Israel. That's quite some time ago, but the issue, clearly, is they felt it had reached that imminent danger.

Mr. Eisenstadt: Just on that one—it has been a while since I looked at this—but we actually have good documentation on this. We know the head of intelligence at the time was against the action, as was Shimon Peres, who was at the time out of government and head of the opposition. You know, even the government internally was divided on that one. There were pros and cons and arguments on that.

Speaker: I would like to make two points about the decisionmakers in Iran. First of all, I think to separate the population from the decisionmakers, the ruling elite is a very limited, closed circle, and they have differences of opinions on a lot of points. But on some points they do agree. This is their policy vis-à-vis the west, the United States in particular. So on building and having the atomic bomb, I think they agree with the leader. So you have a bloc of decisionmakers to deal with.

Now, the United States being there, does it make a difference and does this bring Iranians to negotiations? I think it is all the more reason for them to acquire the bomb, so that they could, indeed, negotiate, but from a stronger standpoint. That is their strategy basically.

They have made a decision, even among the more radical reformists, to make life hell for the United States, both in Afghanistan and in Iraq, because they have an ideological stake there. This ideological stake is related to their survival.

It's exactly like the Soviet Union. If they renounce the ideological stake, they would improve, and they know that. So they will make every effort to make your life hell, but they won't take the move that Saddam would have taken, that you go and destroy them. So they will make your life very difficult in this situation.

Speaker: You have hit it right on the nose, okay. And we have to clearly understand the goal of the leadership for Iran, which is driving this nuclear program. They want to be the hegemonic power in the Middle East as a counter to the United States. That is their stated goal, even though they may not come out publicly and say that. You are absolutely right.

Speaker: They say publicly, and I quote them for you, by Rafsanjani. "If one day the Islamic world is also equipped with weapons like those that Israel possesses now, then the imperialist strategy will reach a standstill because the use of even one nuclear bomb inside Israel could destroy everything.

However, it will only harm the Islamic world." That was the strategy from the beginning.

Speaker: Why, in February of 2003, did they decide to allow IAEA in, after years and years and years of refusal? Why did they do that? Is it as Patrick Clawson posits in this sort of oppositionist way, because they want to reach some sort of quid pro quo, to bargain, to trade off? Or is it a trade-off because they're willing to trade off the weapon? Is it to increase their hegemony in a different way? That, we can all muse about.

But there was a fundamental change in Iran's approach. They developed it for years. All of a sudden they put it on the international table for something. What is that something? To me, that's where there can be some kind of constructive approach.

Speaker: There is another pattern in this equation. It is not only the Islamic Republic decisionmakers vis-à-vis the West. It is also the Islamic Republic psychological war against its own population. Having the atomic bomb and keeping the ideological western pressure at bay will enforce them vis-à-vis their own population. That is also a major factor in their decisionmaking. The Islamic Republic is engaged in a psychological and political war with its own population, so acquiring the atomic bomb will allow them to keep at bay the western ideological pressure in terms of democracy and human rights, and that will give them a huge leverage over their own population.

DETER, DELAY, AND DEFUSE THE THREAT

Mr. Clawson: Next, we have asked Rose Gottemoeller to present what I would argue is the default option, unless we come up with a good argument as to why this should not be policy. I have characterized it here as "Delay, Defuse the Threat, and if necessary, Deter." That is, with the United States taking the lead to try to find ways to delay Iran's nuclear program, perhaps through some kind of tacit deals—parallel steps that are taken by the two sides—and then that would defuse the threat.

If necessary, and it doesn't defuse the threat adequately, we would instead concentrate on deterring Iran from actually going ahead with the construction of a weapon. As has been said, it may acquire dangerous capabilities, but we may try to deter them from actually assembling a weapon, and if they were to do that, from making use of it.

This option places emphasis on the United States taking an active role in doing things, some of which it may do primarily on its own, and that makes it somewhat different from the multilateral diplomacy option. But the United States does not try to work out some kind of a grand package deal that resolves all of the outstanding issues in one fell swoop. That latter option is what we will be discussing at the end of the day.

Rose Gottemoeller: Thank you. I would like to begin by actually drawing two threads from our previous discussion. One is the General's very, I thought, clever comment about "Jeep Cherokee" diplomacy. I was in Tehran three weeks ago, and the automobile situation in Tehran amused me very much because, like Havana, there's a bit of a time warp. But the time warp is not those great finned cars from the late fifties. Instead, it is American cars of the mid-1970s, which as you will recall, were very boring cars. So there are lots of Ramblers and things like that, Pontiacs.

But the foreign car that is most present in Tehran, at the present time, is the Peugeot. So I actually would like to sign up to the notion of perhaps some Jeep Cherokee diplomacy because the Peugeot diplomacy is outstripping us at the present moment.

The second point I would like to make also draws a thread from our previous discussion, and that is the title of this session puzzled me a bit: delay, defuse the threat, and if necessary, deter. To my mind, the backdrop of everything we do with Iran over the next x months or years will engage a policy of deterrence. At all points in the process, deterrence will operate.

The United States, Europe, and Russia must sustain the possibility of punitive action, in the first instance by the UN Security Council, in the case there is progress toward a nuclear program and away from accommodation with the IAEA and the international community. All would have to make it clear to Iran that if it did not continue to play, then all would be willing to support a finding of noncompliance and sanctions by the UN Security Council. So that in the first instance, I think, is the kind of environment of deterrence that we must maintain throughout this process and, indeed, whatever process we choose, short of the military options that we were talking about a moment ago.

But this perception of a united front on UNSC sanctions is necessary, I think, throughout. But, it is also, I think, necessary to sustain a realistic option of regime change and military action out there in the background in order to bolster deterrence. So let me just put that out on the table to begin with.

I don't think of this as "delay, defuse the threat, and if necessary, deter." I think of it as "deter, delay, and defuse the threat." Now, based on the discussions that I had in Tehran in December, I will say first of all that I believe there is clearly a headlong rush toward a nuclear program, currently, of course, characterized as a nuclear energy program. But public opinion is clearly being driven to support the nuclear program as never before. There is support from the religious leaders at Friday prayers; widespread media attention, including the notion of withdrawing from the Nonproliferation Treaty; a mention of this from the Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, head of the Guardian Council; reaction to the resolution

of the September Board of Governors meeting at the IAEA; prominent reformist groups; and the Islamic Iran Participation Front saying that no dignified Iranian can accept the tone and content of the IAEA Resolution.

So at the present time there is a kind of gathering momentum toward support that I don't think was present historically among the public for the nuclear option. That is another environmental aspect of what we need to be aware of at the present time in trying to work this problem out.

I also believe, based on discussions in Tehran, that there are certain interest groups that are not wedded to the notion of going full speed ahead with the existing nuclear program. They are, in my view, in the first instance in the gas and oil sector. There is a very lively debate, in several instances that I was party to, among energy economists about the sacred rationale of the nuclear program.

That sacred rationale, which many of us have heard repeatedly, is that the nuclear program is needed for domestic energy production so that gas and oil can be sold abroad. Multiple experts who are energy economists said point blank, in discussions that, again, were like debates that took place in front of us, that this makes no sense whatsoever. In fact, the pursuit of the nuclear program and the questions it engenders hamper their ability to communicate and to work with the international gas and oil multinationals and eventually insert themselves more efficiently and effectively into the international marketplace for gas and oil.

But this same group of experts, I would say, also recognize the political realities of the current momentum toward the nuclear program in Iran, in that they articulated the necessity of face-savers. One individual, for example, articulated this as follows: they have $1.5 billion already in sunk costs in the nuclear program. Would we be willing to help them get soft loans, perhaps to the tune of $2.5–3 billion, to build gas-fired power plants and wean Iran away from the nuclear program? Could we help them create the conditions, in other words, in which the interests of the gas and oil sectors would rise above the headlong rush of certain political figures and the media and the public now in the nuclear direction?

So there is a certain—I don't call it an all-out debate about the nuclear program. I think there is a great deal of consensus now, including in the public, but I think there are other centers of interest that might usefully be engaged.

I will go even further than that and say that these centers of interest might not only be in the gas and oil sector, but they might even be in the nuclear sector. Again, during the visit to Tehran, I frequently heard another rationale for the nuclear program; that is, the Iranians need to prove their technological prowess through the nuclear program. Under conditions of heavy sanctions, they have not been able to essentially get the high technology that they need to modernize.

However, I and several others, including some physicists in our group, found considerable resonance when we told them they were barking up the wrong tree in that they were pursuing a 50-year-old nuclear technology with high and significant costs associated with it—nuclear safety, nuclear waste, proliferation, and high costs—just in terms of acquiring the technology.

It interested me very much that there were frequent nods all around the table when these points were raised. One individual approached me after a meeting to say that he was very afraid every time he went to visit the Bushehr reactor site. He said we are cramming German and Russian technology together with Iranian technology, and that he thought it was going to blow up as soon as it was fueled and started. So I conclude from this that, even within the nuclear sector, there might be those who would respond positively to the offer of more modern and proliferation-resistant nuclear technologies, as long as it was part of a consistent engagement process leading to normalization. But that process at the moment is far, far away. Tehran and Washington have many differences, and not only surrounding the nuclear question.

I would like to note what I consider a very negative aspect of our discussions in Tehran. That is, the

Iranians were openly discussing the pros and cons of various rationales for the nuclear program, but they kept an entirely united front with regard to support for Hizballah and Hamas, precisely one of the greatest issues of concern to Washington. So even if magically we were able to resolve all of the nuclear questions, many, many other bilateral concerns of a serious nature would remain.

Let me turn now specifically to the notion of parallel and tacit steps, a phased process to move Tehran and Washington toward each other without, as Patrick mentioned, expecting a perfect package deal.

The goal of this effort, as I see it, is to slow down Iran's nuclear program while creating some time and space to try to address the spectrum of concerns on either side, not only the nuclear concerns but some of the wider concerns between the United States and Iran. The focus again here is on the bilateral rather than on the multilateral.

The long-term goal would be to arrive at a healthy bilateral environment that would support a long-term resolution of the differences, all the differences, between the United States and Iran, including on the nuclear question.

So let me just say a few words now—And I would actually like to give credit to Bob Einhorn, because he's been doing a lot of thinking, talking, and writing on this subject. I am going to essentially make use of some of the points that he has made in talking about a kind of phased approach.

Before we get to the late November meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency Board, Tehran would accept the September resolution in full. In essence, meet the deadlines of the October 31st time period. It would adhere to the additional protocol unconditionally and suspend all enrichment-related activities and any reprocessing activities. The United States would agree that, as long as Iran implemented the protocol faithfully and suspended fuel cycle activities, they would not press for punitive Security Council measures against Iran.

So that's the basic choice, that Iran would do everything to suspend its current activities and adhere to the additional protocol, allowing the IAEA in to begin establishing the conditions for implementing the additional protocol, all inspection requirements and so forth, and the United States and, by the way, the other partners in the September Board of Governors resolution, would essentially say we're holding off from going to the Security Council at this point.

Now, an interesting question is whether the United States and some of its partners in the Board of Governors would be willing to help Tehran with some kind of face-saver, because Tehran might need some public justification—I think would need some public justification—given, as I said, the enthusiasm for the nuclear option at the moment in public discourse.

If it is going to suspend its program for the moment, including the fuel cycle activities, would the United States and its partners be willing to help with a face-saver? That is similar to what was the theme of the letter from the Europeans: new energy technologies—including nuclear technologies that are more proliferation resistant, as well as efficient in other ways—again on the subject of nuclear waste, safety, and cost-effectiveness.

So that is a question that I think should be considered early if this kind of step-by-step approach is to be considered, because I believe there will be some considerable heavy lifting for the Iranian leadership to do with their own public opinion.

The Russians, for their part, would agree that, pending unconditional adherence to the additional protocol and suspension of fuel cycle and enrichment activities, the fuel of the Bushehr reactor would not begin. I actually think, as I mentioned in our earlier session, that this is where the Russians are anyway, so I don't consider this so very difficult for Moscow to carry forward.

And then Iran and the United States would begin a process of direct, bilateral, or it could be indirect—Einhorn's view is it could be indirect through third parties—contacts aimed at addressing and resolving key concerns of both countries. Again, not a kind of package deal, but a series of coordinated

and parallel steps that would be discussed and tacitly agreed by the two sides.

The individual steps could range from small steps, such as pulling back from certain public postures—such as some of Iran's current propaganda support for the Palestinian cause or whatever—or it could involve some larger and more concrete actions as well.

Let me just end by reiterating that the explicit goal of a step-by-step process in the near term would be to slow down the nuclear program in a way that the political dialogue and interaction could unfold, but that in the long run the explicit goal would be very much eventual normalization of U.S.-Iranian relations.

But I want to reiterate the importance of the near-term bargain being established and firmly put in place—that is, mutual suspension. On the one hand, Iran would suspend its fuel cycle activities and sign up unconditionally to the additional protocol. And on the other hand, the United States, together with its partners, would agree not to move forward with punitive actions in the UN Security Council.

Henry Sokolski: I think Rose has given us not only the default position, but I think the position most favorably viewed within much of the diplomatic corps in the West. It has the advantage of being well-regarded. It has the advantage of being something that, conceivably, the current folks in Iran might do, or be willing to do. It has all of the advantages of being supported, probably, by a majority of the western press.

It has only three problems. First, I cannot imagine, if George Bush is awake, that he would agree to another agreed framework—and this will be characterized as being that.

Second, we just heard at the conclusion of the last session, that Iran really is intent on getting nuclear weapons. As such, the prospect of it giving that option up is about as great as the current regime in North Korea giving up its nuclear weapons option.

Third, and where I would like to start off first, is that the proposal depends on the false premise of "proliferation resistance." As a student of Albert Wohlstetter's, I have dedicated a good portion of my life going after this term. It may propel a lot of nuclear programs at the Department of Energy's weapons labs. But they are not programs we should promote outside of those labs because they are not all that proliferation resistant.

What you have in your package is some material that my center has put together. It suggests a different proposal, which actually includes some key elements of what Rose has proposed, but in a different sequence and for different reasons.

You also have a summation of a study done for a full two years by the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and it was reviewed by the General Accounting Office. It shows that a reprocessing facility could be built covertly in four to six months. While it was being built, it wouldn't give off any radiation. It could be on-the-ready once Bushehr had operated for fifteen months and had taken fuel assemblies. After a week, it could process the first bomb's worth of plutonium, and one bomb's worth every day thereafter.

The spent fuel assemblies could be taken out legally, without necessarily raising any suspicions until Iran moved the material to this covert facility from the reactor.

That is the reason that Bushehr is a problem. Not because it is a cover for making bombs, but because it is a bomb-making machine in and of itself, in addition to making power. That is the reason why we need to be concerned about that facility.

There is an additional caveat. Just getting access to lightly enriched fuel can vastly accelerate, if Iran chooses to use it as fresh feed for its uranium enrichment centrifuges, how quickly or how many bombs it could make.

Now, some people say that we need the IAEA inspections protocol and to have the Russians take back the spent fuel. If you take a look at the inspection times and the conversion times in the IAEA's own guidebook, though, it turns out that the amount of time it takes to convert the material that it's

inspecting into bombs is always far shorter than the suggested time that you would go to routinely to look at it. And that problem isn't going to go away with the protocol. It only allows you to break up the routine of inspections. It does not require it.

But you will not necessarily be doing more inspections. In fact, if you did the protocol, I'm sure Iran would ask for what is called an integrated safeguards package, which would mean that, by agreeing to the protocol, they would be eligible to reduce the number of times they would be inspected. I don't know if we would ever agree to that, but they would be within their rights to ask for such treatment because other countries, in fact, are getting that now.

All of this suggests that there is a problem in the here and now if the fresh fuel is ever delivered and if the Bushehr facility is completed. That could happen, according to the Russians, as soon as next spring. I think Rose is correct. There is a lot of misgiving and I think we ought to be exploiting that, as to whether they will do that.

That said, if they do go ahead, you're talking about a twelve to fifteen month period of operation that would then put Iran within weeks of possibly having a large arsenal's worth of weapons. That is intolerable from a diplomatic standpoint, because we take much longer just to get a resolution approved at the IAEA—much less the UN Security Council—to pay attention to whatever resolution is passed by the IAEA. We still have a report from February sitting in the in-box at the UN Security Council about North Korea that has not been acted on.

If you begin to bargain about that which muddies the waters as to what folks will or will not do with regard to this Bushehr issue—well, you say we have the protocol. Okay. But then that opens the door to talking about sharing proliferation-resistant nuclear technology with Iran. That means completing Bushehr. I think that's a bad idea—the program continues. This is to say nothing of the enrichment program.

Now, am I against talking with Iran? No. In fact, Patrick and I—the last document you have—just finished a year-long study, which was funded in large part by the Department of Defense, that spells out how you could, in fact—and Patrick Clawson will undoubtedly talk more about this when it comes up—spell out what benefits we could expect if Iran changed its behavior.

But I think you have to be clear. First, it seems to me you do need to understand what your objectives are in dealing with Iran if it is intent on getting nuclear weapons—which I hope I'm wrong, but I think we might have to assume they are. If so, I think what you have to worry about most are a couple of things that, frankly, aren't as explicitly on the radar screen of our policymakers as they need to be.

On the basis of these criteria, then, I have difficulty with what is probably the most popular set of proposals, which I think really Rose Gottemoeller's presentation did a good job of laying out. Instead of this course, I would find Iran in violation of the NPT. Iran, after all, has technically violated the NPT. We don't need any more proof. They have. Let's follow the instructions at the top of the box on this.

Second of all, let's do some kind of sanction, please. We can pass a resolution upholding the principles of the proliferation security initiative, which forces people to do nothing but authorizes others to do what they would like to do, which is to at least restrict imports and exports of nuclear items out of countries not only like North Korea and Pakistan but Iran.

Then, I think, you do go forward with a rather bold proposal, force the Iranians to demonstrate to their population that they are making a clear choice, and what we want is everything. Hizballah, Hamas, should not be assisted. Those ties must be cut in a verifiable way, and we want the whole nuclear program eliminated. These conditions are not negotiable.

But here's the thing. I'll tell you what we will negotiate over. What the Iranians want, we'll be very willing to listen to. It ought to include everything. If they want security guarantees, if they want us to get rid of the sanctions and the frozen assets, increase trade and recognition, fine. But they've got to do two things that aren't negotiable first. And nine will get you ten they won't do it.

But if they don't, that tells you something. You then have to shift into this ugly thing that we've done before: a cold war.

I hesitate to say this, but I think if we do not recognize technically and politically what the most likely truths are, with regard to what Iran's bomb-making capability is and with regard to their intent, it will not matter that we go after and do that which is politically the most popular thing right now, which I think roughly is what I would describe as the Samore-Einhorn package, which I think was pretty well described by Rose Gottemoeller.

By the way, my view is not yet very popular, and I know that. But then, the views that are now popular weren't very popular even eight months ago, and some of those views are views I support, so I'm optimistic.

Ms. Gottemoeller: Henry, you have described what sounds to me more like your version of a grand package, a grand bargain.

How do you characterize it as a step-by-step approach, with the notion of delay, defuse the threat? I mean, that's what the task was.

Mr. Clawson: His task was attacking it. I understand his attack is basically to say that the delay/defuse approach doesn't solve enough of the problem. Unless you get a package deal, you don't get anything.

Speaker: For Mr. Sokolski, I understand that you want to give a great priority in our approach to this problem to protecting the integrity of the Nonproliferation Treaty and the regime for which the treaty is a foundation. I think you're probably right the way you laid out the elements of a package deal that you would be willing to put on the table for the Iranians. I think they're probably not going to accept it.

Then, if we get into the cold war situation that you described with the Iranians, what is it in that situation that is going to keep Iran from developing a capability to manufacture nuclear weapons? If I understand your scenario, we end up making an important point about the nonproliferation regime, but we don't really do anything to solve a very pressing, nonproliferation problem.

Mr. Sokolski: I guess the short answer is this. If you don't have the support of a country-neutral rule behind you, you will have difficulty taking specific actions against specific proliferators. I think if we've learned anything about Iraq, it is that the real driver of that had to do with some UN resolutions.

You have nothing behind you without country-neutral rules. The idea that you're going to really land on your feet by doing a bombing run and making it stick to go anywhere is pretty lower without them.

You will notice in the report that I sent out—the cold war against a hostile, nuclear-capable Iran will include, presumably, the kinds of things that were talked about earlier, which includes covert action, which may well send chills through the spine of the program. And I think we are talking about regime change, which is your fix. As long term or as uncertain as that is, at the end of the day, if you've got to cut a deal with this crew, you're in trouble.

Also, I think you have got to shore up your alliance relations, which in many cases are nonexistent in this region. Without that, it won't matter whether they develop a bomb or not. You're in trouble.

Mr. Clawson: If I understand the implication of what you're saying, it is that if in the end the strategy you're outlining doesn't prevent Iran from developing a nuclear bomb, you're willing to accept that tradeoff because doing the other things your strategy would do are more important.

Mr. Sokolski: I think you have to weigh this. It's kind of like using the fear of North Korea exporting a device to terrorists as the driver policy, or World War III is the only alternative. If you view your

alternative risk in that fashion, you will do really dumb, dangerous, self-defeating things.

What I am proposing, I think, leads you to the ultimate fixes, which are long term in any case. If you don't do what I'm describing, bombing or various forms of—I won't call it groveling; I guess it's deal making—aren't going to work either anyway.

Speaker: For Rose Gottemoeller, I thought you gave a really nice presentation of the Einhorn-Samore approach. I will ask you the question that troubles me a bit about this approach. I understand that this approach is trying to create space, buy some time, so we can work on a longer-term fix. I think you have done some really important thinking about how to do that. But then, shouldn't you try to put in place something that you buy with that time, to capitalize on it by going for a grand bargain? It's hard to escape the reality that at least one of the motives for this program is a set of security concerns. I don't know how you address those security concerns and get at the motives for this program in a diplomatic process without doing a grand bargain.

Ms. Gottemoeller: Yeah, I think that's a very good question. Anyway, as I understand from what Einhorn and Samore have written, and talking to them over time, and then just looking at the whole vacuum that currently exists between Washington and Tehran, I sense that they feel there's a value. And I think I have concluded that there's a value to trying to begin to establish the communication links to fill in that vacuum. Because currently, in my view, we're in nowheresville. We're trying to run our Iranian policy through Moscow and it's not working. Again, that's my perception of the situation.

Having just been in Tehran and hearing the Iranians, they too feel completely cut off, but extraordinarily threatened in some ways by the United States. So how do you begin to construct a communications line that will then enable and perhaps over time actually facilitate the development of a different conclusion in Washington, in Tehran, about what the other side is up to? That is a slow process, an incremental process, that eventually perhaps leads to a feeling of enhanced security, or a resolution of the security problems on the Iranian side. But it is also a very chancy kind of process.

I think the sense that Einhorn is putting out there by saying we can't have a road map is precisely because there is such a vacuum now. It is difficult to articulate a road map when there is a complete lack of mechanisms for communication between the two sides.

Speaker: Actually, the way I read Einhorn's paper, in the end a grand bargain isn't precluded, if you wanted to "morph" it in that direction at some point in time.

Mr. Clawson: You could create the conditions possible for a grand bargain, but the problem is so urgent and so bad that we have to start with passive and parallel standards. If it works under the grand bargain, that's wonderful, but don't count on that happening now.

Ms. Gottemoeller: He does underscore that the goal is normalization over time, so to get to normalization, presumably you need the big package at some point in time.

Mr. Clawson: By the way, note that his constant reference point for the goal is normalization, and there is not the underlying sense that if there's a regime change in Iran, then everything will be okay. His sense is that our goal here is normalization. His long-term vision is one of normal relations between the two sides, even with the current crowd staying in power. That's very different from what I think Henry was describing—a long-term goal is good relations because the regime will change.

Mr. Sokolski: You know, I thought your two questions were perfectly balanced and gave me the impression of severe schizophrenia. I think this is exactly a good Rorschach of the way we around the table look at these things normally, which is how do we do both. And let's not listen to anything that might not have an immediate success, and certainly let's not listen to something that might actually fail, because we want to succeed.

Now, the problem is this. The very things that you want, oddly enough, are in this package. Just like you, I don't know that they'll agree to that. Although you've got to wonder if what they want are security guarantees—if what they want is lots of money, and even energy aid for the substitution, and also, by the way, an opening up of relations so you can't have these communications—you've got to wonder whether or not what we were just told earlier in the day about them actually wanting the bomb is true.

Speaker: My reasons for agreeing with your assessment that they probably wouldn't take part was not so much because the elements were wrong but because, I think, the sequence in packaging is dysfunctional.

Mr. Sokolski: I think you're right. Those are the key elements of any bargain. They are dysfunctional, but for reasons that make it very functional for us to do it the opposite way.

Now, it could be that by failing first—By the way, you might succeed. Really, I think trying to prejudge all these things is probably a big mistake. I mean, we're not that smart.

But even if—and "even if" is a terrible way to argue—but even if this thing did fail, I think it would set the stage for a lot more clarity—politically and technically—than what we're doing: we're talking about proliferation resistance, eventually normalizing relations with guys that we don't really want to deal with. I think there's an impatience in politics with that level of sophistication that we need to be wary of.

Speaker: The premise of Rose Gottemoeller's presentation leading toward normalization as the long-term goal, using this as, in a sense, a confidence-building measure, to me is repeatedly talked about out of context with history and experience on it. It leaves out the context of history and experience when dealing with Iranians.

We have had repeated, direct and indirect, unilateral, bilateral and multilateral, talks with the Iranians on Afghanistan, on the Balkans, on Iraq, on drugs, on refugees, multiple fora, bilateral, multilateral, both country-specific and functionally focused.

On each one of them, we received actually some measure of cooperation. They were riddled with problems. Most of those problems dealt with the fact that the underlying issues of concern, particularly to us—terrorism and nuclear peace, the human rights situation, the democratization and peace—constantly interfered with the very tactically focused area of cooperation that we were seeking.

Now, I think we got a lot from the Iranians on Afghanistan. We got a lot from them on the Balkans. We got something from them on Iraq. The problem is it never has translated to building confidence. In fact, I would argue it's the opposite. It has undermined confidence and it has shown on both sides that you can't trust what the other person says, that at the end of the day what you really need is not going to be delivered on. I guess we'll get to that this afternoon.

But I just wanted to put it into context that for something as serious as a nuclear program, to use it yet again as a way to build confidence, I think we really need to look at the five areas of tried experience in dealing with the Iranians, directly or indirectly, bilaterally and multilaterally.

Ms. Gottemoeller: That's a really excellent point. I would point out again—First of all, I have seen now both sides of this. I see it in Washington and I have seen it in Tehran and on both sides there's a sense that the tactical confidence building has had some accomplishment, but then failed in major ways and, in some cases, created less confidence at the end of the day. So I think that's a very, very astute comment.

You could begin to accumulate some momentum, as long as you don't have some kind of bridge too far—like a road map, for example. So these tiny little incremental steps would, with the right spirit, begin to accumulate some positive momentum over time.

But I agree with you that the history does not necessarily give you much optimism in that regard.

Speaker: If I may, there is one dramatic example of that. There we were in the fall of 2001 in Bonn, negotiating with the Iranian government representatives about the future of the Afghan government. They were incredibly pragmatic and incredibly important to creating the interim authority with Hamid Karzai. Six weeks later, thinking this was coming, they hear the "axis of evil" speech. It's not because they weren't cooperating, but also there were these pieces that were undermining constantly. So I think there are elements, both on their side and on our side, that even if you have the momentum, the other side is just not going to see it coming and really will discredit it.

Mr. Sokolski: In a very interesting interview, Iranian ambassador to the IAEA Salehi, suggested that if they ever were found in a legal, technical violation, Iran's ability to get what it wanted in negotiations of any sort would be vastly reduced.

You can see why I'm such an enthusiast for doing this first before we do any grand bargain. I think it may well be that to get the kind of negotiated settlement you want, oddly enough, there are elements of what I'm proposing that may make it easier. You and I share the judgment that, in the end, maybe what I'm asking for is way impractical, but it doesn't suggest not doing what I'm recommending.

Speaker: I have just one reservation to make about your apprehension of public opinion in Iran, because when you went to Iran, you mentioned the media as if they were free media. The media in Iran are a state-controlled media.

Ms. Gottemoeller: I had no illusions that they were free media.

Speaker: So when they give to you that they have a safe place vis-à-vis the public, I wonder who this public is. What I want to say is, as far as the public opinion is concerned, they are not really pushing for an atomic bomb or nuclear weapons. It is only a matter of the regime that says it.

Mr. Clawson: To what extent would this process as prescribed, the step-by-step slow effort toward normalization, what impact would that have on the reform movement in Iran? To put it not too bluntly, would this be perceived as the United States once again making a deal with corrupt and hated autocratic leaders in the Middle East for purely strategic reasons, which this administration has said has been a failed policy of another place in the Middle East?

Speaker: I had an open interview roundtable with Voice of America (VOA), and people were calling from Iran. And one of the skepticisms about the U.S. policy was that, yes, they will try to negotiate the Palestinian and Israeli question and the nuclear weapons, and leave us with our mess in Iran. So one of the reasons that makes the Iranian public appear very skeptical of the United States is the perspective of such a normalization—to the detriment of democracy. If you were to lose the support and the sympathy you have in Iran—and it's immense, I must tell you—it would be because you opted for this kind of normalization with this very specific regime, not because you bombed Bushehr.

Mr. Clawson: Can we combine these kinds of processes that you're describing with what we did during the whole Helsinki period with the Soviet Union—continuing to criticize the Soviet Union on human rights issues?

Is it possible for us to make progress on this while at the same time, indeed, referring to human rights violations in Iran? Are the Iranians going to take such umbrage at those criticisms and say it will make it not possible for us to reach a deal with them on strategic matters?

Ms. Gottemoeller: I think that the model of the Helsinki process is a good model to look at, but it's way too slow. It was a decade-plus process. But I do think that we should be able to, and the Iranians be able to, articulate a broad enough spectrum in the dialogue that can include continuing complaints

about the other side and concerns expressed. That all has to be part of the agenda of discussion, I think, to make in the end a viable discussion of the kind that Bob and Gary have proposed.

If I could just make one point: I found it very amusing actually and, again, reminiscent of what was happening in the latter years of the Soviet Union as the Helsinki process gained momentum. The reason they were talking to us—the academics, the government people, and what I would call the elite we were talking to (they were mentioning this kind of rush of public opinion forming around the nuclear question)—was to say to us, "We are being boxed in." It was amusing, because we understood, of course, in the Soviet era, that government wasn't boxed in by public opinion or media or whatever, but they were using it in a fairly sophisticated way to appeal to our kind of democratic tendencies. That was very amusing. But it's entirely reminiscent of the former Soviet Union.

Speaker: Just on the point that Patrick Clawson pointed to. We have the experience of the past two years. We had dramatically increased rhetoric out of this administration, standing side-by-side with the Iranian people in their aspirations for democracy and freedom, at the exact same time that we had the cooperation going on.

The cooperation on Afghanistan, I think, was popular inside Iran. The cooperation that we had with the Iranians on Iraq, I think, was also popular inside Iran. The cooperation we've had on narcotics and on refugees, I think, has also been something that's accepted within the population.

Now, maybe this issue would be different, but the areas that we've had cooperation on previously, though I had problems with them, in terms of their acceptance within Iran, I think they were accepted.

You can pick apart small details here and there, but I think overall you had a scenario in the past two years where we've had tacit cooperation on particular issues that you haven't had sentiment against in Iran. I would say I think you had a favorable reaction within Iran to that cooperation.

The critical thing, perhaps at the same time, was that you had a really tough stand from the administration in standing by the Iranian people and their aspirations for democracy.

Mr. Sokolski: Wasn't there just an additional element, which also speeded up the Helsinki process, called an arms race? And here we're in Iraq.

Speaker: Absolutely. I don't mean to go out of context and say that automatically cooperation is going to be viewed inside as antagonistic.

Speaker: I still don't understand what cooperation with Iran you're talking about—the cooperation that the United States has with Iran on Iraq? I still don't understand what you're talking about. That's the big question. There was no cooperation with Iran on Iraq.

Speaker: I am thinking in particular to the pre-war period in terms of dealing with the exiles, with the opposition. You can look at the formation of the governing council, the representation on it. There have been several areas where it's been an extremely antagonistic relationship, but there have been particular areas of cooperation. You know the movement with Iran—for Iran to embrace the governing council, to receive it, to endorse it early, the moves that Iran has done within the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC). There have been areas much less than Afghanistan, but there have been areas of cooperation.

Whether it's good or not—whether it's worthwhile or not—that's not what I'm talking about. I have my qualms with it as well. I have serious criticisms with it. But in terms of the perception within Iran about whether or not it was right or wrong to cooperate with the United States on those issues, I don't think that's been an issue at all.

Speaker: The difference between those other examples of cooperation—I think anything on the nuclear issue is, whether it's indirect or direct, strengthening of the underpinnings of the regime.

I really think there is a magnitude of difference in discussing narcotics or this issue, which potentially goes to the heart of whether this regime lives or dies and does it have any legitimacy whatsoever? They have staked their reputation on who will be a nuclear power. You know, it goes right to the heart of the issue.

So I see a major difference in terms of even looking at past areas of cooperation and the extent that the populace would support it, versus exactly what Patrick Clawson was saying, which is: are we going to be undercutting those very people that want to see change in their government because we are increasing legitimacy for this regime?

Speaker: I see a sort of confusion between how things are perceived in Iran. We pass from the population at large to the ruling elite. Sometimes I don't see who has seen this cooperation—for instance, in Afghanistan, or even in Iraq—with the Iranian government positively.

The population is extremely worried about this kind of cooperation, because in Afghanistan the cooperation was at the cost of pushing back the democratic agenda and imposing some trace of the Islam regime as a constitutional organization. The same in Iraq. I mean, to have the Islamic revolution concept participating in the government of Iran is not viewed with optimism by the Iranian population, especially by the pro-democracy population.

I feel here a sort of confusion between who perceived what positively or negatively. I think we should really distinguish this so that we comprehend the situation clearly.

In Iran, the dividing line between those who rule and make decisions and participate in the regime, and the vast majority who is totally excluded from any decisionmaking, is very, very clear. It's not the Soviet Union where the network of the party embraces and integrates the whole society into the regime. In Iran, the divide is very sharp between those who are insiders and those who are outsiders.

Speaker: The big difference between going to Iran and talking to authorities in Iran versus going to—just choose a country—is that when you have to talk to somebody at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), or anybody outside of the office of the Supreme Leader, or Rafsanjani—the Islamic Republic Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS)—you're talking to certain people that would say certain things.

So if you talk to somebody in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and they sincerely believe certain things—like we sincerely don't want to have al-Qaeda here, we sincerely don't want to have a nuclear program—but at the same time there is a way of communicating those things, that there's a huge difference between what those people say and what the true ruling elite does.

Ms. Gottemoeller: Nobody said they did not want a nuclear program. What was remarkable to me was that the arguments were over the rationales for the program, not for the program itself.

Speaker: In everything I have read in Farsi and in English, nobody denies that it's a nuclear program. The question is whether it's a nuclear bomb or not.

Speaker: There is a difference between what they say. And everybody up and down the MFA is saying it's not a bomb, it's a program, and we have a right to have that program. Whereas what Rafsanjani says, what the Supreme Leaders say—it's very different.

Mr. Clawson: I have had senior Iranian MFA officials say we want to have the capability to make a bomb, but we have not yet decided if we're going to assemble a bomb, but we are determined to have the capability to have a bomb.

Speaker: As to Iraq, I am not so sure—and if you are so sure, I'm very surprised—nobody is very sure they are in every way cooperating, or in any way, definitely cooperating. They are scared of the American presence there, and what they're doing.

Speaker: I was just asking for clarification on what we mean by the term "nuclear program." I have heard it used multiple times this morning, and sometimes I think the person is referring to weapons, and other times I think the person is referring to just having nuclear energy of any sort. I think there is a distinction there, not only in reality, but even in the minds of a lot of Iranians. There is a divide within the regime on that issue as well.

I think we need to be clear when we make some of these statements, which one are we talking about, or are we talking about both—which is fine. But let's be clear about it.

Ms. Gottemoeller: The official script is to say that it's a nuclear energy program. But even in the kinds of discussions I was having with kind of quasi-governmental think tanks and so forth, they did say, "We might have a national security reason for this program in the future." And no, they weren't talking about energy security.

Mr. Sokolski: The technical problem is that what determines the difference between a weapons program and a nuclear power program in Iran's case is, unfortunately, not as much as we would like it to be. The reason why is, if you harbor the desire to have that option, what you can legally do to get ready for that brings you within weeks of being able to do it. So as soon as you make that decision, the timeline to realizing what you've decided to do is quite short.

We would like to have the line between civil and military and nuclear power. And you're quite right that the Iranians are not cooperating.

Speaker: So when we say that when Iran goes nuclear—you know, I have heard that several times this morning—it's not clear to me if you mean by that when they power up Bushehr, or when they develop a weapon.

If we mean when they power up Bushehr—and what we're saying is the United States is going to oppose any possibility of nuclear power for Iran—I think we need to understand that that is going to ring in entirely differently throughout the rest of the world, including among our allies, than if we say they're never going to have a weapon. You may be technically right that the line between the two is fairly short, and once you get the one you can get the other. But that's not the way the rest of the world is going to see it. I just want to make sure I understand when we make these policy statements which one we are talking about.

Mr. Sokolski: How about a third option?

Speaker: Are we saying no weapon or no power or what?

Mr. Sokolski: Let's make a third option, because this is too Manichean technically on what you're laying out. It's not true to reality.

What I think we ought to be saying is we do not want Iran to come within weeks of getting a large arsenal of weapons. That is at least fifteen or so months after they power up Bushehr, and that is a separate issue, arguably, to a point. Once you unbutton that thing, and assuming you've got this covert facility, which is less than a million dollars worth of construction—it's not a big deal—you are then within weeks of being able to produce enough fissile material for a bomb a day.

Mr. Clawson: Are you worried that what's going to happen is you're going to work out some kinds of arrangements and deals with the Iranian government, and then the Iranian government will say, "Well, we didn't know about these rogues." The kind of argument we hear about the *Karine-A*, for instance, like, "Oh, that wasn't the Iranian government. It was some rogue elements doing it, and we didn't know about it."

We hear this a lot from the terrorism people, the argument that "Well, it's not the central elements of the Iranian government that are doing it. It's rogues out there."

Ms. Gottemoeller: Again, I'm familiar with this argument in the Russian environment. I don't see any hint of it yet because basically the Iranian government has been so up front in saying it's pursuing peaceful nuclear energy and has been very enthusiastic in all regards. So I don't think they can now backpeddle and say oh, it's just rogue elements, even in the case where they decide to engage and—you're saying some portion of the program would go underground, so to speak.

Mr. Clawson: They would say, "Look, we shut down our official program, but oh my gosh, as we were shutting down, some of these people took this stuff and, gosh, we don't know what happened to it."

Ms. Gottemoeller: I have been stepping back and trying to think what is the future impact on the biggest resource that Iran has available—which is its gas supplies. If somehow it becomes a nuclear weapon state, are we assuming immediately that the world says, "Oh, no problem. Okay, we've got to go forward." I know that's what we're doing with India. But in the case of Iran, I think they would essentially find that their national interests were damaged over a long period of time by proceeding to become an overt nuclear weapon state, in that they would not be able to enrich themselves with their biggest natural resources, which are in the petro gas and oil arena. So that's one point I would like to make in conclusion.

The other point I just cannot resist. Henry Sokolski and I have tangled on this issue of Bushehr before—and I just can't resist.

One of the things that we have to develop in the context of the fuel services deal—and I've talked to a lot of Russian technical experts on this now—is a very, very detailed monitoring program for the fuel services deal, so they can't just unbutton the fuel rods and take them away without anybody knowing about it.

We can do this by constraining the amount of fuel that flows in and out of the country—keeping very close tabs on that. The Russians, in fact, say to us, if you are so concerned, let us ensure that we are doing the monitoring of this fuel services deal together, so that you know precisely what is going in and precisely what is coming out of that reactor.

I think we ought to be taking them up on that and looking to develop both the technical and policy tools that would enable us to do that.

Mr. Sokolski: I agree we should take them up, but not because we think it's a solution to Iran. But maybe it will get us somewhere with the old 1956 proposals of the U.S. government, that the IAEA should somehow be responsible for taking back spent fuel from other reactors. But it is a lousy example in this case, and here's why. It isn't what goes in. It isn't what happens when the stuff comes out. It is what's inside. At any point, I would agree with you that we would perhaps know that they were unbuttoning the reactor.

By the way, you do this normally to refuel it, so their unbuttoning it wouldn't set off alarms. If you were taking the fuel out, it wouldn't set of alarms. What would happen when you moved the fuel to someplace other than where it was expected to go?

The Iranians will just say, "Excuse me. Here are your visas. Leave." They have the authority to do that. We will then hear that they have decided that there was a fuel failure—I'm making this up, okay—and that they need to analyze the fuel. That's all that they're doing.

Well, you're saying the Russians are going to enforce this with tanks and planes. In fact, they will sit back, the fuel will go, and they will report that something very bad is going on. There will be newspaper reporters putting microphones in front of your face and mine. The National Security Council (NSC) will meet. But within ten days, the first bomb will be completed.

What you're saying is, because it's being looked at, and the looking has stopped, and something that should not go on is going on, and that at a full stop everyone will be deterred from doing the bad

thing. I don't see it. This is exactly the scenario we had hoped for all along through this NPT process—and what is no longer working.

Mr. Clawson: All right. We have a disagreement about how quickly the international community would react based on the political will, and how quickly Iran could develop weapons, and whether or not this poses a real problem.

ACCELERATING DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

Mr. Clawson: The next policy option we will consider is accelerating democratic change. The point we were making here is that I think almost everybody anticipates that it's going to be very difficult for the Islamic Republic, over the long term, to maintain its current kind of policy stands that are unpopular. The question is, what's the prospect that change would come relatively quickly to Iran, and in particular, what is the prospect that the U.S. government can do very much to accelerate that.

Now, I had promised Ladan Boroumand that we would concentrate primarily on that question. There is, of course, also the question of what would the attitude of a democratic movement that came into power be about nuclear weapons. To the extent our speakers and commentator care to speculate on that, that's great. But the first question is can we do anything about bringing about democratic change in Iran? Then we can discuss the issue of whether or not we could do anything about nuclear weapons if it came to power.

As Geoff Kemp reminded us this morning, the U.S. government's attitude toward an Iran that has a democratic government and an embassy in Jerusalem might be very different than our attitude toward nuclear weapons in the hands of this government. First we discuss—can we make a difference in accelerating democratic change?

Ladan Boroumand: There are several questions to be dealt with in order to understand how Iran's democratization could be stimulated. I will briefly point to the correlation between democratization and the nuclear issue and leave more time for the discussion.

First of all, we should ask ourselves why this regime is after the bomb. I think we all agree, after the discussion this morning, it is because the regime does not feel secure. Iran's rulers envisaged seriously the acquisition of the bomb when they thought they might lose the protective umbrella of the USSR.

Now, most of those who want engagement with Iran think that if we could reassure them that they could continue their existence and prosper were they to renounce their support of terrorism, were they to renounce pursuing the building of an atomic bomb, and were they to renounce the characteristics of this regime, then we might be able to reach an agreement with Iran.

The problem is that those who think that way do not take into consideration the ideological nature of this regime. The Islamic regime is not a nation state, which is somehow ideologically neutral with perhaps territorial ambitions or power ambitions. It was defined, at its emergence, against the Western democracies. Hence, the sense of insecurity that prevails among Iran's rulers. This sense of insecurity has intensified precisely after the fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the last totalitarian ideology.

The Islamic statesmen are not lying when they say they feel threatened by the United States. The menace they talk about is not due to any U.S. hostile action against Iran, it is mainly due to what the United States represents—the victory of the democratic ideology. That is why the very specific problem of the atomic bomb would not be the only problem we will have to face, even if we convince the Iranian regime to renounce the acquisition of nuclear weapons. There are also other ways for the Islamic Republic to be faithful to its nature and to support the expansion of its ideological domination. So the basic problem we face with the Iranian regime is its very nature.

This is what makes democracy the only long-term solution in terms of security policy for the United States in particular, but for the whole of the Western democracies in general.

Now, are we able to help with democratic change in Iran? Would it be possible? And what are the circumstances that would help us bring change or help the Iranian pro-democracy movement? Is Iran ready for democracy? Will the population join a democratic movement? How could we, indeed, help to bring about a democratic regime?

When observing the Iranian rulers' foreign policy, one can notice how successful it has been in creating the illusion of its popularity and popular legitimacy. For twenty years, we have constantly seen images of millions of people, fervently religious, demonstrating in favor of the regime. As a result, in dealing with Iran, Western policymakers have generally taken a defensive position, admitting that ideologically they had no say about the nature of the Islamic regime. The West's prevailing assumption has been—this is their culture, this is their religion, so what can be done about it? Therefore, the focus was shifted to containing Iran's terrorism through sanctions, deterrence, and similar policies. Another consequence of this mindset is that Western policymakers have constantly denied any relevance to pro-democracy activists and movement in Iran. During these twenty years, they have lost many golden opportunities where they would have been able to help democratization at a lower cost.

Recent student demonstrations (June 2003) are just the latest in a series of popular unrests that have recurrently marked the history of the Islamic Republic since its inception. Most of these spontaneous expressions of collective discontent were not reported by the media. Suffice it to mention the 1.5 million people demonstrating against the constitution of the Islamic Republic in December 1979. This major event never got the coverage it deserved because the world was preoccupied with the U.S. embassy hostages and, therefore, reluctant to provoke the new leaders of Iran. This is how the regime has been successful in creating the illusion of its legitimacy.

The massive participation of the population in the elections since 1997 has also created the illusion, or the sentiment, that the regime is able to mobilize the population. And there are possibilities of change from within the regime. Unfortunately, the failure of the reformist government of Mr. Khatami has shown that the regime being ideological cannot reform itself. Either it will implode or we will have to go through a change of regime. As for the population, it has used the elections to express its discontent—not to elect representatives.

In this regard, the last elections that were held in Iran were extremely important, in the sense that they showed how the Iranian population is reacting against the impasse of its own regime. These were the municipal elections (February 2003) that were relatively free. The numbers are speaking for themselves.

The regime's officials claimed that 20 percent of the electorate participated. Given the 80 percent participation rate five years earlier for the presidential election, this was a major reaction and a sort of boycott against the entire regime. I mean, there is a visible difference now in the stance of the population. The Iranian population seems to have given up hope on the possibility of regime change within the legal context of the Islamic Republic.

The number of eligible voters in Tehran in 1999 was seven million. In 2003, in order to attenuate the catastrophically low rate of participation, the regime pretended that there were only 4.6 million eligible voters. In Tehran, only 550,000 people voted. This was a disaster for the Islamic Republic.

It is also important to note that this boycott was unprecedented in the electoral history of the Islamic Republic. For more than twenty years, the Islamic Republic had been able, through different stratagems, to bring at least 30 percent of the electorate to the voting polls. This time it was under 10 percent.

The electorate's reaction was the result of a unanimous call from the opposition and dissidents inside the country to boycott the elections. They had appealed to boycott the elections as a sign of divorce with the Islamic regime. This appeal came from within the prisons—from detained students. They asked the population in a very moving letter not to go to the polls in order to show the regime, and specifically the reformists of the regime, that they are tired and in need of real change.

After that success, the victory of those who appealed for the boycott—Here is what the political leaders of the pro-democracy movement within Iran said. I am quoting one of the leaders of the pro-democracy movement within Iran. He said, "The Iranian citizens' massive boycott of the municipal

elections on February 28th was a major historical victory for the Iranian nation and a humiliating defeat for both factions of the ruling elite. Truly, the boycott of the elections by the people in cities such as Tehran, Esfahan, Tabriz, Shiraz, Mashhad, and Akbaz and other regional capitals illustrated the popular participation in a third-force movement for freedom."

This means there exists within Iran a third force, which is very active and getting stronger, that is pushing for a secular democracy in Iran.

He continues, "Truly, February 28 was a victory for the people over a regime of oppression, ignorance, arrogance, corruption, misery, and destruction. In this day, the people refuse to be misled by the regime faction's propaganda and showed that the Islamic Republic has no legal and popular legitimacy."

I would like to draw your attention to the last part of his speech. "We hope that the international institutions and the European countries that once referred to democracy and the vote of the people will get the message of the Iranian people sent to them on February 28th." Evidently, the Iranian pro-democracy forces within Iran are trying to send the world a message—that they are ready and getting stronger.

It is important to mention that this message is coming from within Iran. The person who sent it used to be an activist of the regime, and he now is one of the leaders of the pro-democracy movement. That again tells you about the degree of defection that the regime suffers from within and from its own cadres. Also, that could be a good indication as to how weak the structure is—the building of the Islamic Republic—even if we can't see it right now from outside.

If this letter was written by me, I would have gotten killed immediately. If this person can send this letter, and he is not killed—or he is not really harmed, even if he's arrested—it means that within the regime he has some protection. That is what makes the current pro-democracy movement in Iran extremely interesting, because it has its roots not only among the population at large—and the boycott of the elections show it very clearly—but it also has its roots and some protection in some important quarter within the structure of the regime.

Basically, we think there are dissident forces in the revolutionary guards and Hizballah. As we monitor the Iranian situation—and the Internet has become a major information source for us—we have seen some statements by Hizballah for a secular democracy in Iran. This is an extraordinary piece of information that should be taken into consideration.

I mention this to say that the Iranian situation is ripe for a change. Basically, all different ideologies—the revolutionary ideologies, Islamic ideologies—have faded in Iran, and we have a bursting and extremely active intellectual movement in favor of democracy—liberal democracy, Western democracy—and Western philosophy.

You can also read through the articles and the writings of the intellectuals, not only the intellectuals outside the regime, but major intellectual figures who used to be inside the regime.

Another point I would like to mention is that the dissatisfaction and divorce with the regime is such that during these elections not only the population boycotted the polls, but also nobody wanted to become a candidate. They had a major problem on the eve of the elections—for 100,000 seats they did not have 50,000 candidates. And again, they had to lie. And in twenty-four hours they got all their candidates. The truth is, no one wants to be related any more to these people.

The last question I would like to discuss is what could the West do to help this change? We have had two different strategies that have their proponents and opponents. One is to have a dialogue with the regime and support the reformists. The other is to confront them, at least rhetorically. That is what President Bush did in his "axis of evil" speech. We have had a number of articles about this speech and how disastrous it has been for reforms in Iran because it strengthened the conservatives against the reformists and so on.

The informed commentators, hence, advised the U.S. policymakers to be more discrete, support the reformists, and avoid directly confronting the regime.

Here again, I would like to take issue with this position and say that contrary to what was said and written in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and other newspapers and media, Bush's axis of evil speech has had a tremendous positive effect not only on Iran's civil society—invigorating the civil society's demands at the time—but also providing arguments to the reformists who attacked the conservatives by referring to Bush's speech. Basically, their reasoning was that if we were more open, if we relied more on our population, the enemy couldn't question our legitimacy. In reality, no reformist was sacked or arrested as a result of the speech.

The immediate consequences of the axis of evil speech was that all the nationalist Islamists who were detained were freed at the time, students got more active, and the society got so invigorated that it led to disturbances in the spring and summer of this year—2003.

In this context, how can we help democratize Iran? Since we are speaking in the framework of Iran's nuclear weapons, I would say, if you think of bombing Iran without having any campaign—any long-term strategy for democratization of Iran—you will definitely have a backlash. My advice would be, so far, to keep a high rhetorical pressure in terms of democracy building in Iran.

What I would see as a disastrous policy is what Colin Powell did by mentioning that Iran was a democracy and the United States was not interested in the internal affairs of a democratic country. That had a disastrous psychological effect on the pro-democracy movement within Iran.

Also, we should understand that the Islamic Republic is a regime that relies on oil for its financial survival. It doesn't rely so much on its society. It also has the monopoly of the means of violence. The population feels very quickly isolated if it does not have the sympathy of the world to be able to carry on its effort for democratization.

Reuel Marc Gerecht: Well, I think this is going to be one of those days that reminds me when CNN called me up and said, "Do you want to debate Max Boot on whether you should use assassination as a tool of foreign policy?" I said, "Sure." It ended up with Max and I saying, "I agree with him. Oh, I agree with him more."

I really don't have a big disagreement with what has been said. I mean, I think philosophically I would be more or less in complete agreement. I do wonder whether Iran might be as situationally ripe as some might say. And the only reason I say that—and that's not to in any way suggest a discussion of dissatisfaction—disgust and disdain for the regime has been over-stated. I don't think it has at all.

However, there is one factor that has been missing in this. And that factor has been young men willing to die. I think the possibilities of a velvet revolution inside of Iran are virtually nil. I don't think you're going to see an overturning through gradual street power and the clerical regime withdrawing to their mosque and religious schools just in time, if for no other reason than most of the clerics who are now intimately involved in political power are no longer comfortable in mosques and religious schools. So I doubt whether that's likely.

There has been a distinct reluctance on the part of young men to throw themselves in harm's way. I think there are a variety of very good, historical reasons for that. The Iranian psyche has deep within its DNA trauma from the revolution, even for the young men who were not present at the revolution. I think Iranians do remember how dark those revolutionary days were—and they were very dark. I think they remember the trauma and the shock of the war with Iraq, even for the young men who were not there. I think these things have sort of embedded themselves in society, and there is a reluctance on the part of young men to spill blood. I think it's true on the regime side, and it's true on the dissidents' side, and there is this jousting contest between the two.

You always hear Iranians talk about the possibility of a "spark." If you could have some type of a spark that could cause combustion in more cities than the regime could handle, you could actually

develop sort of a wave through the country and, through that, you could conceivably turn important elements of the regime that may not be loyal. Because contrary to what has sometimes been written, the difference in sociological makeup of the young men who were demonstrating in the streets and the young men who are beating them isn't all that great.

It is conceivable if you could think up some means to aid internal combustion—to start things rolling inside of Iran—sooner not later. But I have a hard time imagining a scenario unfolding in a helpful nuclear timeframe.

Now, we can go back and forth and argue about Iran's nuclear threshold. I would suggest it's always better to err on the side of caution; that is, you take the lowest estimate, not the highest estimate. So it's probably best to take eighteen months or thereabouts, as opposed to five years.

But with the smaller timeframe, I am very skeptical that you're going to be able to generate anything in that country. I mean, I'm all for the rhetorical approach. I think President Bush ought to get out all the time and let loose against the clerical regime. He ought to defend the rights of Iranians as Ronald Reagan defended the rights of Eastern Europeans. There should be no moral difference in our minds between Poles or Czechs or others and Iranians. The President has given the most revolutionary speeches on the Middle East. For the first time, an American President has stated, unequivocally, that Muslims have the right to live as free men. I think that needs to be repeated over and over again.

But with all that said and done, I'm not so optimistic that the regime is just going to crack apart and that you're going to get young men rushing into the streets.

In my former life, I have some familiarity with certain covert action efforts. Let's just say that the Agency in general is tenaciously opposed to covert action in general. There are long historical reasons for that—having to do with the battle between espionage and covert action in the Agency—and there are very specific operational reasons for that distaste for Iranian covert action.

To prevent any aggressive Iranian covert action, the Agency will fight you tooth and toenail. They are not going to go out there now to do what would've been a good idea in the early to mid-1980s. And that is a much more massive effort to support women's movements, labor unions, strikes, book publishing—a whole variety of things that take planning and time—that show their value incrementally and cumulatively.

Given the nuclear timeframe, I think it is probably too late for all that. This doesn't mean you shouldn't try to do it, but it does certainly mean that the President of the United States needs to draw a very long knife and let loose a lot of blood in the bureaucracy. He's obviously going to have to take on the Agency and the State Department, because Foggy Bottom—for very natural, bureaucratic reasons—believes that any time you can sit down and talk with a foreigner that's a step in the right direction. So their natural inclination is to try to find some mullah, somewhere, to talk to. Given that mentality, Rafsanjani would, if engaged by State, inevitably hold the high ground against the United States.

Remember—Rafsanjani and Khamenei have never had any problem in dealing with Boeing or any American oil companies. They also don't have any problem killing Americans. These are not mutually exclusive terms in their minds. While they may be mutually exclusive in Foggy Bottom or at Mobil, I would suggest that the Iranians have a much more historical Italian conception of commerce and war.

So, to sum it up, I don't see a lot of hope via overt or covert methods. Again, if there is to be any chance of movement, it will again require President Bush to engage constantly and forcefully. This is going to be a presidentially-driven foreign policy. He's going to have to stand up and beat people's heads in.

Is this likely? I don't know. I would say probably not. However, the one thing I would say—as the clock continues to tick on the nuclear issue—I do believe that President Bush is actually quite serious about this issue. If he wins the next presidential election, I do think this will come up, and it will come

up quite quickly.

And the litmus test of seriousness will be their willingness to send into Iran paramilitary groups to scout out the terrain. Washington can't put a preemptive strike on the drawing board—which is also the sine qua non for an aggressive diplomatic approach backed up by the threat of force—unless it operationally prepares the terrain inside Iran. Teams will have to go in and set up monitoring sites. If such things happen, then brace yourself.

I'm in favor, as I have said many times, of preemptive military action. It is, in the end, the only action likely to delay significantly the development of an Iranian nuke. I don't like it, but I just don't think the diplomatic approach will ratchet up sufficient pressure to change the clerical regime's nuclear dreams.

But I would agree completely that it would be a serious mistake on our part to think only about a preemptive military strike, that the key here long-term is obviously regime change. It behooves us to think about these things sooner, not later. But we need to be brutally realistic. At a minimum, a presidential directive of enormous force is required, because the powers that be—both in the Agency and in the State Department and, probably, even at the Pentagon—are going to work against this quite tenaciously. So if you are going to see a regime change policy in the United States on Iran, it has got to start at the top.

If it doesn't start there, there is no way in the world that you're going to have clever little minds elsewhere in the bureaucracies coming up with regime change ideas and sending them upstairs for others to contemplate. That's not the way it's going to work. It's going to have to come directly from the White House and NSC. If it doesn't come from there, it won't happen.

Mr. Clawson: Suppose the United States were to engage in an active policy of promoting regime change in Iran. How would that influence the regime's attitude toward nuclear weapons? Would it have any impact? How would that influence the attitude of foreign countries—the Europeans, for instance—toward working with us about this problem?

In other words, to what extent is this going to complicate our efforts to achieve our objectives? Feel free to say that you don't know that much about some of these topics.

Ms. Boroumand: Actually, I would say that I don't know, but anyway, I will risk an answer.

I think the regime, as it is, will pursue the weapons, whatever the situation. Whether you keep the rhetorical pressure or not, they will pursue that. Because it's your very existence as a liberal democracy power—a big power, super power—in the world that endangers their existence. It's not anything else. Especially now that you are both in the East and the West, they feel really threatened. And they will do whatever they can to sabotage democracy building, both in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Now, if supporting democracy building in Iran could avoid military action and take the shape of a sort of rhetorical, propaganda pressure, then I think it will put the European countries in a more difficult position. How would they say no democracy to counter your efforts?

As for how they would be allied with you to hamper the nuclear program, this I don't know. Maybe you can answer.

Mr. Gerecht: I would say on the first question, I think the Iranians are working as fast as they possibly can on the nuclear weapon now. There is no possibility of them increasing the speed. I think they're at full throttle as we speak. I don't think anything on God's earth is going to change that.

Right now, we may actually have the Europeans in a strategically weak position—assuming the administration is capable of convincing the Europeans that we will preemptively strike if they're not prepared economically to punish Iran severely. There is full unanimity within the Western intelligence services on Iranian nuclear intentions. The French have had very good intelligence on this for years, and so have the Germans.

Though the Europeans may well be seriously concerned about an Iranian nuclear program, the reason that they are now spooked by this issue is that they're scared to death that we're going to preemptively strike. "Shock and awe" has unquestionably already had a salutary effect upon them, if not upon Tehran's hardcore.

It is possible that if the Europeans keep going rhetorically in the way they've been going, the United States could actually be in an excellent public relations position militarily to preempt Iran. The Europeans are very close to actually making a rhetorical case for a preemptive strike. They don't see it that way, of course, but if the Bush administration is clever—admittedly not a common occurrence vis-à-vis the Europeans—it could conceivably handcuff the Europeans with their own rhetoric and the EU's new security directive, which admits the possibility of military force against nuclear proliferation.

Concerning European-Russian aid to Iran's nuclear industry. It is important to note that the clerics may not require European help anymore to develop a nuke. It is distinctly possible. We just don't know because our intelligence isn't good enough, but it is distinctly possible that they have all the technological wherewithal already in the country, and it's really a question now of time. So no matter how much the Europeans try to ratchet up the pressure, we may well be indulging in an illusion.

In any case, even assuming the possibility of effective delaying action by the EU, the reality of EU diplomacy gives the upper hand to the Iranians. The EU moves very slowly about everything. The foreign policy apparatus of the EU is in its infancy. It is extremely unlikely—even if they could achieve consensus among themselves—that they would be able to implement the type of policy through which the Iranians would feel scorching heat for bad behavior.

Speaker: Ladan Boroumand, I wanted to ask you how deep is the disaffection? How much of it is depoliticization? Was it a boycott from the elections or was it simply people giving up? It seems to me there's a big difference between those two things in evaluating the prospects for some kind of popular pressure for change.

And on your side, Reuel Gerecht, I wanted to get to the point you made about the trauma on both sides—the unwillingness to shed blood. It seems to me that's a double-edged sword and that's something, if there is the potential for a real popular movement, that that is something you can work with—the regime's reluctance to shed blood. That makes it more brittle in some ways. So your comments on those two.

Ms. Boroumand: I think it is not disaffection because of the timing. The previous election had a much better score. It was the last presidential elections that led to Mr. Khatami's victory for his second term. Compared to the 1997 presidential elections, the participation rate was lower by about 14 to 15 percent, which was an important decrease. But still, the electorate thought it will give him a last chance. But the abrupt drop from 60 percent to 12 percent—this is a boycott. It is not a slow trend of disaffection. Foreign radio emitting from the United States called for a boycott. They informed people about the demands of the detained students' leaders. Since this demand was extremely moving, it touched many people and they decided not to participate as a sign of real protest.

Mr. Gerecht: I agree. It potentially is a double-edge sword. But the first problem is that you have to develop a coherent movement that doesn't have its head chopped off.

The regime has been pretty good about going after individuals that it considers to be potential threats and neutralizing them, either through the special clerical court or through assassination teams or prison sentences. So it is by no means inept in that, and I think it knows what it's doing.

Shiism is about special individuals coming forward and changing the course of history. The regime is very cautious and is very focused on that issue, and I think they've done a relatively good job at

gutting the opposition when the opposition actually becomes a significant force.

If you were going to make a comparison between what is organized in Iran today and what was organized in Iran before the revolution, certainly the revolutionary forces of the left and the clerical classes would have a distinct advantage over the level of organization today, unless there's much, much more going on underground than we know of, and I don't think there is.

Iran, to its credit, is a fairly open society in comparison to Saddam Husayn's Iraq and even other dictatorial Middle Eastern states. A lot comes out of Iran. The one reason we can talk about Iran with some level of confidence is that actually you can know a lot. People come out and with the telephone, the Internet, there are a variety of ways for people to learn about things.

Speaker: So your skepticism is really just in our inability to generate or to help generate and guide that opposition in time?

Mr. Gerecht: Well, yes and no. I mean, it's for the Iranians themselves. They're the ones who are going to have to put their lives on the line. It's really for the United States to judge whether you're going to get yourself killed or not. If someone wants to fight tyranny and the odds that they're going to die doing it, that's their choice, not yours. Should the United States as a general rule help people fight tyranny? Absolutely.

I think the problem has been on the Iranian side. The United States can't really do much to organize a greater movement inside of the country. It could perhaps do a little, but this is really an Iranian question of whether, as I said before, young men are willing to risk prison and death in greater numbers to develop the type of movement that I think could really shake the regime.

Ms. Boroumand: I have two points. We should remember that the clerics we are talking about constitute only 5 percent of the Shiite clergy in Iran itself. So this is again like the ruling elite. It is a very small minority. What makes them at odds with their own religion is that the body of the Iranian Shiite clergy is religiously against them. They consider them as heretics. Khomeini's grandson, when he came to Washington, mentioned the word heresy about what they are doing—being implicated in political life.

It is true that they will fight, because it's a fight for survival. But it is also true that they are not mean. I mean, those who would be held accountable are not many clerics. So in that respect, this is a mixed—This could be a positive asset for the pro-democracy movement.

As for these kids going and being killed, you know, we have been killed for twenty-five years. I understand. And what I see in the evolution of the pro-democracy movement within Iran is that they are thinking of other ways, because they clearly see that when they come to the streets they can't fight a state with such means of violence and repression. So it seems to me that debates even inside the prisons are thinking and trying to devise other forms of protest.

One of these forms is precisely the boycott. I suspect that in the coming months and years—because we should think in longer terms, and that's where your main problem is—they will try to envisage a different strategy.

Again, I would like to stress the feeling of isolation that is demobilizing the movement when they think they are alone in the world, when they think the Americans have their own business, where the highest concern they have is Israel and their own security and terrorism. If that is resolved, they don't attach any importance for the fate of the Iranian population.

When I insist on keeping the rhetorical pressure, it means that sooner or later rhetoric in politics brings about acts and actions. One of the devastating effects of Colin Powell's statement was because it was on the eve of a very important demonstration. This, together with what happened with jamming the radios that were emitting into Iran, gave again a feeling of betrayal by the West and democratic countries. These are incidents that we should, at any cost, avoid, if we want slowly to have this pro-

democracy movement gain strength and find its own way with a limited amount of bloodshed, while trying to reach the maximum result.

Speaker: I think there is a disconnect that I assume your organization, I hope, is trying to prepare between what the press coverage is and what's going on in Iran. You have educated me quite a lot. I didn't know anything about this boycott. I suppose everybody around this table knows about it, so I'm just displaying my ignorance.

But I'll tell you what. There are a lot more of me than there are of you. That is to say, I don't think many people know about this. As a result, it encourages and feeds the kind of contempt among our officials when they talk about these things—like what Colin Powell did. But if the press was covering this a bit more, they would be on guard of that point.

Ms. Boroumand: I was actually going to bring up that issue, because when we say the Iranian young men are not willing to die and that there is no fast solution, and bringing people to the street and having clerics go back to the mosques, is unrealistic. I think it is and it is not.

Iran hasn't had the chance to show what it's willing to do. I will spare you the details of what happens to these young people when they are taken into jail. Obviously, they have been in and out of jail for several years now, no matter what happens to them in jail.

We never had what the Eastern Europeans had, which is rhetorical support and insistence on the lack of legitimacy of the regime, coupled with high visibility given to events—pro-democracy developments inside those countries. In Iran, we have people coming in thousands to the streets with no repercussion whatsoever in the big media.

I think that could also be used, because no matter how arrogant the Islamic Republic is, for various reasons, in the past ten years they have had a systematic policy of improving their image outside the country. That is precisely where pressure could come. Obviously, they will not go to a very serious extent to get rid of organized movements.

It's true that they have gotten rid of the leadership of the opposition, but what counts right now is for some opposition movement to be able to organize and sustain an organization for a given period of time. That they don't allow. But if there is visibility, meaning after the "axis of evil" discourse, we don't have several officials—lower ranking officials in different places having a discourse that would bring down the effect of the axis of evil discourse. If we didn't have the major media and newspapers completely ignoring revolutions in the streets, then we will have people who will come in the streets.

On the level of the government, the axis of evil discourse not only gave rise to a very important debate inside the regime, between radicals and reformists, but you had CEDAW (Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) pushed through the parliament and you had the UN convention against torture approved by the parliament. These are also things that the regime would do under pressure, which could also apply to the nuclear situation.

As a result of the Colin Powell discourse, you had the Council of Guardian rejecting CEDAW and rejecting the torture convention. So I think on the level of organization in the streets and on the level of the Iranian government coming to terms with international law, you have both means of pressure.

But for that, you need to be consistent. I don't think anyone has been consistent over the past two or three years—or ten years. We have had the best we had in ten years, but this hasn't been consistent.

Mr. Gerecht: I would agree with you completely. I think there needs to be much more rhetorical effort on the part of the American side. I would say that I would be more optimistic in the short term. In the long term, I'm pretty optimistic. But in the short term, I would be more optimistic if I could see, for example, more efforts inside of Iran to paralyze the national Iranian oil company. I would like to see people go after the jugular. Until they start going after the jugular, I don't really see that kinetic energy developing on the streets.

Speaker: There is often a lot of focus on looking at the election cycles in Iran and what's happening in the election cycles, at what could happen coming up after 2005 with Khatami being term limited, and at who's going to come next.

There is a lot less focused on who comes after Khamenei. I'm wondering if you could shed any insight on that. My understanding is that his credentials were far less than his predecessor and that there's no one really waiting in the wings who has any sense of legitimacy within any of the clerical establishment. Even if it's the 5 percent that's in the regime, then even within that, there is no successor waiting.

Speaker: Sounds like a solution to me.

Speaker: Well, that gets to the flip side of it: whether that then affects the regime change calculus; whether there is more of a calculus that is focused on more of an implosion because of the failure of the institution and the spiritual leader, which should be more of a focus on whether it should happen, instead of being a large regime change; whether the focus perhaps should be there or not, and not necessarily even with traditional diplomatic means. That's the first point.

The second part is—if you could talk about perceptions, both in Iran and, I think, perhaps maybe even here in terms of decisionmaking or impulses—what's going on in Iraq and how that affects what we can do in the near term.

You spoke about in terms of, if President Bush is reelected, this will be a very serious issue very quickly. If you look at the time frame, with the worst case scenario being fifteen to eighteen months of a nuclear capability, that's going to hit the next administration very soon and very, very hard. And it may not be another Bush administration.

So what are we going to be able to do in the next fifteen to eighteen months that is feasible for policy?

Ms. Boroumand: For your first question. It's a very interesting question, actually. But I would like to remind you that who could have replaced Khomeini with his charisma and legitimacy. Ali Khamenei was far from being an important figure, both in terms of political career and in religious credentials. And he did.

We have the Assembly of Experts. They will come up with one person that they can agree on. Don't be surprised if this person is Rafsanjani himself, or they can have a council of five—

Mr. Gerecht: He was actually clerically more qualified than Khamenei was.

Ms. Boroumand: Anyway, I really don't think that would be an issue—the way we saw how a successor was elected to replace Khomeini himself.

About your second question. This morning we had the problem about what is the public opinion, so I will divide the public opinion between the civil society in general and the ruling elite, be they reformists or conservatives.

For the ruling elite, it is a catastrophe. What happened in Iraq was both an opportunity and a possible catastrophe. So their negotiation with the Americans on Iraq was also a way for them to secure a foot in Iraq and to try to implement part of their own ideological and political agenda and take control of the Shiite centers.

This will, in the long term, be determining for them. Because if the Shiite center is freed from the domination of Saddam Husayn, and becomes an independent and flourishing theological center, that will sap the illusion of religious legitimacy that the Islamic Republic has. So they have high stakes there, and they will try to do whatever they can to have a foot in Iraq, to intimidate the United States, to leave them enough space so that they would tolerate them, and then to implement slowly their agenda.

This would be a disaster for the Iranian population. Basically, what we observed while the Iraq war

was going on was a sharp divide between the public opinion of Iranians in exile, who were a little bit wary and uncomfortable about the military invasion, and the enthusiasm that was felt in the streets of Iran.

I remember again having the debate with two intellectuals close to the Iranian regime from Tehran through Radio Farda. My interlocutor from Tehran was saying, well, this is a disaster—the invasion of Iraq. He was happy because he was against Saddam, but he also said the American military expansion is very bad. And he added that if the Americans think of coming and invading us, we will fight to the last drop of our blood. But at the same time, he said, "I'm a professor at the university. All my students are so enthusiastic about the U.S. invasion of Iraq that this is really worrying me."

He said that when the Americans invaded Afghanistan, the kids and the youngsters in the public were happy. But he said when they started to come to Iraq, then they got seriously enthusiastic and this is very dangerous for us—the regime. He really frankly said it. It was amazing.

The popularity of President Bush in Iran, I think, is exceptional in the whole world. The French journalist, Gilles Anquetil of the *Nouvel Observateur*, was in Iran in early April 2003, and he was devastated to see how popular Bush was in the streets of Tehran. And I believe President Bush is still popular in Iran, although there is now less enthusiasm.

Speaker: But the question I was asking is really for now. The impressions that I get—and maybe they're not representative or they're wrong—is that in the aftermath of the post-war period the viewpoint that is being covered in the Iranian media all the time is "look at the chaos next door." If you weren't willing to risk your life for a regime change last year, you certainly aren't going to be willing to risk your life now.
Has the post-war situation in Iraq changed the perceptions in Iran in terms of regime change?

Mr. Gerecht: On that issue, it's a little too soon to tell. But I'm very skeptical that the Iranian media is going to be able to long depict nefarious American intent even among the clergy, given the number of Iranians who are visiting Iraq. In Najaf and Karbala, it's like old home week. The Iranians are just everywhere.

And in Karbala and Najaf, despite the bombings and the attacks, you do not come away from either of those two cities thinking chaos and bedlam. If you're an Iranian cleric, you come away with the distinct impression that Iraq is freer than Iran. The clerical schools in Iraq are in terrible shape, but the atmosphere is quite free. You can feel it in the schools when you visit. Iranian clerics in both towns don't often mince words in criticizing the regime in Tehran. Anti-American propaganda, even among the hardcore, isn't likely to survive the Iranian clerical grapevine for any length of time.

Speaker: I just wanted to add that when you go about thinking about whether it's covert or overt, the information operations, or public diplomacy and so forth, unintended consequences are something to think about.

For instance—a recent example—we had an anniversary of the July 9th, 1999 student riots that was set up to be a big event, and some of the outside forces had also encouraged some of the earlier events that the regime then used to crack down on the very people who probably would have been central to what might have been a much bigger event. That July 9th turned out to be a complete nonevent.

You know, it may have turned out that way anyway, but the potential for unintended consequences of things that people do on the outside have an impact.

I do agree to a large extent that the organization of dedicated people who are really mobilized and committed isn't there yet. You could get things happening like in Eastern Europe—not the more recent successful example, but from the fifties and sixties—where outsiders encouraged things, only to stand on the sidelines as other people were brutally crushed by the tanks and everything else. So again, whether that was intended or not—and that's not to say you shouldn't do these things—but when you

do them, you should be careful about what your level of commitment is and what you're expecting from the people you're trying to communicate with.

Ms. Boroumand: Yes, quickly, just a factual corrective. The events that took place before the events were not instigated by outside people. It was instigated by reform about the universities that just inflamed the revolt of the students, and then they got out of control and it had this mobilizing effect.

You also should remember that what the radios did, actually, was to help the demonstrators as to where security forces were attacking. They provided sort of a logistic support.

Speaker: Was this the most recent one, or the July 9th, four years ago?

Ms. Boroumand: No, no, what we had in June. Remember, in a matter of a week, four to five thousand people were arrested in Iran. This is a massive event that found no echo whatsoever in any press in the world. I can't believe that it didn't make the headlines. Five thousand people were arrested in Iran in a matter of a week. This is a big event. Nobody mentioned it.

This is the invisibility that Roya Boroumand mentioned and the sense of isolation that totalitarian regimes create in the mind of the population to make them inactive and demobilize them.

Mr. Clawson: It seems unlikely that regime change is going to occur in the next twelve to eighteen months. Suppose the U.S. government were to implement some of the other options that have been talked about here. In particular, what happens if the U.S. government takes military action against the facilities at Bushehr and Natanz? What impact does that have on the reform movement?

Second, suppose the U.S. government decides to pursue a grand package deal—vigorous engagement with the current government. What impact does that have on the reform movement?

Speaker: If I could just add a rider to that. To what degree, if we either take preventive action or, as a result of kind of a full court diplomatic press internationally, do you think the regime would be able to successfully say to the people that this is an assault on our access—to what one of our colleagues was talking about before—not to just weapons but to nuclear technology, and this is an act against the Iranian nation? And to what degree could this result in an anti-American backlash and the loss of—

Mr. Clawson: Right. And to what extent, on the other hand, if we engage with the regime in negotiations, could the regime say that, once again, the Americans are accepting a corrupt, autocratic, unpopular government for strategic reasons?

Ms. Boroumand: Your presupposition is fairly right. In eighteen months we would be unable to change the regime. Yet eighteen months, if we have real political will and long-term strategy for creating more favorable conditions for the pro-democracy movement, is a fairly good amount of time to put things on track. I know it sounds too optimistic. But remember, eighteen months before the fall of the Shah, nobody would have believed that he would be gone and Khomeini would return and a theocracy would be up and running in Iran. In unstable situations such as the one we face in Iran, unpredictable changes are not impossible. That is just a parenthesis.

As for a package deal with the Iranian government, the consequences depend on its content. If it deals only with the problems created by Hamas, the Lebanese Hizballah, and weapons of mass destruction—without any mention of democracy and human rights—it will have a devastating effect on the pro-democracy movement in Iran. You may well pay for this omission five to ten years along the road.

As for attacking Iran, I don't think the Iranian population will give in to the regime's propaganda. Maybe some part of the population will feel uneasy about military action—you know, there are nationalistic feelings in Iran.

But at the same time, if the regime gets the atomic bomb, then its leverage over its population

would be much more important, and that also would have a devastating effect on the pro-democracy movement. This is a very sensitive issue. If you have no other choice, that should be the last choice. It should go with a clear and consistent pro-democracy policy in Iran.

Speaker: Does the leverage that the regime gains domestically by acquiring nuclear weapons derive from their ability to portray themselves now as invulnerable to outside pressures and that this is their guarantee of permanence?

Ms. Boroumand: Yes. We had the same experience with the rapprochement with the Europeans, especially with France. As the regime was negotiating with France, it also started to kill most of the opposition figures who resided in that country. After the completion of the elimination of the dissidents in France, Iranian authorities addressed their own population and reminded them that lucrative contracts make Western democracies forget all their democratic principles—Western democracies are all about money. They basically implied that Iranians should not think of relying on Western solidarity for democratization. That was a very clearly put message from the leaders to their population, and the repression intensified after the rapprochement with the Europeans.

Speaker: Is there any prospect of the revolutionary government using the bombing as an act of war that would require them to take more risks and bleed against the opposition—to wipe it out? Because if they don't, then things get very shaky, indeed.

Mr. Gerecht: No. Actually, I think the preemptive military strikes against Iran will probably advance the reformist cause. The clerical regime will have put Iran on a head-on collision course with the United States, and there is no one in Iran who believes the clerical regime has a chance of winning that one. I think you will actually start churning things up inside the country much more rapidly with a preemptive strike.

I definitely think there could be some short-term nationalist furor, but even here, the debate could quickly give way to serious discussions on what the regime has wrought. I would be willing to bet a large amount of money that a preemptive military strike will really cause the political discussion in Iran to take off, which is what both we and the reformists want. You want something to break the status quo, which has given us an advanced weapons program and near paralysis among the reformers.

Speaker: What if Iran fields a credible claim that it now has one or more atom bombs, no matter how primitive? Then how dangerous does it get to try and spark regime change?

Mr. Gerecht: I would still be in favor of it. The Soviet Union had nuclear weapons. That did not prevent the United States and Ronald Reagan, most effectively, from aggressively seeking to put the Soviet Union on the trash heap of history.

Now, it is true that the Iranian nuke is scary precisely because the clerical regime has a fondness for terrorism. It is a tool that they have used in the past, not unsuccessfully. So the possibility is certainly there that they might make a calculation, from loathing and fear, that "wouldn't it be great to see a nuke go off in New York?" That is precisely why you want to preempt them before you must live with this possibility and the highly corrosive effect it could have on the American moral psyche and our strategic calculations.

Speaker: Especially, though, if the regime is going down the tubes and strike at the people who are behind this.

Mr. Gerecht: I agree. There is no doubt that you could actually arrive at that perverse calculation, and I suspect the people on the realist right may, as the democracy movement grows in Iran and the Iranians get the nuke.

Speaker: So you're saying, if I got it right, these guys should be allowed the possibility that they might use these weapons to knock out an American city. But if we strike them, wouldn't they try to repress the forces that might make their continued rule difficult?

Mr. Gerecht: Oh, no. They can try to repress. I'm just saying they can try to repress and repress all they want. The worst thing they could possibly do for their own survival is to hit the Iranian street hard. They could easily churn up society to activate the young Iranian men who don't loathe the regime sufficiently to die in protest. The clerical regime has more often than not been very sophisticated in its repression. It has to be because Iranian society is sophisticated. It remains in many important ways a traditional, tolerant society that puts real brakes on the regime's worst behavior. If the clerical regime violates the unspoken, post-revolutionary compact—the civil society that springs primarily from Iran's culture—and reintroduces too much violence, the whole thing could easily come unstuck

Speaker: But surely, you said they were smarter than that. In other words, they might increase the effort to go after possible forces and claim it's a national security issue.

Mr. Gerecht: What a preemptive strike would likely do is provoke further clerical and popular dissent. Anti-Americanism may well be powerfully mixed into this equation, but the dissent is the key. It is what Ladan Boroumand described—the overwhelming majority of the clergy really doesn't like the way things are going. Getting bombed by America doesn't show astute planning.

A raging debate on the nuclear issue, as the United States turns up the heat, is already producing an ever more vivid discussion—could create more Abdullah Nuris. You could have more people like Montazeri, mullahs who are willing to damn the clerical class to save the country. What the United States wants to do in Iran is galvanize the debate. You want to have more people come forward and start talking about the problems of the country.

Ms. Boroumand: I think I agree on the point that whatever strives to the invulnerability of the regime will empower the opposition and pro-democracy forces.

Now, when Bush made this statement, it was the first time that a Western statesman first attacked the legitimacy, the ideological legitimacy of the Islamic Republic. Second, it separated the population from its ruling class. That really was a blow to the ruling elite. And they debated on that, and Khamenei, the first two weeks after the statement, was on the defensive. Instead of saying America is the great Satan power—imperialist superpower—he was saying no, we are legitimate, our population is with us. So we observed a changing tone in the discourse of the Supreme Leader.

The same would be true, and much more intense, with a blow—Again, it should come with a very strong, orchestrated pro-democracy rhetoric.

GRAND PACKAGE DEAL

Mr. Clawson: The next panel is discussing the question of a U.S.-Iran grand package deal. The focus here is on the idea that what we would do is the U.S. government would take the initiative to try to put together a package deal that will resolve the outstanding issues between Iran and the United States all at once. So that's the focus here.

Ray Takeyh: I wasn't here this morning, so some of the issues might have been discussed; namely, over the past two years or so, there has been a series of revelations demonstrating that Iran's nuclear program is actually much more accelerated than anticipated and previously assessed—maybe within two years, maybe within three years. It is surprisingly enough that I don't believe American intelligence assessments have changed since the end of the decade. Nevertheless, largely it is anticipated that that is an unrealizable time. So this is an alarming proposition.

But despite these dire developments, I don't believe that it is inevitable that Iran will be the next member of the exclusive nuclear club. There is a discussion, a debate. This is an issue that people speak about with some degree of definitiveness and, I think, an extraordinary degree of opacity surrounding the nuclear issue. And there is much more about it that we don't know, even those who follow this issue closely and so forth.

I think what the Islamic Republic will do regarding crossing the nuclear threshold, as opposed to having sort of a robust nuclear research program, will depend on three serious factors.

Number one, the nature of this relationship with the United States, how contentious and how difficult that relationship may be. Number two, the emergence of what type of a post-war security architecture will emerge in the Persian Gulf. And finally, the nature of the internal discussions and debates.

There are things that perhaps the United States can do in order to influence the Iranian deliberations. Patrick and I have done this before—this discussion that is sort of like old professional wrestlers who sort of know each other's moves and know what the other guy is going to do—and the conclusions perhaps may not be predictable but they're anticipated. But I have sort of grown dubious of the proposition of the grand view, but I would be happy to do it for you here and see what you think.

Why does Iran want nuclear weapons? Maybe this issue was discussed earlier today, but why do they want ostensibly nuclear weapons? What are the calculations that derive this?

I would suggest that, despite Iran's incendiary rhetoric, despite its engagement in international terrorism, despite its opposition to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—and the latter two are concentric, where the Iranians express opposition to the peace process and the sponsorship of terrorism—Iran, during the past twenty years or so, has had an uneasy trajectory toward more of a pragmatic state, a state that bases its policies toward kind of a nationalistic, and national interest calculus has evolved—sovereignty, vital interests, and so on.

Therefore, I don't believe that the Iranians want a nuclear weapon as a means of power projection but more as a deterrent capability against an evolving set of threats. I don't think it's consistent with their international orientation to brandish nuclear diplomacy as a means of extracting concessions from the other side, as other nuclear powers have done in the past, including the United States when their early period of this nuclear monopoly against the Soviet Union was contemplated.

On the surface, Iran has ample reasons to acquire nuclear weapons given the sort of dangerous and unstable neighborhood that it lives in. Most people suggest that that's one of the reasons. It's a trite calculation. I don't believe it. There might be instability in Afghanistan and Central Asia, and I don't know how nuclear weapons would ameliorate that.

Therefore, Iran's attempt to acquire nuclear weapons capability has to do with the narrower and more existential set of threats. Here I would say that two states have derived and conditioned Iran's

nuclear policy: Iraq and the United States. I very consciously left Israel out of that. These two states have determined Iran's threat perceptions and, I think, determined its defense priorities.

The most important arena of concern for Iran is, and has always been, the Persian Gulf. It is its most suitable link to the international petroleum market, and it is the lifeblood of its economy.

Of course, some of the history is obvious, but perhaps it needs to be somewhat repeated just as a question of context. For the past two decades, the primary obstacle to that important Iranian objective was, of course, Iraq. Iran and Iraq—the historical narrative is all familiar and is tragic. For the war, Iraq employed chemical weapons, and the legacy of that is still very much alive when you go to the Iranian war veterans and so forth.

But with the demise of Saddam, one of the important existential threats has at least diminished. Whatever government succeeds Saddam, it is likely to be a government that will adhere to its nonproliferation commitments. Apparently, the last one did as well, but nonetheless, there will be a greater degree of transparency.

We pretty much know these defense priorities are going to work and, therefore, it is likely to be a state that will adhere to its nonproliferation commitments. So with the Iraqi factor being diminished as an incentive for Iran's nuclear predilections, what remains? It is my view that, with Saddam gone, America has emerged as a formal strategic problem for Iran and the primary drive of its nuclear weapons response.

The Bush doctrine, which pledges, very provocatively, the preemptive use of force as a tool of counter-proliferation—which was just mentioned. A regime change as a means of disarmament—that is a very provocative idea. It comes at a time when Iran is surrounded by American power and also the projection of American forces on all of its periphery. Americans are everywhere that they haven't been before. So in that particular sense, there is a sort of recognition by Iran that they are in Washington's crosshairs. It is, in my view, this perception that is driving Iran's accelerated nuclear program. I'm not quite sure if it's a crash program, like you mentioned, but it is certainly accelerated.

As Khatami confessed, they tell us Syria is next but, you know, based upon rhetorical reports, we could be next.

In this sort of menacing shadow of American colossus, Iran's strategic planners have drawn some very important lessons from Operation Iraqi Freedom. Mainly, that even if the United States perceives the other power to possess chemical and biological weapons, it will not necessarily stop American military intervention. That possession of chemical and biological depositories need not stop a determined American President and a determined American nation from effecting regime change.

On the other side, the Korean model—the North Korean model—demonstrates that the perception of nuclear weapons capability can not only avert a preemptive strike but perhaps generate its own set of economic rewards and even security guarantee.

Now, there is a paradox here because in the post-September 11 Middle East, Iran's objective security has actually improved. The recalcitrant regimes to its left and right have been displaced—the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the Saddam regime in Iraq—which, as I mentioned, I think was existential to them. So in that particular sense, however, as Iran's objective security improves, a sense of insecurity intensifies. This has much to do with the enduring antagonism between Washington and Tehran.

As with nearly every aspect in this, however, the Islamic Republic—even the issue of nuclear weapons crossing or not is a subject of debate—is hardly a settled topic in this contentious terrain. A more adroit American diplomacy can perhaps still have an impact on parameters of that debate.

Will Iran go nuclear or not? I don't think anybody can sit here and answer that question. I certainly will not presume to do that. Although, I can give you some of the debate that is taking place within Iran as I understand it, and perhaps you can draw your own conclusions.

It is often assumed that the Islamic Republic has made its decision and is pursuing a course. To attribute such efficiency and cohesion to a sort of cantankerous group of clerics—this faction-driven polity, this polarized system—is too simple and too facile.

There is a debate—there is a discussion. There are those within Iran who support nuclear weapons. And this doesn't break down the conventional parameters of Iranian politics, reformist, hard line, and so forth. But there is a constituency: the Defense Minister, Shamkhani, and others. Namely, from a strategic national interest perspective, nuclear weapons don't make sense. Actually, Iran's possession of nuclear weapons will only accentuate its strategic vulnerabilities.

During the past six or seven years—ten years—the Islamic Republic has invested considerably in developing relationships with key international actors such as India, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Japan, and the European Union. The relationship is valuable for it from a strategic, diplomatic, and economic perspective. It is important to recognize that those international relationships and its treaty commitments act as a constraint on this proliferation of proclivities. That is not something we can dismiss easily and effortlessly.

Even with the projection of American power, the idea is that if Iran approaches a nuclear capability in violation of its long-standing treaties, it actually could generate its isolation. The Gulf States are likely to be further within the American security orbit. The European Union and Japanese pressure on Iran is going to be even more enhanced, perhaps even generate multilateral sanctions. That is some of the reason why Iran is a little bit more forthcoming in the IAEA in the discussions of late. It has much to do with the pressure that has been generated by international actors, as such.

Within this particular debate regarding the strategic utility of nuclear weapons, you find another set of discussions. You hear it in the Iranian press a lot. It is the idea of a North Korean model. Namely, the use of nuclear weapons capability—the nuclear weapons infrastructure—as a means of negotiating with the West and as a means of possibly extracting concessions from the United States in terms of economic policy and in terms of Iran's strategic predicament.

The economic dimension is particularly important because there has been a recognition on the part of the Iranian political class—really across the board—that in the absence of some sort of a rational relationship with the United States, Iran is unlikely to be able to be integrated into the international economy given the fact that the Iranian political class—left, right, up, down, center left, or wherever it is—doesn't have the appetite to institute deep-seeded structural economic reforms. The right is too implicated in the corrupt economy, and the left has no particular economic vision to speak of. They just cannot have the political will and the capability to institute deep-seeded economic reforms. Therefore, the way they try to ameliorate their economic predicament is by generating foreign investment.

Is there a grand deal possible? I suspect that there could be a deal. The deal would involve various economic levers that the United States would put forward, maybe easing trade sanctions—access to international lending institutions. That would not only necessarily engender American investment in Iran, but it would have greater investor confidence as such. In return, the United States must demand significant concessions from Iran.

But there are two other schools of thought that need to be addressed. These are very fluid situations. Number one is the conservatives who essentially are much more inclined to be unilateral and rejectionist on this front.

But even more ominous is a new school of thought that has emerged in Iran. You see it with the head of Parliament and the National Security and Foreign Affairs—and even Rafsanjani made a similar speech a couple of days ago—namely, we can sign the additional protocols and develop a nuclear capability as well. Rafsanjani makes a speech saying, "If we sign the international protocols, it will take three or four years to put it into effect." So within that time, Iran can essentially do two things: fracture the international coalition and, at the same time, continue to develop surreptitious nuclear

capability before the IAEA essentially manages to be on the ground.

As I understand it—and the science of this is beyond me, as the science of most things are—but the idea is that the IAEA—if you don't sign additional protocols tomorrow—it will take two years to complete a survey, establish the infrastructure, and so on.

That's why I think, if there is going to be a deal between the United States and Iran, it has to be a bilateral deal—the United States and Iran. The inspections have to be conducted by the Department of Energy, not Mohamed ElBaradei and that sort of gang of misfits at IAEA. This will be a bilateral arrangement between the United States and Iran, and it will involve a very intrusive inspection of the regime, to the satisfaction of the United States, that Iran is not signing agreements and developing surreptitious nuclear weapons capability.

Ultimately, I would suggest that the fate of Iran's nuclear program has much to do with the internal power struggle. Because what is happening in Iran, the internal power struggle—and it has been discussed here before—is not only about what is the nature of the theocracies (Is it going to be a liberal theocracy? Is it going to be Islamic theocracy?) ultimately the battle is not on that front, but also between what type of international orientation Iran will have.

For the conservatives, the idea of international isolation, the idea of confrontation with the international community, is not necessarily a bad thing. This is why much of the right wing papers—*Kayhan*, *Resalat* and others—have been calling for Iran to withdraw from the NPT. If that involves a confrontation with the international community, that's fine. Because the way you generate revolutionary impulses within Iran, the way you intensify them, is to have confrontation abroad—to be isolated.

Once again, they are so nostalgic for the early 1980s when Iran was this beleaguered, isolated state, fighting against all sorts of imagined foes and imagined conspiracies.

On the other hand, the reformist international orientation essentially suggests that the best way for Iran to project its influence and interests is to be involved in the international community through an interlocking set of security and economic arrangements.

Therefore, international treaties matter. International norms are important, and adherence to them is similarly of consequence. Ultimately, this is going to decide whether Iran will become a recalcitrant regime intending to abide by its treaty arrangements or not.

I would suggest that Washington today, which has been dismissive of the reform movement, would be wise to recognize that in the realm of foreign policy, the reform movement has been successful in at least arresting the impetuous tendencies and impulses of the hardliners. It has not been as successful as others have mentioned about Iran's domestic political reform.

The idea of a grand deal is sort of a moment in time. It is not a timeless moment. And the moment is here and now.

Mr. Clawson: Let me assume for purposes of discussion that Ray Takeyh is 100 percent correct that Iran is interested in nuclear weapons in response to a U.S. threat, and, if it could work out a deal, it would be interested in doing so. It would depend upon the terms and conditions and so on.

I'm not convinced that that's the case. As we heard earlier, there was a lot of discussion about whether or not the clerics want this for either purposes of aggression or for purposes of the misperception that this is the way in which they can defend their revolution against foreign and domestic foes. But let's assume for a moment that Iran is actually interested in nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip and deterrent capability.

Let me explain why under those circumstance. First, we would not want a deal. And second, why would it be impractical for us to reach a deal? Why would we not want to deal under those circumstances?

There are four principal reasons why we would be uninterested in a deal if that, in fact, is what Iran was interested in doing. First—as several of our speakers have said—that would dramatically undercut

the pro-American sentiment of the Iranian people. If we were to abandon most pro-American people in the Middle East in order to yet cut another deal with a corrupt, autocratic, and unpopular dictator for geo-strategic purposes, that would have not only negative repercussions in our situation vis-á-vis Iran, but also in our entire effort to transform the Middle East. Throw that one out for a generation.

I think there is increasing consensus, both in the United States and Europe, that the fundamental project for the world system for the next generation is transforming the Middle East into a more democratic direction. I can think of fewer things that we could do that would more undercut this than to say—we will strategically bargain with an unpopular and autocratic dictator. And if they make the terms attractive enough, we will throw away the most promising, pro-democratic and pro-American popular movement in the Middle East.

Second, as Ray Takeyh suggested, another major reason we would not be interested in doing such a deal is because, if we started negotiating such a deal, there would be a powerful impulse in Iran saying, "Oh, now we've got the Americans dealing. Let's just stall them long enough until we can acquire a nuclear weapon, which would strengthen our hand in the deal." So there would be every incentive for Iran to stall the negotiations—it wouldn't be that hard to do—and to accelerate its efforts on its programs. If it's not a rush program now, it will become one if we started negotiating seriously about a grand deal.

It's not coincidental—as our Soviet friends used to say—that Mr. Rafsanjani threw out that figure of four years as to how long it would take for them to ratify the additional protocol when that falls nicely within the range of most people's estimates of when Iran will acquire its first nuclear weapon. I think that Rafsanjani feels, correctly, that his bargaining position would dramatically increase if they had a nuke.

Look at what happened with the North Koreans. You get a nuclear weapon and you do much better in bargaining. I think this would give the Iranians a strong incentive to develop a nuclear weapon before they reached a deal. Not a good idea.

Third, once we started negotiations about an international deal, there goes the European interest in this issue. They say, "Oh good, you're taking care of this, and that's your problem." What we would see, instead of a broad international effort to try and come up with a common international position, we would see a lot of carping about how the Americans are handling it wrong with Europeans saying that if they were in charge, they would come up with a deal. Instead of an effort to construct an international consensus, there would be a lot of European sniping at the United States saying we're not doing a good enough job and if we would offer just the Iranians a little bit more, this problem could be solved. So instead of this being an area of trans-Atlantic consensus, it would be an area of trans-Atlantic dispute. I don't think we need that.

Last, as you suggested, is that enforcement of any such a deal would be highly impractical. It would be very difficult for us to say—forget the IAEA, what we're going to do is do our own bilateral inspections. If you came along and said, "Ah, they really are developing a bomb," then the entire world would turn to the IAEA and say, "Is that right?" There's going to be a bureaucratic impulse on their part to say no, the Americans are wrong, and they're exaggerating it, if for no other reason because they want to say they could do a better job than we. So we couldn't do anything unless the IAEA said that they agreed with us and, yet, they would have every incentive not to agree with us just for bureaucratic reasons if for nothing else. So it would be very difficult for us to gain any kind of consensus that there's a problem here.

And then if there's a problem, the Europeans are off the hook for enforcement. It's going to be us who is responsible for enforcement. Of course, they're going to criticize whatever it is we do and say we're being unilateral for it. So we're giving them the "you can ignore this problem, and by the way, you can also criticize us" card again. I don't think that that's a smart move.

In other words, I don't think we would want this deal with the Iranians. Even if it were available to us and offered to us on a silver platter, it would be a bad idea.

Now, let me explain why it's impractical to even get to this deal. It's impractical to think we could ever get to this deal because the Iranians and the Americans mistrust each other. The fact of the matter is that we have each persuaded the other side that we are not honest and that we do not deliver on the terms of agreements between the two sides. We each have readings of history that we think are excellent readings of history, which explains why the other side cannot be trusted.

Under those circumstances, if we're going to reach any kind of a deal, I think it has to be an open deal. I don't think it can be some kind of tacit deal. I don't think it can be some kind of a deal that is implicit or understood just because we don't trust each other. It would have to be an open deal. It would probably have to be some kind of a formal deal.

Well, that is, of course, much more demanding than reaching some kind of a tacit or quiet understanding. Because there is the lack of trust between us, we can't do that kind of a tacit deal. It has got to be an open deal—probably a formal treaty.

Second, because both sides have powerful divisions within their own countries about how to deal with this matter. We were discussing this morning that we don't have a clue about what the U.S. government's position is. And the U.S. government doesn't have a clue about what the U.S. government's position is—about our goals, much less how to achieve them. We don't even know what we want, and we certainly don't know how we're going to get there.

And that's just discussing the Executive Branch. You throw in Congress—and Congress' approval would be required for many of the things the Iranians would want in a grand deal—you've got yourself a mess here. The Iranians could quite correctly believe that they could reach an agreement with the State Department, which would not, in fact, be implemented by the Defense Department, much less by Congress. So they are going to insist, correctly, that this is a deal that has to be signed on by everybody and properly approved by our government. We, too, are going to say, "Look, if your government is divided in sixteen different ways, we've got to get this thing signed off on by the Supreme Leader, by the Majlis, by the Guardian Council. That points me again to saying it's got to be a formal treaty, which is ratified by both sides. That's a lot tougher, all right? Mind you, this is all within the framework of the time constraints that we have to do this quickly.

Third, is that in order to get this kind of a deal we're talking about, it has got to be comprehensive. It can't just be about the nuclear matter. As Ray Takeyh has written, it has to be something that covers all the principal issues. And as Geoff Kemp was explaining this morning, that is the four principal issues that the Europeans are raising in their discussions about the trade cooperation agreement.

The Bush administration can't come up with an agreement that is less comprehensive than what the Europeans are insisting on. And they're insisting on progress on not only weapons of mass destruction—including things like chemical weapons and missiles—on the Arab-Israeli peace process, and on terrorism issues like Hizballah and Hamas, but also on human rights. Now, there's an easy one for us to come to some agreement about. We might, if we're lucky, come to an agreement that we would agree to disagree on and seek onward from there. But this deal has got to be comprehensive.

That means, as we heard from Rose Gottemoeller this morning—She was pessimistic that any deal could be negotiated on the questions of the Arab-Israeli peace process or terrorism. She was saying that no, you could only do something on nuclear issues. That to imagine you could do a deal on the Arab-Israeli peace process or terrorism, it would just overload the circuits.

Lastly, on top of all of this, there is the issue of Iran's approach to international negotiations. Here, it is extremely instructive to take a look at what has happened to Iran's negotiations with the international oil companies. In 1995, eight years ago, Iran holds this huge conference in which they put forward thirty-two contracts of their opening for international oil companies, saying, "Here, come in,

you can invest in these thirty-two contracts." Well, they have now reached agreements on seven of those thirty-two deals. And not one agreement—not one—the last two years. In fact, it's coming close to two-and-a-half years.

That is because, systematically, what the Iranians do is overreach on these things. Every time the foreign partner makes a concession, the Iranians regard this as a sign of weakness and demand more. That is their approach in negotiations. Every time we offer a compromise, are they going to take that as a sign of weakness and demand more? That's what has happened so far. When Madeleine Albright apologized about our involvement on the Mossadegh area, the response of Iran's Foreign Minister—the voice of moderation—was to say, "Well, that will provide added evidence for the court cases in which the Iranians are demanding damages from the United States for that."

I would say, Ray Takeyh, if you are correct that, in fact, Iran has these weapons because they want to deal, still, we don't want that deal. Even if we did want that deal, it's extremely unlikely we would ever get it.

Mr. Takeyh: This may be tangential to this topic, whether a deal affects the case of democratic change in Iran—and it was talked about on the last panel—this is one of the more interesting positions. Everyone's position on this issue is predetermined. Those who favor engagement with Iran suggest American belligerence will damage the reform movement—will damage the prospects of democracy. Those who do not favor engagement with Iran suggest that belligerent, bellicose rhetoric has no impact on the pace of democratic change.

I would actually take a third point of view. Since I am too iconoclastic to be part of any gang, I have to have my own. I would actually suggest that Iran's internal existential struggle will proceed on its own terms, and external powers—even dominant powers like the United States—are unlikely to make a profound impact on this pace and the evolution that's coming that you said has been taking place for the last 100 years. So saying this deal would abort the democratic process—I think that's nonsense.

The second point you made, Patrick Clawson, is that Iran will cross the nuclear threshold even quicker because they think having nuclear weapons will get them a better deal. I actually think having nuclear ambiguity gets them a better deal. Once they cross, then it's a different category of issues. I think the debate in Iran is whether to have a nuclear weapons capability—not cross it—to the extent that we can decipher this very opaque debate. I don't think anyone beyond the hard right, beyond the *Kayhan* editorials—I think crossing the threshold is a more serious issue than having a weapons program or not.

Third of all, the position that you put forward, as I understand it, is whether it has to be a comprehensive deal. You sort of attributed that to me, which I didn't say, actually. What I said in the *National Interest* piece is that Iran's foreign policy—actually, I disagree with Geoff Kemp on this—has gone to a third phase, from revolutionary to pragmatism to what I call compartmentalization. Namely, since September 11, there has been a recognition by Iranians that America is just too close, too powerful, too menacing for us to have no relationship with them. So previous taboos and previous reservations and previous prohibitions have to be evaluated.

Remember, through the 1990s, Iran could not cannot have direct negotiations with the United States. Well, what happened at Bonn, what happened at Tokyo, what has happened in Geneva? There has been direct negotiations with the United States.

The Iranian foreign policy, in my view, is at the stage where they are willing to have individual negotiations over specific issues, whether that issue is Afghanistan, whether that issue is Iraq, whether that issue is nuclear weapons. But it will be very specific, very tailored toward those specific issues. Not linkage.

American policy is what you said it was—linkage. We can't talk about nuclear weapons unless we talk about Hizballah. What Iranians are saying is sequence. Why do the Americans want a grand deal?

Simply because the Iranian domestic political system can support a compartmentalized deal, but it cannot support a grand deal. The American domestic political system can support a grand deal but not a compartmentalized deal. This is where the tension is.

Mr. Clawson: What would the Iranians want in that deal from the United States about the nukes?

Mr. Takeyh: Here's the interesting point. Because for a long time, American policy, as I understood it, was that signing the additional protocol is necessary but not sufficient. As for what would be sufficient, we don't know. We never defined it. This is one of those issues that is very ambiguous.

I would suggest what the Iranians would want is to have some sort of economic ties, but also a voice in the development of the security system of the Persian Gulf.

Mr. Clawson: Do you think that's going to be possible without some kind of deal about terrorism? Therefore, the only way in which we can put together a package, which would begin to meet the price the Iranians are talking about, is to make it a comprehensive deal.

Mr. Takeyh: Exactly. We're at an impasse.

Speaker: What I heard Ray Takeyh say is basically there's a fundamental dissidence, because what it is they are able to deal on we could not accept, and vice versa. Basically, there is no way that we could possibly do a deal with the Iranians, especially on nuclear weapons, that doesn't address the issue: they're still free to support terrorism everywhere, with anybody, any time and any place.

Mr. Takeyh: The idea would be to go in sequence, one issue at a time. You can reject those ideas, but maybe you want to be derisive about it. But that's the idea.

Speaker: I understand the point. And one could make the case that basically not having Iran go nuclear is so important to us, given it's impact on the region as a whole. Because as you have so often said, they go nuclear and what do the Saudis do? What do the Egyptians do? So it is conceivable that from the standpoint of looking at what is so important to us, we could say this is so critical that we need to do a deal that is compartmental—only on nukes.

But here is where I see the problem. This is what you were raising. What they are going to require for that is very high. And as soon as it gets very high, then suddenly we can no longer limit it only to nukes.

Mr. Clawson: It's even worse than that. Because now that the Europeans have said that they won't even do a trade cooperation agreement, which is a relatively limited agreement, after all, they won't even do a trade cooperation agreement unless they can get progress on human rights and on the Arab-Israeli peace process and terrorism, as well as on weapons of mass destruction at large, not just nukes. Are you going to ask this administration to come along and say maybe they will accept something dramatically less far-reaching than what the Europeans are demanding, in this political climate?

Speaker: Particularly this administration, the one that has, as you pointed out, explicitly and rhetorically said it's terror-plus-technology that creates the problem.

This is one of the reasons why I see the utility of the big deal as public diplomacy first and foremost, rather than something that is likely to produce the result. Although I would front-load their performance precisely because you cannot verify after the fact. I mean, they dismantle everything and they cut off their terror ties, and then we will hit them with a thousand pounds of gold.

Mr. Clawson: We can have a debate about Iran, but there is the impact this would have in the Arab world. In the Arab world, this deal would be the "kiss of death" for any kind of idea that we're promoting democratic change in the Middle East.

Speaker: That would be true only if they bought that we are promoting democratic change in the Middle East, which today most of the Arab world does not buy.

Mr. Takeyh: Right now you mentioned there is no strategy of dealing with the Iranian proliferation problem. There is a strategy, and it will lead most certainly to Iran being very close nuclear capability. Namely, as I understand it, the administration sort of dusted off the old Bob Einhorn memos about how to deal. You go to IAEA, you kind of negotiate with the Russians.

The problem is the Iranian program is much more advanced than that. I think it has actually reached the point of self-sufficiency. They no longer require external assistance.

I anticipate in the next couple of months—maybe not by October 30th—the Iranians will sign the additional protocols, with conditions about this and that. I think they will sign, and then the coalition of willing that we're so proud of is gone.

Mr. Clawson: The British, the French, and the Germans are pretty strongly dug in that there has to be a break in the enrichment cycle. They have taken the political position that says the additional protocol is not enough. They have told the Iranians this, and that's one of the reasons why the Iranians are so shocked at the September IAEA meetings is because the Europeans have told them no, that implementing the additional protocol is not enough, that you have to first sign it and implement it immediately. The Europeans have said that that's not enough. You have to have a break in the enrichment cycle. They have said that that is their position. Are they going to stick with it? Well, that's another question.

Speaker: I think this is an important point. I agree with you that the Europeans have come a long way toward the American point of view about there needing to be some sort of break in the fuel cycle capabilities that the Iranians would have.

But whereas we haven't really defined precisely what the threshold is, I think it's going to end up being pretty close to zero. We don't want to have extra monitoring at Natanz. We don't want to have permanent international inspectors at Natanz. We want Natanz to be stopped.

Mr. Takeyh: We want Bushehr to be stopped.

Speaker: My sense is, I would be very surprised if the Europeans would sign on to a solution for Natanz that the only acceptable solution was dismantling.

So in that situation, how can you say that the Europeans are dug in on this? They may be dug in at some conceptual level.

Mr. Clawson: They are dug in on a different position. They are dug in on saying there's got to be a break in the fuel cycle. Ray Takeyh was saying that they would accept just the additional protocol. I don't agree. I think the European position and the American position are very different. What the Europeans will accept is much less than what the Americans will accept, because the Americans will insist, as you say, on basically dismantling at Natanz and also on no completion of Bushehr. We do not have, by any means, agreement on that with the Europeans. And I don't think we'll get it.

Speaker: And the Europeans want a meaningful break in the fuel cycle without going to those extremes.

Mr. Clawson: But the Iranian position seems to be that they may sign the additional protocol and implement it, and that's not going to be enough.

Speaker: I'd like to say that I am less convinced that the Europeans, if we get into work a grand deal, they're going to say, "Hands off. The Americans are taking care of it." I mean, they are very committed to this idea. They also have extraordinarily large commercial interests—the Russians even

more so. The last thing they want to see is the Americans come in and steal Iran back.

Speaker: I want to pick up on actually what Ray Takeyh was saying about the Europeans, and whether or not, in fact, it's going to be so hard to break the coalition of the willing.

I think you can't underestimate the psychology of suddenly the Iranians doing something that they have resisted. The way the Europeans always operate is as soon as they see kind of an accommodation on the other side, their first impulse is to immediately embrace it. They will say, you know, it's not good enough, but it's a step in the right direction, and we've got to find ways to encourage it.

That's their instinct. The way they operate generally is to sort of deny benefits and never to punish. When they see someone who has always been resisting, they say, "Whoa, here's a major step forward."

If the Iranians, in fact, do sign the protocol, and say they are prepared to work in terms of how it's going to be implemented, I'm not so optimistic about how the Europeans are going to stay the course and say, "You know what? It's not good enough."

Mr. Clawson: Their approach is going to be that that's a first step, and we already have an agreement with the Europeans about—okay, because the problem that they may complete this facility if we let them stall, then we have already gotten some agreements about. Okay, here's the timelines by which they're going to have to do additional things.

So you're quite right that the Europeans will say that that's a first step, and therefore we're not going to the Security Council, which I don't think, frankly, we want to go to the Security Council yet because we don't have an agreement about what to do at the Security Council. We will lay down timelines of other things the Iranians have to do.

ElBaradei, in his discussion of the work program with the Iranians, has been laying down target dates that prepares a basis for converting this into a new resolution that says you do this by this date and so on.

Speaker: I think there is hope that, if you animate the European's fear of a preemptive strike—and it's certainly there; I have played this game, and most diplomats in the last year have—you can get them not only to be tough, but even tougher than we've been. They can, in fact, take that on the road to Russia, which has immense implications that brought us, I believe, our victory with regard to September.

Contrary to some assessments, I think it can be played again. I think it could get you to the UN Security Council, and I think we need to think long and hard about that, because without the UN Security Council vote, I think our colleague is right. I think you'll see tents fold quicker than you can say, "Looks positive to me, let's work with it."

Speaker: Can you answer the question on what do you want to see happen at the UN?

Speaker: I think the first thing you do—after you get an identification of the violation—is you call for country-neutral rules. And I have a favorite, but there are others that can be generated. One might be supporting first having the UN Security Council support the principles that are laid out, rather than saying the words "proliferation security initiative principles," and/or second that no country has the right to withdraw after it gained nuclear power technology under the NPT.

Mr. Clawson: Twice last year the administration has thought it was clear that if a security problem were brought to the United Nations, that it would be so much in the interest of the other countries to come to an understanding about this matter, that the Security Council would reach agreement by a resolution of this issue.

Twice what we have found is that if we expose our vital parts at the UN—to the vulnerabilities of those who do not have a particular reason to help us protect them—what we have done is create a

situation in which it is very easy for them to raise a whole variety of different objections.

So having walked into that buzz saw once, we backed off and decided in the last month or two to walk into it a second time. I am impressed with the idea of, having done this now twice, this administration is preparing to do it a third time. But you were quite correct. That is what the administration's entire focus is on at the moment. How quickly can we walk into that buzz saw again by giving this one to the Security Council?

Speaker: I believe that if you work this with the Japanese and Europeans, you can isolate and get the Russians in a situation where the Chinese are not going to vote against this.

Mr. Clawson: But unless we do that before we get the IAEA vote and go to the Council, we are going to create a situation in which the Russians will say, "Oh boy, you've got an opportunity right here now to make problems for the United States."

Mr. Clawson: The focus is entirely on, "Let's get to the United Nations Security Council as quickly as we can," instead of saying, "Let's delay the IAEA vote until we've got the Perm five agreement on what we're going to do when we get to the Security Council."

Speaker: At the risk of raining on someone's parade, how can we talk about this without taking into account Israel's position, that if there's some substance to it, it can't allow Iran to go nuclear?

Speaker: Every time I have been there and met with the Generals—the Intelligence—they say Iran is their number one problem.

Speaker: I mean, weren't there press reports that Sharon came and he has his Intel guy—at the lunch with President Bush—lay out the pictures, the satellite photographs? And this is what's happening, and we can't allow this to happen. At the end of July, during his lunch, they did a major exposé on the Iranian nuclear problem. Didn't the administration walk away from that briefing with a sense that it is basically an extraordinarily sensitive issue where, if the Israelis aren't satisfied with what we and others might do, they will act? Was that the conclusion the administration drew?

Speaker: Maybe one of the reasons the administration isn't doing a lot is because, in a sense, in the end, they think the Israelis are going to?

Mr. Clawson: We had a discussion this morning about whether or not it was a good idea for the United States to develop the military action or let the Israelis do it instead of letting Americans do it.

Geoff Kemp was making the argument this morning that that would be a bad mistake because the degree of cooperation between the United States and Israel today is very different than what it was at the time of Osirak, and that everyone in the Middle East would quite properly assume that Israel would have to coordinate this one very closely with the United States. It wouldn't just happen without the Untied States knowing about it in advance, and there would be close coordination. The Prime Minister would not do this without coordinating with the United States.

But then you have another speaker saying no, it's a good idea, let the Israelis do it, because if you let the Israelis do it and you get some plausible deniability, then it won't cause the kind of crisis in U.S.-Russian relations. The point was that you think about the implications for U.S.-Russian relations, and that yes, it may be true that everybody in the region will blame the United States for having done this if Israel does it. But it could provide plausible deniability for the Russians, which could be useful, depending upon the approach.

Speaker: I'm just trying to understand why people are being so harsh and critical of the administration for doing nothing, when everybody acknowledges that where we are in the IAEA process. And the Europeans and the consensus now is that these guys are trying to build a bomb. They've been trying to

get it. We need to try and stop it. And the European position on additional protocol and its immediate implementation—no fuel cycle, you know, heading toward this October 31st thing and maybe November—why aren't people thinking that we've come some distance here?

Mr. Clawson: There was a strong sense at the beginning of the morning that the first part of the Iran nuclear crisis was played real well by the United States. We played our hand really well up until now. Now the question is, okay, we've come to the harder part, so what do you do now?

Speaker: You think the harder part is when they get the bomb, saying these guys are in violation of their NPT obligations? Is that the hard part, getting Security Council sanctions under those circumstances?

Mr. Clawson: If your concern is how to achieve trans-Atlantic consensus on this issue, we've done the hard part. If your concern is stopping Iran's bomb, we've done the easy part. Not a one of us around this table thought that getting that kind of consensus, which you just described, is going to stop Iran from getting the bomb.

Speaker: But the additional protocol and immediate implementation and breaking the fuel cycle will push timelines back and is an integral component of the strategy to delay and eventually get rid of dismantling the program.

Mr. Clawson: There were people who said no, that's not a particularly successful approach. For instance, that's not going to do very much about Bushehr necessarily.

Speaker: Not only that, there are two sides to the delay equation. It is not clear there can be immediate implementation with the Iranians bringing up the requirements of their own system and getting agreement among all of us in terms of modalities and stuff like that. Anyhow, delay could work both ways.

Mr. Takeyh: After you get this coalition, and assuming the coalition is durable, and even you get some sort of multilateral sanctions and declare your own noncompliance, does that mean Iran's nuclear program stops?

Mr. Clawson: The answer around the table—everybody said no. The strategy of delay is contingent, therefore, upon something happening during that period when there's a delay. I have to tell you that there was not confidence around this table that you could delay the program long enough that Iran's regime would fundamentally change—in the absence of our doing some dramatic things—one way or the other. There is a great risk in the delay while trying to encourage regime change strategy, which is, is the timeframe for Iran acquiring the nuclear weapon going to delay long enough, or is Iran going to acquire a weapon? I think that was the issue—the degree of risk that you're prepared to accept around that. It's a question we were debating a lot this morning. Everybody agreed that we've had a lot of accomplishment in getting the multilateral diplomacy up to this point, but there is a lot of disagreement about whether or not it's going to hold together when we start insisting on some of the more effective actions, which would accomplish delay.

What you just heard here was skepticism that, in fact, we will get consensus and hold this together in a system of things that would actually realistically delay Iran's program. So then, we may be locked into a multilateral process that we hold up as a great accomplishment, but that process insists on ineffective actions and Iran being allowed to continue its program. But because we have placed all our marbles in this basket, saying this is a multilateral process that we're going with, we can't break with it.

Speaker: The public diplomacy, with all due respect, on this topic is pretty, pretty quiet. I know it's hard to get the President to speak, but how about the rest of the crowd beneath him? You don't have too

many public speeches laying out even one-tenth of what went on today. And you need it

Speaker: Especially when there could be internal division within the administration on this issue.

Mr. Clawson: I think it would be quite possible to achieve a resolution with the Security Council, if we started the work now in which we say that any country that has been referred to the Security Council by the IAEA Board as being in violation of the NPT, there shall be no shipment of nuclear material until that violation has been resolved.

I would also propose we ask the Security Council for a resolution ordering that a country not to develop nuclear weapons until it is no longer in violation of the NPT.

Speaker: Or you could even make it easier. Just no country has a right to withdraw from the NPT.

Mr. Clawson: That's too ambitious. I would simply say that a country who is in violation of the NPT is not allowed to develop nuclear weapons until such time as they restore themselves in good status. Look, these are weak resolutions, but you can get a consensus and you can get some resolutions to it.

Under the current circumstances, it would be in our interest if the Iranians would provide just enough information to kick this down the road a little bit, because I think it would be better if we raised it with the Security Council later on, once there was more of an agreement about what we're going to do when we get there.

So if the Iranians do just enough, then we ought to be taking the position that let's lay down a timeline for the things they have to do, which reflects the fact that if they stall long enough, they can develop a nuclear weapon. That is what our position ought to be, instead of let's get these people to the Security Council as quickly as we can. We have to lay down a timeline of how quickly these inspections have to proceed, and at the next meeting we're prepared to be flexible "one more time" to show how reasonable we're being and keep it down the road to the January meeting. The IAEA Board can lay down a timeline of saying that these issues have to be resolved by such and such a time, or else we would have to assume that Iran is not in compliance

If you pass a resolution ordering a country to continue to follow its NPT obligations so long as it is found out of compliance by the IAEA, then you have a legal basis—if you find they're developing nuclear weapons—to say they're violating the UN Security Council Resolution. And then you start talking about how we enforce the UN Security Council resolution. They now have the legal right to withdraw from the NPT and develop a nuclear weapon. I want to take that away from them. Once you are violating the NPT, you cannot withdraw. Once you're back in full compliance with the NPT, yes, you can withdraw. But while you're violating the NPT, no, you cannot withdraw.

Speaker: What you're doing is you're creating also some thresholds for the Iranians that they realize they're going to have to cross. Then they will have to decide, are they willing to run the risk of crossing it?

Speaker: And what are the risks? Is it economic sanctions we're holding over their head?

Speaker: I laid out one idea. And that is, why not get behind the PSI Proliferation Security Initiative by saying these principles will, in fact, be ones that any country can back. And they have our authority to do so, which makes it international common usage, which is what they currently lack, and they can't interdict—on the high seas—a number of things. You could clear the way for that. And you make it totally permissive, not restrictive.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Dennis Ross: The only thing I can say is that—not having been here all day but having been here for the last hour—the reason we decided to do this seminar is because when we had an internal discussion where we looked at the options, our conclusion was that none of the options looked very good. In light of that, one of the things we had to do was to determine what are the least bad options.

What I hear are procedural approaches that cannot, by definition, be panaceas. They're not going to solve the problem. But maybe what they do is put us in a better position to deal with this, at least to convey a message to the Iranians that maybe they will believe more.

One of the things that has always troubled me is trying to get a grip on the nature of the internal struggle in Iran to figure out can we affect that struggle from the outside or not? Your suggestion is we can't. But they're not indifferent to what they see happening on the outside. It clearly affects their own calculus.

That being said, the idea of creating a country-neutral rule about not withdrawing from the NPT is really a critical thing to achieve for now, because it does send a message to the Iranians. And they can then calculate what is this going to cost them. Also, in truth, it's a threat to leave something to chance—to quote Shelly.

Does this mean economic sanctions? Does it mean military action? Well, the fact is, nobody knows what it means. What they know it does mean is that it creates a much greater justification for what are tougher steps that come down the road. I would like the Iranians to know that that's a clear possibility.

I would like the Iranians, as they're evaluating their choices, to think that maybe it's not going to be so easy to stretch it out, and that it's better for them to go ahead and sign the protocol than not sign the protocol.

We can't be the ones who are raising the siren song about the Iranians, because of Iraq right now. We don't have the credibility to raise certain kinds of siren songs that we did before.

So I would rather win some kind of greater international consensus. I would rather see it reflected in a resolution, especially if it's country-neutral.

I leave here saying I still don't feel that this is an issue where we can be particularly comfortable about. But at least I feel we can take certain steps that can improve where we are relative to where we have been.

As good as the process may be, there is still a basic reality. What I'm afraid of, fundamentally, is that the Iranians have made the decision that they're going to have a nuclear capability, and that even the reformists believe this is essential. If that's the case, then I still come back to a process for giving us some options in the future that maybe we don't have today.

Whatever we can do to buy time is good. Because somewhere down the road, if Iran is going to have that nuclear capability, I would rather have an Iran with a very different kind of government than the one we see today.

That doesn't change my fears about the impact on the region as a whole, but if Iran looks like it's less of a missionary, proselytizing regime that is prepared to threaten everybody else, maybe the effect on the Middle East is less profound and worrisome than I might think.

Back when the NPT was established many people said this can't work. Well, in many ways it worked by delaying things for a long time. The concept of delay is not the worst thing to have in mind, especially when you're facing an outcome you really don't want to face.

A lesson for the people in the administration is, notwithstanding the desire maybe on the part of some not to have the Iranian nuclear issue intrude into what is already a pretty difficult political environment. I'm afraid if the administration isn't out there doing more to publicly explain this one, the task

is harder from a lot of different standpoints, including the public's attitude toward this.

This issue will emerge at some point. You know, this is not one you're going to sweep under the rug. It will be introduced in the public discourse here, whether the administration has shaped the context for that or not. If it has shaped the context for it, it has much less of an impact. If it hasn't shaped the context for it, it's much more likely to create a kind of steering around it.

So I would say, even for nonforeign policy reasons, I think it is really critical for the administration to be out there, not only on Iraq right now, but at least explaining what it's doing.

Thank you very much to all for your contributions.