

WEAPONS THREATS AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY: REBUILDING AN UNRAVELED CONSENSUS

LUNCH SESSION

LEONE: – (inaudible) by Joe Cirincione who has been such a good colleague with the Center for American Progress in making this possible. And of course my thanks especially to the Italian Foreign Ministry for their idea and support of this conference. We have heard throughout the day varying degrees of optimism and pessimism, and we've heard a lot of general conversation about arms control. In the American newspapers today, the focus is on arms control in a couple of countries and nuclear proliferation in a couple of places, and we're fortunate this afternoon to have with us people who can discuss that with great authority.

Our panel is very distinguished. It includes Richard Haass, the President of the Council on Foreign Relations, who served both Presidents Bush and is a scholar in foreign policy in his own right. And Ambassador Javad Zarif, the Permanent Representative of the United Nations from Iran. They will be candid, but this is an on-the-record session, and I want to make sure everybody understands that we're not operating on Council rules.

To moderate this discussion, we have Carla Robbins, the Deputy Editorial Page editor of the *New York Times*. And without further ado, Carla.

ROBBINS: Thank you very much. I think we've decided rather than having opening remarks, I'm just going to ask you a few softball questions to start.

(laughter)

ROBBINS: And then everybody else can lob their softballs as well. I want to start with the ambassador. We can all discuss – and I'm sure we will – what the perceptions are of Iran's intention with its pursuit of a nuclear fuel production capability. But I suppose my most basic question is that Iran has been ordered by the Security Council to suspend enrichment. And more than six months have passed and you're still doing it. So the question is why, and how can you justify what basically is a total rejection of international law?

ZARIF: Well, first of all let me say that if this a softball, what will be the hardball?

(laughter)

ROBBINS: You can imagine what my question would have been like if I were at the [Wall Street] *Journal*.

ZARIF: And I expected no less from you. But I want to first of all thank the organizers for having organized this wonderful event, and I'm sure it helps to discuss these issues, even the soft issues that you raise.

The problem with the resolutions that were adopted by the Security Council has been that the resolutions were not adopted in an effort to find a resolution to the problem, but in an effort to impose pressure on Iran. If I remember it correctly, it was Ambassador Bolton who said in 2005, at APAC, that rest assured, that the Security Council is not the only tool in our toolbox. So if the Security Council is perceived as a tool in the toolbox, you don't expect others to treat it any differently.

Now, we need to find a resolution to this problem. Iran exercised a voluntary suspension of its enrichment activities for over two years. But unfortunately during those two years, no attempt was made in order to negotiate a solution. There were attempts to continue the negotiations, and I led the Iranian delegation in the negotiations and I can tell you, as my personal observation, that there were attempts to continue and prolong the negotiations but there were no attempts to find a solution. We presented offers, proposals, after-proposals in order to find the solution, but unfortunately there were no takers.

So we knew that the Security Council was being mentioned from the first day as an instrument of pressure in order to bring Iran into – *compel* Iran into accepting a demand that we thought was unreasonable and would not resolve the problem. And that is why nobody expected Iran to observe that demand, and that is what happened afterwards.

ROBBINS: So you get to pick and choose on Security Council resolutions because we have an impolitic ambassador to the UN?

ZARIF: No, we don't get to pick and choose on Security Council resolutions. In fact the United States has started that practice a long time ago, and it didn't start with Ambassador Bolton, it started a long time ago. There are many Security Council resolutions that have been left unimplemented, and there has been very little effort in order to implement them. And those are Security Council resolutions that escape U.S. veto. Now, if I tell you the number of Security Council resolutions that's already received a gesture of a U.S. veto, the numbers would have been even larger.

The problem is when we see a U.S. ambassador and the U.S. government trying to use the Security Council as an instrument of pressure. When we see a letter by the political director of the United Kingdom, who used to be my negotiating partner when I negotiated, saying that we need to use the Security Council in order to deprive Iran from its legal argument that suspension was voluntary. You see all of these and you put them together and you see that the Security Council is not a part of the solution but a part of the problem. It has been from the very first day.

The problem is if you try to continue to put blame on one country or another for not accepting the pressure that is being imposed, you will not resolve the problem. There are ways of resolving this problem and we need to look at those ways instead of insisting on a pre-condition that everybody knows cannot be achieved because it was there for two years and it didn't achieve anything. We should look at the solutions. And there are plenty of solutions that can be found. And I can share with you a number of solutions that were offered by Iran, and unfortunately there were no takers.

ROBBINS: So Richard, multiple wrongs make a right in this case, or do you find some empathy for the ambassador's position?

HAASS: In a word, no. I respect him, this ambassador, tremendously. We go back a long ways. But out of all the arguments I've heard him make over the years, this was the least persuasive.

It reminds me of that saying in courts where if you've got the facts and the evidence on your side, you argue those, if not, you argue the law. Here Iran does not have the substance by its side, so it's arguing atmospherics.

You can always find in diplomacy distractions and arguments for doing or not doing what it is you either want to do or don't want to do, and that's essentially what we heard. But the Security Council, regardless of what Mr. Bolton might have said, regardless of what the United States might want – quite honestly, I wish the Security Council were a tool of American foreign policy, but it's not. You've got four other countries with very different points of view. Anyone doubting that can look at the resolution – the so-called Second Resolution before the Iraq war. Clearly France and others were not tools of American foreign policy. And we can look at Russian foreign policy now and Chinese foreign policy on, say, Darfur. The Security Council is hardly a tool of American foreign policy, and we can look at Iran. And Russian foreign policy is hardly synonymous with American foreign policy.

So the Security Council, for better or for worse, is not a tool of American foreign policy. It's an expression, essentially, of what the five permanent members agree or disagree on. And in this case, there's actually significant agreement about what ought to be expected of Iran. That Iran ought not to be in the business of enriching uranium, ought not to be in the business of doing things outside the jurisdiction of the International Atomic Energy Agency, ought not to be going down the path of developing nuclear weapons.

I do not see this as a tool of American foreign policy, I see this as an expression of international order. And I would hope that Iran would see fit to agree with it, because I don't believe it is being asked to do anything that is against Iran's own national interests. And I think as part of a diplomatic, negotiated package it would

benefit not just the world, but Iran would be better off it were to reenter compliance and cooperation with the IAEA.

ROBBINS: So there's been a lot of talk recently about the idea of rather than getting caught in more of this "after you suspend" problem that we seem to have, would Iran be willing – can you make that commitment today that if the Security Council would say, OK, as of 12:01 AM, we'll suspend an effort for sanctions if you will suspend uranium enrichment, so that we can get the talks back moving forward?

ZARIF: You are basically repeating what is already in the Security Council resolution. You're not giving a lot of incentives for Iran. The point is, we can continue to argue what happened in this process until the end of the day. And Richard can point to international legality, and I'm happy to see the United States – and unfortunately, Richard is outside the government – but I'm happy to see the United States sticking so much to international legality. That would be an important development for all of us.

But let's not get involved in that. We know how the Security Council operates. We know how the Security Council was prevented from even passing a cease-fire resolution [in Lebanon], so let's not get into that. We have our own history with the Security Council, the way the Security Council miserably dealt with the Iran/Iraq war. So I don't want to get into things that after 10, 20 years, people will find out how miserably the Security Council acted or reacted to a certain thing.

Let's discuss how we can – I think this conference is about nonproliferation – how we can help nonproliferation. Now, if we start from the assumption and agree on two fundamental starting points, that you do not want to have nuclear weapons proliferated and you do not want to see Iran becoming a nuclear weapon state. And at the same time, you want to respect the inalienable right of Iran to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. If we can agree – and I think these are very simple propositions, but it's very difficult to agree on these two very simple propositions – if we can agree on these two simple propositions and see how best we can achieve them, I believe there are ways much more effective than this so-called panacea of suspension that could in fact achieve these goals.

If the suspension was in fact a resolution, a solution to this issue, why was it that Iran had the suspension for two years, and negotiated, but we did not reach a solution? Because there was no will to reach a solution. Let us agree on these two fundamental points, that Iran should never have nuclear weapons – and I would be the first one to join you in committing my country to this goal that Iran should never have nuclear weapons. In fact, everybody who has nuclear weapons should abandon them because nuclear weapons no longer bring security to anybody. And I think if we recognized that, we would have been – we would go a long way in addressing the problem.

But that is a goal, that is an objective, and I don't want to talk about objectives. Let's take the issue at hand. Iran should never have nuclear weapons. But Iran should have the right to develop nuclear technology. What are the ways of doing this? How can the international community – and let's not confuse international community, with the Security Council, I can quote for you statements by the non-aligned 118 members of the international community who are on record saying that nobody could impose on Iran its choice on fuel cycle technologies. But let's not even discuss that, because I don't want to get into basically rhetorical discussions.

Let us say how we can make sure that the international community, if it has concern, could be allayed about Iran's nuclear program – that it will always remain peaceful. And at the same time, Iran's right would be observed. Because if you ask Iran to abandon its right, that is not a good recipe for finding a solution and for maintaining nonproliferation.

ROBBINS: Richard, one might say that if Iran hasn't yet crossed the point of no return, it's pretty close. Because the issue is not really how much U236 they produce, or how much they can then enrich, or what level of enrichment – this is the sort of thing that happens in people's brains. Unfortunately in Iran, it's only in the brains of men, and not women, but we won't talk about that today.

(laughter)

ZARIF: Where did you hear that?

ROBBINS: I've been just noticing what your government looks like. But if they are close to the point of the intellectual point of no return, time is on their side. We can talk about the legality versus the question of law. We can talk about this. How do we get out of this box? Because time appears to be in Tehran's side and that's not a good thing.

HAASS: Well I'm not sure time is on Iran's side. Time simply could be on the side of no one, because it could force countries to contemplate actions which could be in no one's interest. So I'm not sure time is on Iran's side or anybody else's.

A lot depends upon what Iran is interested in. If Iran is interested in access to nuclear materials for generating electricity – access to, not physical control of – there's no problem. The Russians and others have made fairly imaginative offers of access to all the nuclear power anyone could want. So if this is an energy issue, there's ought not to be a problem.

If the question is not simply that, but what Ambassador Zarif described as Iran's inalienable right to – I don't want to put words in your mouth – but to, what, explore nuclear technology, to enrich uranium, what have you – the question then is under who's auspices? What controls and assurances does the international community have? Essentially, how is that right defined and limited?

And I'd say one other thing, countries have rights all the time. International relations is not about an Oxford junior common room debate about whether one possesses rights. What international relations is about is the exercise of rights or, at times, the choice of not exercising rights. Indeed, international restraint often depends upon countries deciding *not* to exercise what they may have legal or other rights to do or the capacities to do in the overall – in their own self-interests as well as in the interests in regional and global order.

So coming back, this is all a long-winded way of saying I think there are diplomatic and negotiated outcomes here that are possible, that certainly have not been precluded, have not been meaningfully explored. I would say that before we go down a path implicit in your question where the world has to face one of two choices: either an Iran that accumulates a significant amount of enriched uranium outside IAEA controls, which no one wants to see, which would give them a weapon option in short order; or the use of military force, which would bring into play all sorts of possibilities that again might be in no one's interest. I would think it's in the interest of everybody – not just Iran and the United States, but everybody – to fully explore whether there is a diplomatic or negotiating outcome. And I would simply say I think there is, in principle, one that could be negotiated. And secondly, I don't believe that we have done, no party has done all that they might to demonstrate that it's not there.

I mean diplomacy always has two purposes. One is to reach agreement. The other is also to show that you can't reach agreement. And then if you can't reach agreement, then you can, with an open mind, fully then weigh the alternatives. I don't think we have reached that point in the case of Iran, and I would think it makes sense to reach that point. To essentially fully explore diplomacy – not, by the way, as a stalling tactic, not as a way to allow Iran to continue to simply enrich uranium for as long as it wants—but I think that one should be able to have a diplomacy that at the same time would prevent Iran from going down that path voluntarily, it would unilaterally decide not to exercise what it determines is its right. And then hopefully, as in the case say we've seen in other parts of the world, most recently with North Korea, there is the possibility of at least reaching agreements that might be mutually acceptable.

ROBBINS: So what would it take for your government to agree to re-suspend the enrichment of uranium so that talks could continue?

ZARIF: Well, you see –

ROBBINS: Or under no conditions will you –

ZARIF: Well, you see the issue is to find, as Richard said, a modality or a number of modalities where the international community – or those who are concerned in the international community – could be assured that Iran would never pursue nuclear

weapons. Now, I don't agree with a lot of innuendoes in Richard's remarks, but I agree with his conclusion. I do not believe that under the current circumstances, anything that Iran does in the area of enrichment is outside the control of the IAEA. In fact, the IAEA has cameras, is watching what we're doing in that area.

We have offered to do even more. We have offered to allow – when we offered in 2005 to allow the IAEA to have a permanent presence on our sites. Now, that is something that no other country has offered. We offered that. That is beyond the Additional Protocol. But we did offer that. So Iran does not want to do anything outside the view of the IAEA. You can rest-assured that we want to make sure that the IAEA looks at what we are doing and is able to monitor what we are doing.

But there are ways of reaching that even to the satisfaction of everybody, if people are ready to look for resolution. If you have a preconceived idea about what a resolution would look like and want to impose that preconceived idea, even before you start the process – a tactic that has already been used and exhausted in my view without much conclusion – then you're precluding the possibility of looking for alternatives.

I believe what Richard said, talking about modalities that would prevent Iran from making nuclear weapons – in addition to the fact that Iran doesn't want to make nuclear weapons, and I don't draw any parallels between Iranian case and the North Korean case because we have stated very clearly, unlike North Korea, that we do not want to have nuclear weapons. We do not believe that nuclear weapons help our national security. So the way to do it is to find those modalities.

Now, addressing the issue of time being on this side or the other side. Secretary Rice made a statement on the 31st of May where she put an impossible precondition for those negotiations. Now, Richard says that we should not allow Iran to continue to move forward. But the point is we have already lost, what, seven months? No, even more. Almost ten months. Which could have been used for negotiations and Iran was ready to negotiate. We had proposals on the table to be negotiated. People did not even look at those proposals.

I would submit to you that it would be in the interests of everybody to start looking at those proposals. To see whether there is any element that could be used in order to provide these assurances. Now, red lines have always existed. I remember Richard when you were in government, the red line was Bushehr. The red line was not enrichment but actual nuclear power plants. Now that red line has shifted. It can reshift. It can reshift back to Bushehr, as it did during the consultations on the second draft resolution in the Security Council, where the argument was raised that even Bushehr was dangerous.

So we've seen these shifting red lines. Now, let us not talk about arbitrary red lines. We have an international agreement. We have mechanisms. We have the MNA report, the Multilateral Nuclear Approaches to fuel cycle technologies that

have been produced by the IAEA. The MNA report provides five alternatives in order to reach a – the guarantee that is necessary that countries are not developing nuclear weapons in the name of developing nuclear fuel. So we can explore those. Iran has been prepared to accept and to implement for the first time – and is the only country that has accepted – three of those five suggestions.

So let us start talking about those and finding a way in order to address the problem rather than insisting on an impossible precondition. Which did not resolve the problem then, and I can tell you that it does not address the security concerns that are being raised by people. That in Iran, the knowledge has been created. However it was created, the knowledge is there.

And to address your question, one of the people who is very knowledgeable in this area is a lady. So it's a discussion that has been done by both genders. It's not a gender-specific discussion. She was tougher than I was in the negotiations in Paris.

ROBBINS: So just to point out, I didn't – I haven't missed the point that you didn't actually answer my question about what it would take for suspension but – because you were answering a much larger, more strategic, and I was asking a tactical question. But since my softball time is almost running out and I want to share it with everybody else, let's go into final jeopardy here and very quickly, just do the very, very short responses but for the biggest of questions.

I'm going to ask both of you, what is your idea of what a deal is that could get us out of the problem we have right now? Just give me the four aspects of it that you feel would address America's concerns--or the concerns of the international community, more to the point. I will make this point here, which is the red line of Boushir was not a red line for the UN Security Council, it might have been a red line for the Clinton Administration or for the Bush Administration. There's a pretty big difference here about shifting red lines. You've been ordered to do something by the Security Council which is very different from being told that there's a red line by a particular U.S. administration.

But beyond that, let's talk about what the outlines of a deal is. Do you want to go first, Richard, and see what you think would be a deal that might work?

HAASS: Sure. One can imagine a deal that was a nuclear-only deal, or one can imagine a broader deal between the United States and Iran that each side would be permitted if you will, to introduce other aspects of the other's policy that gave them pause. So from the United States' point of view, a comprehensive deal would obviously deal with terrorism issues, Iranian support for Hamas, Hezbollah, questions of its opposition to Israel and the peace process. So one could imagine a comprehensive deal, and the only reason I say that is the more comprehensive a deal and to the extent one got satisfaction on a broader range of problems, the more one could put on the table in return in terms of assurances, guarantees, economic

incentives, and so forth. Obviously if it's a nuclear-only deal, what one can put on the table is constrained.

Let me say one other point, and then I will answer your question. Secondly, it's not enough to have not simply assurances but even clear evidence that Iran is not "developing nuclear weapons." What we want to avoid is a situation where Iran could develop nuclear weapons in short order. So as a result, what we need to avoid is a situation where Iran is able to develop – even with the IAEA there, it doesn't matter – large amounts of enriched material. Because that would simply – literally and figuratively – shorten the fuse between that point and weaponization.

So IAEA cooperation and presence *per se* is not enough, non-weaponization is not enough. What we need to do is essentially come up with a negotiation where Iran either does not exercise what it sees as its right, or exercise it only in the most symbolic, limited way – its right to enrich uranium.

And I would think a basic deal is essentially that: That either no enrichment activity or extremely, extremely, extremely limited with extraordinarily intrusive inspection in exchange for whatever arrangements in Iran internationally for access to nuclear power and in exchange for not simply the elimination of certain sanctions but conceivably economic incentives, a degree of political normalization and diplomatic normalization. Possibly certain security assurances. I can imagine essentially, a fairly rich menu of possibilities. But it's got to satisfy the West and the United States would have to – or the world would have to be satisfied on the nuclear side.

And let me just say I think this whole question of preconditions and the rest could be finessed. What matters in diplomacy is not where you begin a negotiation, it's where you come out and when you come out. So I think it is not beyond the wit and wisdom of diplomats to devise a negotiating process that would get over this hurdle and very quickly get to the point where we were – the United States, Iran or – really Iran and the – better yet – the international community in the expression of the UN Security Council would be talking about the details of the agreement. I do not think this call for a precondition of stoppage of all enrichment activity ought to be allowed to torpedo diplomacy. This is the sort of thing that can be finessed very easily and very quickly I believe.

ROBBINS: Now let me just ask you one follow-up question very quickly just to be clear here, which is that when the Bush Administration came in on the North Korea issue – if you recall when they began what they said was we're not just going to talk about – it's no longer just a nuclear or a missiles issue, this is a wider issue. This has to do with the deployment of conventional forces along the DMZ. They made it so much wider that it paralyzed things, and many people thought that it was made wide *precisely* to paralyze things.

Could you, if you were in government, in a more reasonable Republican administration, could you recommend a mainly nuclear deal that ends up with Iran limited in its inability to – and some assurance that it cannot enrich uranium or enrich enough that we have to worry about it but that leaves aside the Hamas and Hezbollah issue? That leaves aside internal politics of Iran? And that in exchange gets in some diplomatic relationship and an end of sanctions. Is resolving the nuclear issue enough? Because the Bush Administration has apparently made the decision that it was enough to resolve it in North Korea at the end of the day to leave all those other things off the table.

HAASS: Well, the short answer to that long question is yes. One could design a negotiation which was, if you will, nuclear only, in exchange for certain types of, say, access again to energy, certain types of economic and diplomatic incentives or benefits. All I was saying is the scale of the incentives would have to be proportionate to the full range of Iranian behavior that was being constrained. And to the extent one moves beyond the nuclear program, I can therefore imagine a more generous package of incentives that would be put on the table. But I don't think we ought to insist that everything be resolved before anything can be resolved. So I do think – while it would be preferable to have a comprehensive agreement vis-à-vis Iran, because by definition that would get at questions such as their support for Hamas and Hezbollah, that would obviously be preferable. But if that can't be reached at this point, then I would go for a more modest agreement that would deal with the nuclear issue and, again, having a more modest set of incentives or benefits for Iran and still leave in place certain sanctions or certain potential incentives that would only be triggered – in the positive sense – if Iran addressed other concerns of the Security Council.

And by the way, it's in Iran's interest, I would think, to do that, because Iran has a full range and – needless to say, I'm not going to speak for the Iranian side – but they obviously have concerns about Western and American policy that go way back. They would like those things introduced. And there might be incentive on their side for broadening negotiations. Sometimes broadening negotiations actually simplifies them because it creates the possibility for tradeoffs.

The reason there was not progress with North Korea, I would say – six years ago – was not because the agreement was potentially broad and comprehensive. There were many other reasons. There was not progress. But again, broadening things in some ways, it may make it more complex, but it also does create the possibility of tradeoffs and deals that aren't there if you keep things narrow. So I wouldn't necessarily take an approach that embraced the issues comprehensively as somehow a device to push away the possibility of accord – possibly just the opposite.

ROBBINS: So you only have another month at your job, so let's make a deal before you go.

(laughter)

ROBBINS: Tell us if you –

ZARIF: Richard and I could do that.

ROBBINS: Right, that would be good.

ZARIF: I think that it is possible – more than possible, it's necessary – to find a formula to deal with the nuclear issue. And I venture to add that the nuclear issue is the easiest issue to be resolved because there are objective ways of doing this.

Now, let me just give you what should look like these objective ways. Political commitments. Now I'm talking about the Iranian side. And I'm not that interested in incentives and carrots and stick. You might have heard what I've said about carrots and stick and all that. So I'm talking about dealing with the nuclear issue on its own issues, and forget about the other things. Now, Iran has no problem with a general understanding, but I do not see this administration here in Washington being prepared for that. So let's deal with the nuclear one and not get too ambitious.

I believe a combination of these: political commitments on peaceful activity. Second, monitoring mechanisms. Third, technical arrangements on the levels, extent, ceilings, that type of stuff. And fourth, a mechanism for cooperation that is from consortium – possibilities of a consortium – that would be there to be participating in the process and making sure that the process would not get out of hand. A combination of these factors would give the necessary assurances. Now, I would agree with Richard that nothing would be fool-proof. But nothing is fool-proof in this world. You want to get as much guarantee as possible that Iran can enjoy its rights, but at the same time any proliferation concern is addressed.

And I think under these four topics, if we start negotiating with those two assumptions – agreement on those two propositions – I believe that we can find a resolution and I believe that there is enough on the table already to find a resolution on the nuclear issue without even addressing these other issues – side issues. I'm not talking about the more global issues, the Iranian grievances against the U.S. and the U.S. concerns about Iran. I'm not talking about those. I'm talking about economic incentives, political incentives, security incentives – those are all nice, but we need to deal with crux of the matter and that is the nuclear issue. And I believe that can be dealt with and it should be dealt with.

ROBBINS: Thank you. I'll throw it open to questions – we have mikes and if you could identify who you are. And we don't want speeches, we genuinely want questions. And Jeff, do you want to start off?

LAURENTI: Sure. Jeff Laurenti, Century Foundation. It's a parallel question for each of you, because Khatami's government had wanted to try to normalize relations in some way with Washington, but other people in Tehran held the leash tight. And then we ended up with the Bush Administration that when Khatami did try to make overtures didn't want to hear it for a while. Who really holds the power in Tehran politics now over the nuclear decisions and over normalization decisions? To what extent does Ahmadinejad – whom the rest of the world does not want to see or doesn't trust – really have a finger on controlling this policy? Or is it lurking somewhere else?

And then to Richard, inside the administration, earlier on when you were within the government, what was the balance of discussion and debate in terms of how close you're willing to get to the Iranians to talk to them? And was regime change then, do you think regime change now a major consideration? Is this administration prepared to consider a larger deal?

ZARIF: I think the fact that the West is not prepared to deal with the issue is pushing it to find the excuses: at this time a certain political faction in Iran is not interested in a deal, the other faction is not interested in the deal, this tendency is working for one thing. I think we need to stop looking at excuses and look at solutions. I believe if there is a serious solution, if there is a serious proposal, that we will – with those two fundamental propositions that I talked about – everybody in Iran would be prepared to listen because in Iran, we have decision-making which is constitutionally-based and everybody plays his part. In that decision-making you cannot exclude people who have been elected by the people of Iran because – unfortunately some people have this tendency, if the electorate doesn't elect the people they like, they find ways of excluding them. Look at what's happening in the Palestinian territory to the way the United States is dealing with Hamas.

Let's us deal with the reality. And the reality is it's the package, not the people who you're trying to send the package to. It's the package that is problematic. Let us look at the package that deals with the fundamental issues, and then I can assure you that if everybody in Iran wants a solution and everybody in Iran wants to avoid a confrontation.

ROBBINS: So Richard, who's running the U.S. government? And are they willing to make a deal?

(laughter)

HAASS: Well first of all, it's good that you're sitting down because I'm now going to shock you in two ways. One is the idea that there might not be total consensus within the administration on this is just one possibility. And secondly, Jeff, I'm amused that you've asked me in some ways to speak for this administration. I wasn't sure I spoke for them when I worked for them.

(laughter)

HAASS: The idea that I could speak for them now is – the irony, shall we say, doesn't escape me.

Look, this is an administration that has, when it comes to Iran, various tendencies. It worked with it very pragmatically, and both Ambassador Zarif and I were personally part of it when it came to Afghanistan. At the same time, there were many people in the administration who held out, if you will, for regime change. You're seeing the same tendencies with North Korea. I think you see some of the same tendencies now with Iran, which changed because you've also got not simply the nuclear concern. Not simply concerns about terrorism, Hamas, Hezbollah and Israel, but you've also got concerns about Iraq and that whole set of issues – in a tougher energy environment.

But the Secretary of State has made clear her willingness and the administration's willingness to speak with Iran. We still have the matter, if you will, of the one precondition, but that's not an existential point. That is a policy point. So that says to me at least, as an outsider, that there has been some, if not movement, at least there's a clear administration position now, which it is willing to talk to Iran. Which suggests that those who have argued that diplomatic interaction with Iran is undesirable because that works against regime change, it seems to me that those people are not dominating administration policy. That rather, what you're seeing is a policy saying we're prepared to have diplomacy: here's the situation or the precondition we want.

Again, we can argue over that. But I'm not hearing, if you will, existential arguments against diplomatic interaction with Iran. That tells me that, again, this is therefore in the realm of the possible, not in the realm of the impossible.

ROBBINS: Thanks. Is that Bill Potter?

POTTER: Thank you very much. My question is for Ambassador Zarif.

ZARIF: Why am I not surprised?

(laughter)

POTTER: I wondered if you could –

(laughter)

POTTER: I would like you to perhaps expand on the fourth point that you identified in the nuclear sector, which was mechanisms for cooperation. And to explore whether this includes various forms of nuclear supply or nuclear assurances. And in

particular, whether you see any role for the Russian proposal about a multinational fuel center as being part of that mechanism for cooperation?

ZARIF: Iran has not closed the door to any possibility. We have said that we are prepared to look into various proposals. A proposal that we put on the table, both here in the General Assembly in September 2005 as well as at the conference on disarmament, in I believe it was April or March of 2006, have been international consortium, border-regional consortium based on the suggestions of the MNA. These are the two proposals that we have put on the table – division of labor, division of tasks all have been stated in one way or another in the proposals that were made by Iran.

Now, fuel assurances, you've got – if you want to look at fuel assurances, you've got to look at the case within the Iranian experience. Iran owns fuel outside Iran. We own shares in fuel production conglomerates. We own 10% of Eurodiv (sp?), but that didn't mean that we got a gram of enriched uranium from them, or even raw uranium from any of those. So that is the problem.

How do you want to deal with Iranian concerns? And I haven't heard anybody being prepared to deal with Iranian concerns. And the way Iran has framed this issue in order to find a mutually acceptable way of addressing the problem while at the same time guaranteeing that it will not go in the direction that neither you nor I want it to go – I believe has to be looked at. And I believe it hasn't been looked at because some people have ideas which are basically the worst of Iranian experience.

I think it is important for people to look at the Iranian experience. I think it's important for people to understand that for the past 27 years, Iran has not been able to get anything in the area of advanced technology through official channels. That has been the case all the time, in every case from – you name it – Iran has been prevented from doing it. And that is why Iran has had to go through the other routes. So don't expect us to simply accept that when our European friends come and tell you, we will guarantee it. How can you guarantee it? Can your guarantee be more than owning the company? We still own it. We still sit on the board of directors. But we cannot get a gram of uranium from it.

So it's easy to simply generalize a situation in a country that has decided to forgo fuel production because you say it's a buyer's market. Now, I have difficulties with that issue because ten years from now it may not be a buyer's market. But you've got to look at the Iranian experience under – within the framework of Iranian history and see how you can address this. And I think there are ways of addressing it even within that framework.

ROBBINS: So does that mean that if it's an international consortium or a multinational, does it have to be geographically in Iran?

ZARIF: Our proposal has been that Iran is prepared to use its facilities in Iran in order to implement an idea that the IAEA has put on the table, but there has been no takers, in order to make it a multinational facility.

ROBBINS: But it has to be in Iran?

ZARIF: I'm not negotiating on camera what has to be and what has not to be the case, but that is the Iranian proposal, and Iran has said that it is ready to discuss various proposals under appropriate conditions.

ROBBINS: I'm just trying to get a deal before you leave, that's all.

(laughter)

ROBBINS: I'm sorry. Next – I'd like a little gender balance here, are there any women with their hands up? Oh well. OK.

COTTA-RAMUSINO: I'm sorry I'm the wrong gender. Nothing I can do about it. My name is Paolo Cotta-Ramusino from Pugwash, Secretary General of Pugwash. The comparison between Iran and North Korea in a sense is very staggering. North Korea always got out of the NPT. They said they wanted to have nuclear weapons. They made nuclear test. And still, at the end, they got talks. Things went in a positive way and presumably have evolved in the right direction. Iran said they don't want to have nuclear weapons. They said they want to have nuclear fuel. There are suspicions about that, but still there are winds of war which is going around and I think are really worrisome.

So my question is essentially to which Richard Haass I guess. How would you explain these different attitude, and is it due to the fact that any military action against North Korea was impossible for logistic reason, since China has its role and so on? Or since South Korea is so much dependent on the (inaudible) activities that could be possibly launched from North Korea that (inaudible) conceive military action in that case? Or is it more to the fact that – we discussed it before – the general role of Iran in the Middle East. And I think if this is the second case, it's important. You can probably understand the sensibility and diffidence of Iranian, say, well, we do something and then after that something else will required to us –namely we don't want to support anymore Hezbollah or Hamas – Hamas is a different category of its own in any case.

So I think that, in fact, this confusion is sort of an obstacle to the solution of the problem. So if you want to cut the deal on nuclear issues, it's one thing. If you want really to involve every other issue, I think then it becomes more complicated.

And the final request would be to – that's to Doctor Zarif – is how much do you really think that this irresponsible declaration about the Holocaust and all this kind of very insensitive approach which has been going on in Tehran has complicated

the calculation? And how much do you think that this thing could be by the internal democratic process of Iran put to a stop? Thank you.

HAASS: Well, it's difficult for me to answer your question because I believe the United States and Iran should be talking to each other. And I believe there should not be an inconsistency between talking with North Korea and not talking to Iran. I come from the old school of foreign policy where negotiation and diplomacy are simply options in the diplomatic toolkit. It's not a favor we do for anybody, it's not a sign of weakness. It's simply one of the tools of national security. If you can get an agreement that serves your interests on balance, you take it. If you can't, compare it to your other options, and you do one of those other options. So I have a very pragmatic approach.

I would be willing to have a negotiation with Iran. Either a narrow agreement on nuclear or a broad agreement on everything else. I'd be prepared to do multiple negotiations with Iran, bilaterally and multilaterally. Multilaterally, for example, to deal with the Iraq situation. Bilaterally to deal with the nuclear – or conceivably other bilateral matters. I believe we should do it with them in the same way that I believe we should be doing it with North Korea. I welcome the North Korean agreement. It clearly doesn't solve the problem. It begins to deal with the parts of the problem. And one hopes that not only is this agreement implemented but that subsequent agreements are negotiated with North Korea and then are then implemented. I would hope the same would happen with Iran.

How to account for the difference? That's difficult. Whether it's a matter of a different calculus, in the sense of China's particular role in the case of North Korea, the fact that you have a multi-party framework. As you say, certain limitations on you as freedom of maneuver given South Korea and so forth. In the case of Iran it's a different set of calculations. But again, as I say, I think in both cases the United States has moved, as I read it, from what you might call a regime change-based policy which precluded negotiations for the most part in both cases. To now, where the United States is having negotiations with North Korea in the six-party talks and seems ready to have negotiations with Iran so long as certain conditions – or in this case, as long as a condition is met. And if I'm right, that at least in principle could be dealt with in the context of negotiations.

So I think there's been some evolution. So it's always dangerous to be optimistic, but I don't see anything that precludes – potentially – there being a negotiation between Iran and be it the United States or others in some sort of a regional framework. And I would hope to see it come about.

ZARIF: Now, the question that you asked, professor. My question would be didn't we have the same problem before the current president came to office? Are we looking for excuses? This is the problem, I started negotiating when President Khatami was in office, and I was the one negotiating. And unfortunately we had a very, very negative experience where extremely generous packages were put on the

table by Iran and they were all but disregarded. That was a problem. Now, we've said the genocide must be condemned, and that position has been repeated again and again, and I do not believe that that has anything to do with this issue. Genocide must be condemned, it should not be an excuse, it should not be an excuse to commit violations against anybody. Holocaust must be condemned. It should never be repeated against anybody. Against the Jews or against the Palestinians or against any other group. It's unfortunate – we today have a decision of the International Court of Justice on genocide. But again, we need to prevent genocide, and we need to condemn genocide whenever and against whomever it happens.

But that has nothing to do with this case because the nuclear problem started long before the current president came to office, and it was not resolved, in spite Iran's policy of accommodation and in spite of Iran's offers over the two years we suspended enrichment. So neither suspension nor the other stuff are reasons for our failure. The failure is due to the fact that people were not looking for solutions. And if we address that fundamental problem, we will be able to resolve the issue. And unless we address that and look for excuses not to look at the problem and find solutions for the problem, we'll never resolve the problem.

ROBBINS: Well, Richard, Ambassador, I'd like both of you to go in the back of the room and try to work out a deal for us. And very honored to have both of you, and you both argued your cases very strongly and I do hope that we some sort of a solution soon. Thank you very much.

(applause)

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