

WAR WITH IRAN: REGIONAL REACTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

*John Duke Anthony, Jean-François Seznec, Tayyar Ari,
Wayne E. White*

The following is an edited transcript of the fifty-third in a series of Capitol Hill conferences convened by the Middle East Policy Council. The meeting was held on Friday, June 20, 2008, in the Caucus Room of the Cannon House Office Building with Chas. W. Freeman, Jr., presiding.

CHAS. W. FREEMAN, JR.: president, Middle East Policy Council

Much of the concern about a possible Israeli or American strike on Iran has receded in recent days. Yet, within the last week, Israel apparently ran a huge military maneuver in the eastern Mediterranean, exercising its capacity to engage in long-range airstrikes. President Bush has on several occasions declared that he will not leave office without dealing with the menace of Iran, as he defines it.

Over the last several years, various rationales for military action against Iran have been put forward. Initially, the discussion was about taking out Iranian nuclear facilities. When it appeared that the Iranians had suspended the weaponization aspect of their nuclear program, for a while at least, that talk was suddenly succeeded by a discussion of the need for protection of American forces in Iraq, who allegedly were being attacked with weapons deliberately provided by Iran.

Grave concerns have also been expressed, particularly in light of the March incident in the Gulf of Suez, in which an American naval vessel fired on an Egyptian gunboat and killed a couple of civilians. U.S. forces are jittery after the USS *Cole* incident and operate under more robust rules of engagement that require small boats to keep a distance from U.S. naval vessels. There have also been concerns about the possibility of an incident at sea between the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and its naval flotilla and the United States.

In a recent issue of *Middle East Policy* (Vol. XV, No. 3), Antony Sullivan analyzed the possible regional metastasis that might ensue from a conflict with Iran, talking about actions in and by Lebanon, in and by Syria, against Israel and, of course, Hamas in Gaza. I encourage you all, if you have not read that article, to take a look at it because it is very sobering.

JOHN DUKE ANTHONY: founding president, chief executive officer, National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations

There is no reason why the idea of attacking Iran militarily ought to be viewed by anyone in the region as necessary, inevitable or unavoidable. A related reaction, as reflected among leaders throughout the Gulf with whom I have met and discussed the matter, is that the Bush administration has deliberately failed to level with the American people about this issue. Within this view is a conviction that the administration has not been forthright about the real reasons that, were they acknowledged and subjected to vigorous public debate by the American people, would likely result in their refusing to support, let alone endorse, such a policy position or action. A third dimension of reactions already in play is the sheer uncertainty of what could follow. This can be seen even now, not only in the significantly higher, fear-induced price of oil. It is also reflected in how rapidly discussion about the possibility of a war has shifted from riveted attention to acute apprehension to sheer anxiety about the likely follow-on implications for the Gulf Arab countries. Here the frames of reference are their respective strategic, economic, political, commercial and defense needs, concerns and interests, not to mention their objectives and relations with each other and outside parties.

As to the requirements side of the equation, in advance of an attack, one is the obvious need for the Gulf Arab governments to persuade their citizenries that every possible precaution is being taken to deter and defend against an attack. Within this requirement is a need to do whatever is necessary to ensure their inherent right to self-preservation no matter what transpires. Another need is to assure their countries' inhabitants that everything imaginable has been and is being done to provide for national and local emergency contingencies. All agree that being able to meet these basic needs is imperative in the event of a near certainty that an attack against Iran by the United States or Israel, or some combination of the two, becomes not a question of whether but when.

Still another requirement is to be prepared to withstand the probability of a range of retaliatory actions by Iran or its agents following an attack. Certainly, possibilities for retaliation would not be lacking. Among them, to name but a few, could be the inflicting of damage to offshore drilling platforms on the Arab side of the Gulf, to undersea energy valves, gauges and pipelines, threats to shipping in the strategic Hormuz Strait, and attacks on power generation and desalination plants along the coasts.

There would also be obvious need for heightened domestic surveillance and security measures vis-à-vis the Iranians in these countries. Some 400,000 Iranians live and work in the UAE emirate of Dubai alone. Additional thousands of Iranians reside in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar, although nowhere near the same number in Oman or Saudi Arabia.

There will probably also be a need to be able to deal effectively with a range of likely, as well as unanticipated political consequences, driven by the perceived as well as actual nature, extent and overall effectiveness of what these countries' elite decision makers do or fail to do to prevent an attack. Regardless of their respective actions or inactions, if whatever they do is perceived as inadequate or ineffective, the prospects are considerable that a range of resultant accusations could represent a rhetorical throwback to an earlier era. A frame of reference is the 1960s, when many Arab Gulf leaders were labeled by Arab nationalists as "America's Arabs," "Anglo-Arabs," "running dogs" and "lackeys of imperialism."

If but a fraction of this kind of reaction were to occur, it would not be difficult to imagine how this would negatively affect the perceived legitimacy of these leaders, not only domestically but further afield. Even now, the meaning of the phrase “moderate Arab leaders” has increasingly been debased. In the eyes of critics, it has migrated from being synonymous with a commendable attribute to an epithet applied to any Arab leader seen as inclined to accommodate America’s aims.

Regarding other requirements deemed necessary to try and prevent an attack, among the most obvious is the need to engage Iran in every imaginable way. The goal would be to underpin their acknowledged common interests in regional peace, stability and prosperity, which by definition renders the idea of launching yet another war in the Gulf unthinkable. A close cousin to this requirement is the need for insiders and outsiders alike not to be precipitous in concluding that diplomacy has been exhausted. Certainly, a consensus within the region is that a case cannot yet be made that diplomacy has been exhausted. On the contrary, practically all agree that greater and more effective diplomacy is needed.

Further, if an attack is to be prevented, a third requirement applies to the United States and Israel almost equally. If for domestic political reasons they cannot do so publicly, they need privately not to fail to focus to the greatest extent possible on the positive aspects of Iran’s behavior over the last quarter of a century, for which a range of evidence is hardly lacking. If only to quiet the extremist warmongers among their respective policy makers, each needs not to lose sight of, and take appropriate measures to commend, empathize with and strategize in relation to these positive aspects.

There’s no need to go overboard in this regard. It should be sufficient merely to cite various facts in the chronology. For example, apart from the Iranian complicity in the deadly attack on the Al-Khobar Towers complex in Saudi Arabia in 1996, and the strengthening of Iran’s occupation of three islands claimed by the UAE in the 1990s, there has been no Iranian actual or potential military attack on any of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries for nearly a quarter of a century. Apart from these two instances, the last serious threat occurred in June 1984. Then, utilizing a combined configuration of American-manufactured AWACs and F-15 aircraft, Saudi Arabia effectively prevented what could easily have been an Iranian armed aerial attack on the kingdom’s Eastern Province oil and gas installations. There has been no comparable threat posed by Iran against any GCC country since then. Neither has there been a recurrence of two incidents in Bahrain, one in December 1981 and another alleged in June 1996 by Iran in which its agents sought to destabilize Bahrain and perhaps lay the groundwork for a coup d’état. Nor has there been anything remotely comparable to the Iranian-instigated attack on the life of the amir of Kuwait in 1985.

If all else fails and an attack occurs, what would be the aftermath in terms of requirements? One almost certain requirement would be to demonstrate an ability to accommodate a set of likely geopolitical, social and psychological challenges as represented by the extent to which the governments would be expected to politically survive intact the after effects of an attack against Iran in the event the attack is mounted solely by the United States.

One high-ranking official of a GCC country informed me of his personal view that the GCC members would likely have a 50-50 chance of being able to weather such an attack were it to be carried out by the United States alone. However, if the Israelis were alleged or even perceived to have been part of an attack, whether independently or in association with the United States, all bets would be off. This official claimed not to know whether any of the governments could cope effectively in the event their citizens reacted with uncontrollable rage and directed their anger at their governments as much as, if not more than, American or Israeli interests in the region.

A further requirement in the event of an attack has to do with a range of logistical, operational, economic and financial dynamics. Aspects of these dynamics are addressed in part by separate Defense Cooperation Agreements that the United States signed and entered into with Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar in the aftermath of Iraq's aggression in Kuwait in addition to a modified Defense Cooperation Agreement between Washington and the United Arab Emirates, and an Access to Facilities Agreement between the United States and Oman, dating from January 1980. It is true that there is no comparable agreement with Saudi Arabia. Even so, in spite of that, what does exist between Riyadh and Washington is a far vaster range of undertakings and understandings. In the realm of defense-cooperation relationships dating over a much longer period of time and involving far more Arabs and Americans than anything remotely comparable with the other seven Arab Gulf countries.

AMB. FREEMAN: The United States cannot conduct military operations in the Gulf without support from countries in the Gulf. An effort to stage military operations without permission, as was the case from Oman with Desert One — the rescue attempt on hostages in Tehran almost 30 years ago — will result in a suspension of military cooperation, as was the case with Oman. Second, because logistics require cooperation from countries in the region, they cannot avoid a measure of complicity with a U.S. operation against Iran, and the word in the region is that Iran has already told Qatar, for example, that if there is such an attack, the Qatari regime is toast. Third, it's not just the use of bases that is involved. We cannot conduct air operations either in Iraq or over Iran, or for that matter in Afghanistan, without overflight of Saudi Arabia, and there is no agreement between the United States and Saudi Arabia that guarantees our right to such overflight. It is granted on a case-by-case basis.

The U.S. airbase in Qatar, from which the air wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan are directed, depends entirely on this air bridge. Therefore, the question of complicity cannot be avoided by countries in the region. The likelihood of retaliation, which John Duke mentioned, cannot be avoided. Of course, there would be collateral damage to things like oil prices in such a scenario.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS SEZNEC: visiting associate professor, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University

I will try to present what I think the Saudi point of view is. My argument is economic. Having lived in the Gulf for 10 years and being a banker, I have seen the business

angle of things and followed it since 1974 quite extensively.

I find that the GCC, and Saudi Arabia in particular, is caught between the anvil and the hammer. They really worry about Iran, of course, for obvious reasons, but they also distrust the United States just as much, if not more, these days. So the Saudis are very worried about a potential U.S. strike on Iran; they feel they can handle Iran on their own. That may sound surprising since their military is not that strong, but neither is the Iranian military.

On the other hand, there is a new paradigm in Saudi thinking in terms of defense and security. The Saudis are seeking to gain time. They want to maximize their economic growth, their wealth and their importance to the world markets. They assume that at the same time, Iran is going bankrupt and because of this, will be forced to change policies. So from their point of view, time is on their side.

A U.S. attack — whether it's U.S. or Israeli, it will be viewed as U.S.-based — would stop the economic growth of the region. It would kill the Saudi chance to become the economic hegemon of the region and one of the hegemons of the world. It would weaken them relative to Iran and Iraq, which they feel they can dominate.

The major points of conflict, of course, are well known. There are the islands and the potential conflict between the UAE and Iran, which has been on the books for a long, long time. The strategic Strait of Hormuz is very important, but the Saudis are not so worried about that. If the Iranians blocked Hormuz, they would be committing hara-kiri, because they could not ship their own oil.

Another issue, which has been alluded to by Ambassador Freeman, is the fact that the Iranians are very worried about the enormous development of the Qatar North Dome Field. It's the largest gas field in the world. The Qataris are developing it like crazy right now, and the Iranians are upset because they own half of that field and they feel that the Qataris are stealing their gas. They have not been able to develop that field for lack of money and lack of technology from overseas.

The other area of potential conflict is the oil platforms on the Kuwaiti-Iraq field. There's been a lot of tension among the Kuwaitis, the Saudis and the Iranians over those platforms. This has somewhat delayed the development of these fields.

The Iranians are not happy that the Saudis are trying to decrease the price of oil. Going from \$130 to maybe \$110 or \$100 would make the Saudis very happy. It would make us happy though it would not change that much. The Iranians are very happy at \$130. That brings a little more money into Iran. It allows the ayatollahs to steal even more money, and it hurts our own economy.

The other point of conflict, of course, which is important for the Saudis, is the Shia communities. In the GCC, in particular, Iran can claim that the Saudis are oppressing the Shia, which, in all fairness, they have done over the years. But things are improving, as we will see.

Finally, another point of potential conflict is the Iranian communities in the Gulf. There are 400,000 Iranians living in Dubai alone. There are 3,000 Iranian-owned businesses in Dubai, so there is some potential for disagreement on these issues.

The GCC and the Saudis are not totally defenseless. The Iranians are totally misman-

aging their economy. The Iranians are going bankrupt. In 2007, they made about \$80 billion from their sales of oil at the very average price of about \$80 a barrel. But out of this, there was very little left for the Iranians, because the ayatollahs are sending about \$15 billion a year into Dubai. They have to import gasoline into the country, which is a very large producer of oil. That costs them another \$5 billion. They have to pump their oil and that costs money. All costs of this nature are limiting the ability of the Iranians to have money for themselves.

One of the reasons for the Iranians not to do too much in the Arab world is that Dubai is vital to the ayatollahs. That's where they put their money. And they don't want to push the GCC too much towards the United States.

The Saudi strategy basically is to wait the Bush administration out. They want to make sure that there is no direct U.S. attack on Iran. As I said, it would limit their ability to grow and become a major economic power. The Saudis are today the fifth-largest producer of chemicals in the world. By 2015, which is just around the corner, they will be the largest producer of chemicals — and not just petrochemicals. The Gulf will be the world's largest producer of aluminum by 2015 or 2018. They feel that creating this major industrial power gives them tremendous diplomatic strength. They would like to continue, because then, from an economic standpoint, they will be vastly superior to Iran.

Iran today is ensuring that it remains a third-world power, totally dependent on the production of one commodity, highly dependent on forces that have nothing to do with their own enterprise. Saudi Arabia is going way up in value-added production and industrial capacity. They feel that if they can be given a chance, they will be able to have a major advantage over Iran and Iraq, in particular. This means that if we attack Iran, the money that is being invested by the hundreds of billions of dollars in the Gulf today will disappear. A lot of this is private local money that, instead of going to Switzerland as it used to, now comes to the Gulf, and that would change.

Another issue that I would like to point out is not economic. There's been a lot of effort by the Saudi leadership to improve the relationship with Iran. The strategy of Saudi Arabia is to improve economically and at the same time engage Iran, and to make them wait. They also want for us to wait, and for the Iranians to wait and to do nothing stupid.

One of the things they are doing, which is very remarkable, happened about a week or ten days ago: the conference between Sunnis and Shia in Mecca. This was done by the king of Saudi Arabia, who brought in Rafsanjani from Iran to try to unite the Shia and the Sunnis a little bit. Coming from Saudi Arabia, this is a revolution. And the Saudi leadership, and the king in particular, has done this against the Wahhabis. He was advised by the Wahhabis not to do this, but he went ahead and did it. There is a lot of tension in Saudi Arabia on this issue, but the king feels that you have to engage Iran. And you can only engage Iran if you bring them into the fold of Islam. This is having great success in the region. People trust the Saudis a little more, and this allows them to defuse some of the tension with Iran.

One other thing the Saudis are likely to do in the future is to encourage the sale of gas from Iran into the other countries of the Gulf. Bahrain is very short of gas for its industrialization purposes. They have signed — and I'm sure they could not have signed it

without the agreement of Saudi Arabia — an agreement to bring gas from Iran into Bahrain. I'm sure this is not to the taste of our State Department. An agreement has also been signed to bring gas into Oman. None of these agreements could be done without Saudi approval. The view of the Saudis is that it is perfect to buy Iranian gas because it takes away their primary commodity. They will run out of gas faster, which is good for the Saudis, and it provides the GCC with the feedstock for its industrial development.

The strategy of Saudi Arabia is to delay any kind of conflict as long as possible in order to overcome Iran as rapidly as possible from an economic standpoint — and therefore from a political standpoint — in their relationship with the Far East, in particular.

AMB. FREEMAN: One of the most interesting developments in the Gulf recently has been the emergence of shortages of gas, such that countries are increasingly talking about importing LNG (liquefied natural gas) from outside the region in order to fuel the huge chemical industries that Jean-François spoke about. Jean-François, you mentioned that there is widespread distrust of the United States these days in the Gulf, and I can't help but note that, in many ways, the United States appears to be becoming the dispensable nation, not the indispensable nation, in the politics of the region.

Consider that the Lebanese political crisis was mediated by Qatar and the Arab League without reference to the United States, even though the United States has been heavily involved in Lebanese internal affairs; that proximity talks between Israel and Syria, which the United States opposed, were brokered by Turkey, again without reference to the United States; that Egypt has now mediated a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, contrary to American desires; and that Saudi Arabia, as Jean-François mentioned, even as it received President Bush, also invited Mr. Rafsanjani to come to Mecca for a pan-Islamic dialogue and as part of an effort to manage relations with Iran.

This is nothing new. If you look at the Khobar Towers incident, you will find that the Saudis were very reluctant to share information with the United States because they feared what we might do. So we have a problem in terms of leadership in a region that we all agree is of vital importance to our nation.

WAYNE E. WHITE: former deputy director, Near East and South Asia Office, Intelligence and Research, U.S. State Department

One cannot emphasize enough the complex set of circumstances that surrounds the Iraqi dimension of practically any U.S. military action in Iran. I don't want to minimize what is said by the other speakers, but the Iraqi dimension is quite dicey because of our heavy presence in Iraq. In fact, the Pentagon apparently also raised some of the complications I'm going to be talking about, in reportedly pushing back against an initiative on the part of the vice president last summer to launch limited attacks across the border against suspected Iranian Revolutionary Guard (IRG) facilities related to training, gun running, etc. But in the context of Iraq, there are different scenarios to address and various factions to be taken into account — first, the issue of sovereignty, which now looms much larger than it did even a few months ago.

The intense and heated diplomatic battle over the U.S.-Iraqi Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) has made clear that the issue of Iraqi sovereignty would be of much larger consideration related to U.S. military action in the future. Intense skirmishing over the SOFA has exposed what has always been historically a very raw nerve for Iraqis. The issue goes all the way back to Britain's much-resented retention of two air bases in the 1930s, following its occupation of Iraq during the mandate period and its attempt again in the late '40s to extend that agreement well into the future.

Any use of very convenient and large U.S. bases in Iraq, or even Iraqi air space, for a military action against Iran could jumpstart a major crisis between the two governments. There probably is a rather broad-based and emotional consensus, especially among Arab Iraqis, against practically anything smacking of occupation or compromising Iraqi sovereignty. As a result, even Sunni Arab Iraqis, with no love for the Iranians, to say the least, would nonetheless almost certainly object strongly to the use of bases in Iraq or Iraqi air space to mount U.S. military operations against another Middle East state. Many observers would expect the Shia-dominated government, containing factions with ties to Iran or large portions of the Iraqi Shia community, to be unsympathetic, but that would be an overly narrow definition of the likely adverse impact.

Many Iraqi Shia would be considerably more sensitive to issues of sovereignty and military action against Iran because many of them have very vivid memories of the war with Iran that Iraq fought throughout the 1980s, in which tens of thousands of Iraqi Shia died fighting the Iranians.

First, Washington would have to confront the Maliki government. Not only Prime Minister Maliki, but other major government figures, like President Talabani, a Kurdish leader with some very close ties to the Iranians, are trying to maintain correct and even friendly relations with Tehran. So even the lowest option on the scale of military escalation against Iran, say limited air strikes along the border against alleged Iranian Revolutionary Guard (IRGC) training facilities or facilities storing arms for movement into Iraq, would bring a rather negative reaction from the Iraqi government. Should the United States ask permission for even limited action along those lines, such a request not only might well be turned down, but might also generate an Iraqi warning to the Iranians about what was in store for them.

That said, Maliki might find it very hard to resist allowing the United States to take some very limited military action against Iran along the border — if there were glaring evidence of IRGC training of and/or gun running to elements such as Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army and Tehran had turned a deaf ear to strong Iraqi diplomatic protests. So far, however, the United States has not been able to produce any really convincing evidence, despite a stream of allegations along those lines. And there's another potential problem regarding more limited U.S. military action against the IRGC. The IRGC's main training facility for Iraqi militiamen, Hezbollah fighters from Lebanon, and others isn't near the border. It's near Tehran, deep inside Iran. We must bear this in mind because the IRGC may well have kept facilities along border to the bare minimum in order to avoid giving the United States easy targets within, say, five, 10 or 15 miles of the border, in order to take away an option that the administration might be able to sell in certain circumstances to the

Iraqi government. A deep strike against the facility near Tehran, which is quite large, would naturally be far more provocative with respect to Iran's reaction, including a possible Iranian response inside of Iraq. That said, such a facility could be hit with a salvo of cruise missiles or air strikes from U.S. fleet elements in the Persian Gulf that would not involve Iraqi air space or bases in Iraq, at least eliminating potential blowback from the Iraqi government and population regarding the issue of sovereignty. Nonetheless, Iran still might opt to step up its aid to anti-U.S. elements in Iraq like Sadr's Mahdi Army. So Iraq might become involved in any case.

Even Sunni Arab Iraqis, with no love for the Iranians, to say the least, would nonetheless almost certainly object strongly to the use of bases in Iraq or Iraqi air space to mount U.S. military operations against another Middle East state.

The consequences in Iraq of what so many of us fear most — robust U.S. military action against Iran's nuclear infrastructure — could be very serious. Given the sheer magnitude of the operations plan as it was briefed to the president in 2006 — between 1,500 and 2,000 combat air strikes, destruction of much of the Iranian military's ability to retaliate in the Gulf, hitting many of those targets before even moving on to the nuclear infrastructure — it is almost certain to involve Iraqi air space in one way or another. The more painful the blow for Iran, the more pressure on the Iraqi government to express protests to the United States in the wake of such action. It's hard to say with real precision what this could mean. It could go in a number of directions that we could explore in questions.

In fact, before the dust-up over the SOFA between the United States and Iraq, I was inclined to believe that the Maliki government and other official denizens of the Green Zone would probably go along with the SOFA if certain concessions were made. They depend so heavily on the United States for their very political and security survival. Clearly, Washington made that same assumption too; it evidently turned out to be very wrong, and it overreached in the first draft that was sent to the Iraqis. That said, it's difficult to sort out what the United States actually proposed because of all the contrary claims and denials that have been bouncing around over the last several weeks regarding the SOFA.

In the context of large-scale U.S. military operations against Iran, the Iraqi government would find itself caught in the middle of a major popularly perceived issue of sovereignty. It would mean that despite the dangers involved for the Iraqi government, the SOFA will go down the drain, possibly forcing a speedier U.S. exit from Iraq. If the Iraqi government were compelled by U.S. military action against Iran to take steps rendering it impossible for U.S. troops to remain in great numbers in Iraq, it could take the first step in more speedily destabilizing itself. I should point out that the Iraqi government, still in the

early phases of development and very fragile, also would be ill-prepared to deal with a veritable war on its doorstep, which is exactly what the worst scenario involving Iran would be. Moreover, there would be a burst of anti-American demonstrations in various quarters of Iraq following a robust U.S. attack against Iran.

The thing that worries me most would be the rocketing and mortaring of the Green Zone and U.S. bases — all manner of this kind of thing — and public demonstrations. Attacks could come against our Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), U.S. forces, contractors and others from people who are armed and presumed to be our friends at this point. This wouldn't be ordered by militia leaders or leaders of the concerned-local-citizen groups or tribal leaders. They could come in an occasional and spotty fashion, which is the worst, because it would be unexpected here and there, by individual fighters or small groups.

Additionally, there is what the Iranians themselves might opt to do in Iraq in the worst-case scenario. The Iranians would greatly increase the amount of support they're giving to anybody who would stand up to the United States, all the way from Moqtada al-Sadr's people to even Sunni Arab elements. In an absolute worst-case scenario, they might throw all caution aside and send Revolutionary Guards, hundreds of them, into Iraq across a porous border and attack U.S. forces directly, not caring much about their own losses. This, of course, would involve violating Iraqi sovereignty, turning Iraq into yet another battlefield. I'm inclined to think they wouldn't do it.

What would be perhaps more dangerous for the entire Gulf and beyond, as well as Iraq, is that the Iranians might surprise everyone by not striking back immediately, by biding their time and looking for a better opportunity. This doesn't limit itself to Iraq or even the Gulf, but other places, including Lebanon. I haven't talked about Israel. That will perhaps come up in the Q&A.

AMB. FREEMAN: I should note before we turn to the next and final panelist that we were honored earlier by the presence of Congressman Jim Moran (D-Va). I didn't want to call attention to him when he was here, but I would just say that he is one of the few members of the House who continues the tradition of hearings that are intended to educate the public and to explore issues without any partisan focus or search for advantage. I think the modesty and seriousness of the man are illustrated by the fact that he came and stayed as long as he could at this early session. So I would like to recognize and commend that seriousness.

We turn now to a Turkish perspective. The United States has troubled relations with Turkey. As a former assistant secretary of defense, I was very much impressed when I was in that job by the extent to which American policy depends on the cooperation or acquiescence of Turkey and the range of issues that are involved. The United States cannot conduct policies toward Iran, Syria, the Eastern Mediterranean, Greece, Cyprus, the Arab Gulf, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Russia, NATO enlargement, the countries of the Islamic Conference or the Balkans without the involvement or acquiescence of Turkey. Therefore, it is particularly striking that Turkey, in cooperation with Israel and Syria, neighbors with which it has had very troubled relations, has been in the process of brokering proximity talks.

TAYYAR ARI: professor of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Uludag University

The problem we are discussing is very important. If a solution cannot be found, it may cause uncontrollable consequences. I will, first of all, try to outline Turkish-Iranian and Turkish-American relations and then suggest potential options and scenarios.

Turkey, as a democratic, parliamentary government, has deep relations with the West and the United States. During the Cold War years, Turkey strengthened these relations as a member of organizations such as NATO, the European Council and the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). In the Cold War era, Turkey became a vital ally for the United States and supported its policies in the Middle East against Soviet expansion toward the region. It recognized Israel and established diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv. Ankara became a reliable ally for Washington and supported Eisenhower and Nixon policies toward the region to reduce the threat of international communism. At the same time, during the long-lasting Iraq-Iran war and the war against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Turkey cooperated with the United States and the international community.

Turkey and Iran, which were important U.S. allies during the Cold War, also have good relations. In fact, the two states have never been at war since the beginning of the seventeenth century. After World War I, Turkey and Iran took the lead in establishing a regional alliance called the Sadabat Pact with Afghanistan; during the 1950s, they signed the Baghdad Pact with Iraq. The basic purpose of these agreements was to make the region secure. In 1962, they established the Regional Cooperation for Development, an economic organization that in 1985 evolved into the Economic Cooperation Organization.

But it should be noted that after the collapse of the Iranian monarchy in 1979, relations between Turkey and Iran became heavily economic, rather than military or strategic. This process also influenced the strategic architecture of the region since Iran was perceived as a new threat to the countries of the region and the United States. Iran's relationship with the United States ended as a result of the hostage crisis, which lasted more than a year. Also, as a result of this threat perception, the Gulf countries, with the exception of Iraq, established an organization called the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981. Moreover, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but particularly after the 9/11 attacks, a new threat perception stemming from international terrorism and nuclear proliferation replaced the Communist threat.

In this new security environment Turkey continued its relations with the United States and the West against these emerging threats. Having experienced terrorism, Ankara gave full support to Washington and took part in the Afghanistan operation as a member of NATO and as an ally of the United States.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War changed Turkey's security structure. Turkey has good relations with Russia and the Newly Independent States. Along the way, Turkey has tried to reduce its security concerns by taking some initiatives to solve existing problems with Syria and Greece. It has also improved its relations with the Balkan countries. This has hastened the EU accession process. In this

context, Turkey benefited from the new opportunity to make its foreign relations multidimensional, in terms of both geographical and functional levels. In this framework, Turkey has developed its economic, political, and social relations with other countries.

In this new period, Turkish-Iranian relations have been virtually problem-free, particularly in the economic sphere. Turkey has been importing 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas from Iran annually; recently their trade volume increased to \$7 billion. Ankara respects Washington's concerns about Tehran's nuclear ambitions and is willing to try to solve this problem by peaceful means. Turkey is definitely against nuclear proliferation. The U.S. government has been insisting that the Iranian nuclear program is aimed at producing weapons, not nuclear energy, since Iran is the second largest energy center in the world.

However, after this conceptual and historical framework of relations between Iran and Turkey, and between Iran and the United States, let's focus on the issue of war with Iran and its regional implications. There are several options for the United States:

- Inspect the Iranian nuclear program through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), search for a settlement in cooperation with Security Council permanent members and NATO allies, and continue the limited isolation of Iran through multilateral action. As noted before, Turkey initially would prefer to find a solution under the cooperation of the international community and international organizations such as the IAEA and the United Nations. But Turkey is willing to play a constructive role to persuade Iran not to develop nuclear weapons and cooperate with the international community. Iran should fully cooperate to eliminate all suspicions about this subject.
- Implement strict isolation of Iran with the support of permanent members of the UN Security Council, NATO and the Middle Eastern countries. Under a comprehensive economic and military embargo, Turkey as well the Europeans and other countries that have important trade relations with Iran might be significantly affected. It is also too difficult to apply under current UN mechanisms. Iran has been an important gas supplier for Turkey in recent years and their trade relations are growing. But under international law, if a decision were adopted by the United Nations, Ankara would perform its responsibilities, as happened during the first Iraqi operation in 1991 and in succeeding years. But without a UN decision, if the United States tried to isolate Iran to deter it from its nuclear ambitions, then Turkey would contribute by reducing its economic and political relations with Iran.
- Strike lower-value targets in Iran with a limited strike. Iran might not retaliate if an American strike is conducted toward non-vital Iranian targets. In such a situation, the United States also needs to be supported by regional and global allies against possible retaliation by Iran. But this would be political rather than military support.
- Strike high-value targets recognized by the IAEA and the EU3 to show the credibility of using a military option and to minimize the reaction of international public opinion. There is the probability of escalation as a result of retaliation by Iran against U.S. forces and U.S. allies in the Middle East. The United States would need to be supported by Turkey and NATO members. If international society were convinced that all peaceful means had been exhausted, Turkey's support might be obtained.

- Strike with a wide range of military capabilities to destroy Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Escalation would probably occur. In such a situation, Iran might retaliate and escalate the war. World public opinion, Middle Eastern countries, Russia and China might respond to the unilateral action of Washington. In such a situation, Turkey's support would be limited to the allocation of certain bases. But if the United States received the support of the UN or NATO members, Turkey's support would not be a problem, and the operation might succeed.

Of course, all of these options/scenarios can be reevaluated by taking into account other factors not included in this analysis. But all scenarios relating to the use of military power against Iran have a potential for escalation, because Iran may retaliate against U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran would have the support of all Shia groups inside or outside Iraq. Iran might attack the U.S. homeland with suicide bombs by proxy groups. Iran might also attack U.S. naval forces stationed in the Gulf and temporarily shut off the flow of oil from the Strait of Hormuz.

In this case, the United States and its allies in the region would be under threat, and escalation to war could destroy the stability of the region. Anti-Americanism would increase and militant groups might attack American targets, as they do in Iraq. Some Iraqi groups have warned the United States against military strikes on Iran. For example, Moqtada al-Sadr pledged he would come to the aid of Iran in the case of a military strike. A military strike against Tehran would increase the chaos in Iraq and could complicate the U.S. position.

To summarize, it is not desirable for Turkey and other countries in the region — or the United States — to exercise military options. U.S. forces are preoccupied, and the lack of security in Iraq would make difficult a full military attack against Iran. Employing military power to solve this question might increase potential threats and risks rather than contribute to regional stability. Even if Iran were occupied, the control of such a large country would be very difficult and would impose too many political costs on America. Oil prices would increase and would not be brought under control, since oil wells and pipelines would be destroyed during a war. Iraqi politics would suffer the most, and the American position would be at risk. It must also be remembered that Iran is very different from Iraq; it is ethnically and religiously not as divided. Most of the population of Iran is Persian or Azeri, sharing the same religious beliefs.

AMB. FREEMAN: I was very struck by your statement that, if the United Nations and NATO were to authorize action against Iran, that would bring with it Turkish support. It's a reminder that one of the issues in a putative American or Israeli strike on Iran is the question of international law and international order, often forgotten in this capital but of considerable concern to those in the capitals of other UN Security Council and NATO members.

You also mentioned, which no one had done, the vulnerability of American forces in Afghanistan to Iranian retaliation and raised the possibility of a plausibly deniable series of terrorist actions in the United States by sympathizers of Iran. I note in this connection that the Antony Sullivan article, which I mentioned at the outset, contains the rather

chilling statement that Hezbollah knows where all the Americans in Lebanon are and would be prepared to take them into custody in the event of such a development. Clearly, we're dealing with something with very wide implications, which have been very nicely explored by the panel.

Q&A

Q: Dr. Mohammad-Reza Khatami — the brother of the former president, about the age of Ahmadinejad and the leader of a reform party, the Participation party — has called repeatedly for dialogue. And on Capitol Hill, Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) introduced a long-overdue bill called the Iran Diplomatic Accountability Act of 2008, requiring a special envoy. How would you foresee preventive diplomacy or engagement with Iran? What should the United States do?

DR. ANTHONY: There would be those on the American side who would say, we've tried this. We've engaged them in the United Nations; we've engaged them in London and other places, and nothing much has come of it. We've been frustrated; we've been set back. There's a lot of nodding of heads and agreement with the rationality and logic of our positions, yet we see no real accommodation in terms of realities on the ground. We have concluded that those with whom we have been speaking do not have the means, power or influence to implement what they orally agree to in our meetings.

There's another aspect of this, though, that is less acknowledged: among those within the Bush administration who seek regime change in Iran, engaging the regime in diplomatic discourse vitiates that particular strategic objective. Diplomatic engagement with the regime that you seek to change is not exactly oxymoronic, but it's counterintuitive and potentially counterproductive.

AMB. FREEMAN: I think the issue of regime change does figure heavily in the answer to this question. The opening to China was premised on abandoning a long-standing effort to produce regime change in Beijing and on accepting the realities as they were — somewhat unpalatable realities, to be sure — and on agreeing in the Shanghai Communiqué to pursue strategic cooperation, notwithstanding differences in the ideologies and social systems in the two countries.

I think the notion of preventive diplomacy is a sound one. A great deal of diplomacy is, of course, invisible and is not credited with success, because it consists of preventing things from happening, that you cannot prove would have happened if you had not engaged in diplomacy. But leaving aside the word preventive, simply rediscovering diplomacy in the Middle East would not be a bad idea! The failure to include it in our strategy is what has produced the sidelining of the United States in the several instances that I mentioned with respect to Lebanon, Syrian-Israeli dialogue, Hamas and Israel, and a new arrangement and dispensation within the realm of Islam. All of these are things we have sidelined ourselves from. So opening a dialogue with Iran would imply not a narrow agenda limited to developments in Iraq, serious as those are, but a broader agenda based on the pursuit of common interests, where we can find them, and reservation of differences for later resolution, if that can be achieved. We will see whether, after January 20, such an approach is tried.

Q: Might a private diplomatic initiative of the sort that Jimmy Carter conducted in Pyongyang, which took us from the brink of war with North Korea to a different negotiating track, work with Iran?

MR. WHITE: One of the problems would be, what would the Iranians say to a delegation like that? The Iranians very much want to deal directly with the United States government. They don't want to receive a note. They don't really need this sort of delegation. It would be positively received, but it probably wouldn't produce any results. The only thing that might produce results, in a situation of hardened positions on the issue of continued enrichment, would be an attempt at a "grand bargain" between the United States and Iran: the United States would essentially give security guarantees to the Iranians in exchange for the cessation of enrichment. But, at this late stage in the game, I'm not so sure that Iran would want to step back from enrichment.

The best-case scenario on the diplomatic side would be the negotiation of a robust initiative in which the United States took the lead rather than using the Europeans as their cat's paw — willing to make meaningful concessions that have not been made since 1979 — and resolve some outstanding issues. Iran would be allowed to enrich, but under extremely ramped-up, intense IAEA monitoring.

I'll raise something very controversial. If all diplomacy fails, we seem to be boxing ourselves into a situation in which somebody then goes to war, either Israel or the United States or a combination of both. We were joking before the session about Israel's recent exercises in the eastern Mediterranean. I've seen these sorts of exercises in government; they're usually done so that a number of governments will detect them and draw the intended warning. They're not usually conducted with great secrecy. They're as much a diplomatic signal as they are an actual military exercise.

Let me suggest another option. Iran remains recalcitrant in the face of UN Security Council resolutions that will probably never have enough teeth to force Iran to stand down, particularly at a time when Iran is selling oil at the incredible price it is now, despite its struggling and ineptly run economy. There is sometimes a choice in between war and failed diplomacy: doing nothing. Often, the American psyche drives one toward solving a problem, doing something. But there are a number of governments around the world that have learned that sometimes the best solution is doing nothing about something — in this case, letting Iran go nuclear, even if there is a risk that Iran might develop a nuclear device.

Why would I say that? Because of the absolute insanity that would be behind a nuclear strike against Israel, which is really the fear that's driving all of this. Iran could, in no way, knock out Israel's massive nuclear capabilities, estimated at between 150 and 300 deliverable weapons, in a first strike. Iran would absolutely — certain Israelis assure me — suffer a return strike that would demolish most of the country, leaving perhaps tens of millions dead. There is no way that I can conceive an Iranian government doing this.

In our own discourse, we focus too intensely on Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He's the president of Iran, not the president of the United States. His finger won't be on the trigger. He has very little power compared to the presidents of the United States and

some other countries we're familiar with. The finger on the button is going to be that of the Supreme Leader and the clerical elite around him. These are people who have grown very comfortable ruling a country in which they're making vast amounts of money, have huge economic empires and are quite happy with the way things are going right now. For them to throw it all away in some quixotic attack against Israel with a nuclear weapon is down there with that 1 percent probability.

I understand how Israelis feel. It's easy for me to sit here in Washington and say there's only a 1 percent possibility that Israel would suffer a nuclear attack in the next 10, 15 or 20 years. But that's how low the probability is. So, I offer that as an option. If all else fails, leave them alone, because there is a 99 percent chance that they want a nuclear weapon as the ultimate deterrent. They want to be able to wag that in the face of the United States and say, "We've got it, leave us alone."

Yes, you're hearing somebody who actually believes that Iran might well have a nuclear weapons program embedded in its overall nuclear program telling you to do nothing about it. Try to forestall it; try to intensify diplomacy to the level where it can work, perhaps. But if you fail, that doesn't mean war is the only option.

AMB. FREEMAN: There is a strong resonance here with the American experience during the Cold War, which consisted of a nuclear standoff in which, 17 minutes after someone turned a key in Moscow, between 60 and 80 million Americans would have died. We lived with that, and we managed it, and it was not fatal. My second observation on Wayne's comment is that, in my experience, people who attribute irrationality to foreign leaders and countries do so as an excuse for not taking the time to figure out what motivates them or how they think. It's too easy to say so-and-so is irrational; the only language they understand is the language of death. Generally, that's not true. I would argue that, in fact, Iran has behaved with consummate rationality on quite a range of issues, even if its reasoning processes and its premises are not ones we share.

DR. ANTHONY: What comes immediately to mind is the frame of reference of the child's question, "Daddy, where were you during the war?" In this particular case, inactivity is not an option. Diplomacy, to be sure, is not limited solely to those incumbents — the foreign-affairs practitioners, foreign-service officers, envoys, intermediaries — and the traditional exercise of "good offices" within the U.S. government. By definition, the concepts of citizen and private diplomacy, if not also public diplomacy, encompass the kind of initiative that you mention. Those in government have no patent on the process, no trademark on the technique, no monopoly on the method, no copyright on the concept. An effort such as the one you suggest would at least show concern on the part of an important segment of the American people. It would show courage, conviction and commitment as to the seriousness of this problem. To the extent it would be covered by the media, such a mission would have the potential to italicize, "neonize" and capitalize on the dangers and possibly slow if not complicate the rush to war. It would contribute to a more robust and wide-ranging discussion and debate. It would enhance people's knowledge and understanding. I support it.

DR. SEZNEC: I think it would be great to have private diplomacy. It would complicate the rush to war. I think the purpose is to actively do nothing and to actively gain time. It's

very important. I think the countries in the region feel that if we actively do nothing, Iran will collapse sooner or later. So why create an enormous amount of trouble in the meantime for ourselves and for them? They view their own interests first. But I think in this case, their interest goes along with ours.

AMB. FREEMAN: It's not always better to talk than not to talk. It's not better to talk if you don't know what you're saying or what you want to accomplish. There is no consensus in the United States about how to deal with Iran so the issue of private diplomacy is, therefore, inherently exploratory, rather than definitive, at this stage.

Second, we have a tendency to treat Iran as a nuclear problem rather than as a country, and here, I think Wayne said something very important. He raised the issue of security guarantees for Iran. Why is it that Iran seeks nuclear weapons? There are probably quite a number of reasons, but one of them might be to gain the ability to retaliate against the sorts of scenarios that have been outlined.

MR. WHITE: I was the Iraq analyst during the time when Iraq's Osiraq reactor was bombed. At the time, there was absolutely no evidence — good evidence came out later — that Iraq had a nuclear program. The Osiraq project was smothered with IAEA observation, and there were French and Italian contractors on site who had considerable access to what Iraq was doing, the diversion of materials and what have you. The Iranian program isn't that confined; far from it. The Iranians learned the lesson from Iraq's Osiraq disaster, when the Israelis on June 7, 1981, took it out. It was all in one place. Iran's nuclear infrastructure is dispersed throughout the country. So, when you go into Iran after that nuclear infrastructure, you are not making a surgical strike against the capability of that country. You're going to war with Iran.

But Iraq's nuclear program did not start until after Osiraq was bombed. Using nuclear materials that it could acquire and that it had on hand from the bombing of the reactor, it is estimated that they got frightfully close to at least the explosion of a nuclear device around the time they were attacked during the Gulf War. In fact, a crash program was started in order to try to forestall Desert Storm. The IAEA inspectors were astounded at what a country could do, even when deprived of the bulk of its only major nuclear site.

It's the same with Iran. There are a number of technical people, nuclear engineers who have followed proliferation, who say that Iran, even if many of its key targets were taken out, could embark on a crash nuclear-weapons program. In other words, the very thing intended to deter them could propel them forward. You'd be surprised what one can do, once one has achieved the expertise and the world assumes that you're not capable anymore of going for a weapon. It could be that the Iranians would move more rapidly toward a weapon if they were hit than if they were left alone.

AMB. FREEMAN: There is a key point here. Science and technology are in the mind, not in the equipment and the buildings that contain it. Bombing, as we saw after World War II, does not destroy modern societies. They can resurrect themselves very quickly.

Under the heading of Iranian rationality, let me suggest that it is intelligent and rational for the Iranians to have suspended their weapons-development program while they concentrate on the far more expensive and difficult task of building a comprehensive

nuclear fuel cycle. So the fact that they suspended their weapons program does not mean that they don't have the intention of developing a weapon. They certainly have ample reason to develop a weapon, especially in light of the threats which are constantly issued against them.

In this connection, however, we need to recall an unlearned lesson from the Iraq experience: we should be very distrustful of the assertion that a country or its leadership is an imminent threat to others in the region when those in the region do not agree. Iran is not primarily a nuclear problem from the perspective of most countries in the region, with the exception of Israel — an important exception. It is a threat in terms of influence, political power and prestige. Many of its inroads in the region have actually been facilitated, if not actually brokered, by American policy.

This brings me to another observation: The effort to isolate Iran is probably, as it has been in the cases of the Cuban regime and the North Koreans and now Comrade Bob Mugabe in Zimbabwe, the greatest guarantee against regime change due to internal causes. It rallies Iranian nationalism behind the current leadership. It concentrates patronage power in that leadership, and it provides a ready excuse for everything that's going wrong. It can be blamed on foreigners who are attempting to destroy the regime or oppose the country.

All of this does argue that diplomacy of some sort, perhaps with some exploration by private emissaries, might be a better idea than the five options that Professor Ari outlined. In this connection, I note that there has been a very constructive proposal made regionally to deal with the problem of the Iranian nuclear issue, and that is to regionalize the nuclear fuel cycle and ensure that bits and pieces of that process are scattered through the various countries of the Gulf and not concentrated in any one country, meaning Iran.

This proposal, which was made first by the Saudis and has been echoed by some American thinkers, has passed unattended by our government and not much noticed by the think-tank community. Yet, it is an obvious means to diplomatic resolution of a serious issue and likely to be much less unacceptable to Iranians than the earlier effort to bring in the Russians, their traditional enemies, as the guarantors of their nuclear security. So I think a bit of diplomacy might not be a bad thing. Whether it's begun on a private level or is thought of as preventive is really secondary. We need to explore alternatives before we decide either to bomb or do nothing.

Q: What happens if we do nothing, while Israel, afraid that they're going to lose hegemony in the region, attacks, and we agree to provide air-refueling support, which they don't have? We still have a problem, but the problem is not Iran anymore. It's Israel. So if we are to pursue discussions with Iran, what do we talk about? What is their hidden agenda that we haven't hit yet?

AMB. FREEMAN: This raises the question of whether there is a possibility of regional diplomacy of the sort that has been going on in the various instances I mentioned. I would like to ask Professor Ari to comment.

DR. ARI: It is a problem that stems from Iranian activities and the perceptions of Israel. Because Iran is an oil hegemon and a military power, it is perceived as an important threat

to Israel. So this, in the case of Israel, is why it is against Iranian nuclear ambitions. But, as my friends have also said, this problem cannot be solved only by military options. Maybe there are other options that should be taken into account in this process. Economic isolation should be continued, with the support of regional countries and the world — NATO allies and the United Nations. This is as important as military options. Let's talk to them, to prevent a process that escalates into a war and worsens the situation in the region.

But the region is becoming much more active in all manner of diplomacy, with Qatar being involved not too long ago in Lebanon and then Turkey being involved in the Israeli-Syrian negotiations.

DR. SEZNEC: By doing nothing, I think we automatically put diplomacy on the region. I think it is already happening, actually. There are a tremendous number of contacts between the Saudis, in particular, and the Iranians. I'm sure there are contacts between the Turks and the Iranians as well, to see how they can, if not mediate with the United States, at least make Iran feel comfortable in the region. They're trying to open up not only the diplomacy, but also the economy, so that they can help Iran have problems faster in many ways. But the region is becoming much more active in all manner of diplomacy, as Ambassador Freeman mentioned, with Qatar being involved not too long ago in Lebanon and then Turkey being involved in the Israeli-Syrian negotiations. They're dying to become more involved, if we could see that there is any success in it.

DR. ANTHONY: As to whether one or more of the ways in which this confrontation might unfold could become an Israeli problem more than an Iranian problem, the answer is potentially yes, for the following reasons. One is rooted in the fact that this is 2008, the sixtieth anniversary of Israel's founding as a Jewish state. Look at the arithmetic. In exactly half of those 60 years, at many different levels, they were closely intertwined. Strategically, it was seen that, at both ends of the spectrum, the relationship was mutually beneficial, reciprocally rewarding. There are many Israelis who long to return to a similar situation.

Two, there are Israelis like a former longtime Israeli intelligence official and foreign ministry director-general who was asked by an interviewer on a BBC television program that I once watched, "Are there no people on the earth that you trust?" The former official answered, "Yes, one." The interviewer followed up with, "Who?" The former official replied matter-of-factly, "The Persians," the allusion being to the Persian slave Esther and her vital role in the liberation of the Jewish people from Babylon.

Three, during the middle of the Iran-Iraq war, there was what is known in the United States as Conragate and in the region as the Iran-Israel Conragate scandal. The episode was one in which the U.S. government pressured all the GCC Arab countries and many other nations to do whatever they could to ensure that all flows of weapons into Iran were stopped. However, to the astonishment and dismay of virtually everyone in the GCC

region, the United States and Israel were caught red-handed providing American-manufactured arms to Iran.

Four, in the eastern part of the Middle East, Iran remains home to the largest number of Jews who have not yet immigrated to Israel.

Five, there is the question of domestic politics in the United States. This is the so-called “silly season.” Between now and November, the entire House of Representatives is standing for election, together with a third of the membership in the Senate. In addition, by the end of January 2009, the president, by law, and the vice president will step down. How the topic of today’s discussion on war with Iran will play out with the pro-Israeli element in American domestic politics remains to be seen.

Six, there is also the element of the Bahai faith. Among its believers in the United States and those among its remaining adherents in Iran, where the faith began, the Temple Mount in Karmel, Israel, constitutes a link between the peoples of the two countries of which many are unaware.

Seven, Shaul Mofaz, one of Israel’s deputy prime ministers, who is the country’s former minister of defense and was born in Iran, is widely known for being one of Israel’s most hawkish advocates for attacking Iran militarily. His goal, one that he shares with many Israelis and numerous Americans, would be to prevent the Islamic Republic from continuing its nuclear program along the lines it has been pursuing.

Eight, there are Israelis and their American and other supporters who view regime change in Iran as holding out the prospect of replacing it with a government more amenable to Israel, more moderate in its approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict, less supportive of Hezbollah and less likely to continue supporting Hamas.

Lastly, numerous Israeli strategists acknowledge the possible strategic and geopolitical benefits that could follow any shift in attention from the eastern Mediterranean, away from the Israeli-Palestinian and/or Syrian peace process and pressure to withdraw from the settlements in the Israeli-occupied territories. Certainly, if the Tehran regime were to remain in place, Israel would find it far more difficult to accomplish many of these envisioned objectives.

MR. WHITE: We have Iraqi elections coming up, which is one reason why the Iraqis are going to be extremely sensitive on the issues of sovereignty that I referred to. The Iranians have elections coming up. In Israel, we have probably the weakest prime minister in a long time. And so we are seeing diplomacy struggling in the worst possible conditions.

As John Duke Anthony said, the silly season is upon us, and this is very dangerous. We are in the last six months of the presidency most likely to carry out robust military action against Iran, and the election campaign will actually make the population more inclined toward that option, which is an extremely dangerous thing. They feed into each other.

Somebody asked, which is more of a problem, Israel or Iran? I think they’re both a problem. The Israelis are painting themselves into a corner, demanding that certain things be done or else. The Iranians have been painted into a corner by their very vocal president, making the worse threats, existential threats, that Iran has ever made. This makes diplomacy extremely hard work.

But I would like to clear up one thing. There has been some criticism of the “doing

nothing” option. I need to clarify something; “doing nothing” wasn’t my recommendation pure and simple. But if we reach the end of the road, all creative diplomacy has played out, and various parties have painted us into a corner in believing war is the only option, THEN we should do nothing.

AMB. FREEMAN: I think, in fairness, Wayne, you’re not really posing the option of doing nothing. What you’re saying is, if you can’t solve the problem, manage it, which is not the same as doing nothing.

MR. WHITE: Precisely.

Q: In 2003, there was nothing that Saddam Hussein could have done to stop the U.S. attack, short of an unconditional surrender. The war party in the United States that dominated the Bush administration had determined, probably 10 years before, that war with Iraq was necessary. It seems to be the same with Iran, and Iran is even less likely to surrender unconditionally than Saddam Hussein was. I suggest raising the cost to the war party in the United States of going to war with Iran, so that they decide for their own self-interest that they can’t do it.

AMB. FREEMAN: We haven’t discussed this, and I think it’s an interesting point. In the case of the invasion of Iraq, there was a remarkable lack of enthusiasm across the board among professionals in the intelligence community, the military and the diplomatic establishment in Washington. This was done entirely by people who had come in as a result of an election and, arguably, a Supreme Court decision connected with that election, not by the professional bureaucracy. We seem to have a very similar situation now regarding war with Iran. One detects a lot of antipathy among the uniformed military for the prospect of what, as Wayne has pointed out, would be an open-ended conflict with no obvious point of termination.

DR. SEZNEC: How do we deter the war party? How about oil at \$300 a barrel? That’s what would happen, and that means people would start paying very substantially at the pump, like \$10 a gallon. We should probably make clear that’s what would happen. If we start cutting the exports from Iran — that’s 2.8 million barrels a day — and if there are any problems in the Strait of Hormuz, there would be a total net loss to the world market of 16 million barrels a day. That would mean a major world recession. We would probably suffer less than most other countries, because we import maybe two million barrels a day from the Gulf. But the price would go through the roof, and we would end up paying very dearly.

AMB. FREEMAN: The global oil market is like a reservoir into which supplies discharge, and from which we draw what we need. Regardless of whether we are dependant directly on bilateral supplies of oil from the Middle East, we are affected. Everyone is affected by the withdrawal of supply that would be entailed in a conflict.

DR. ANTHONY: Unmentioned thus far is another strategic gambit. It is one that was in play in the lead-up to the American military attack against Iraq. The exact same gambit applies to Iran, only more so. In the period prior to the American-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, I and others sat in countless meetings where specialists argued that the United States should be invading Iran first, Iraq second, Syria third, and either Egypt or

Saudi Arabia fourth or fifth. This school of thought, which favors regime change in Iran, has the following objectives in mind. One is associated with remarks that Vice President Cheney made more than once when he was out of office in the mid-1990s until 2000. During those years, he frequently made reference to what he implied was an American self-inflicted wound. In essence, he would say, it is one thing to be patriotic, another to be idiotic, with regard to keeping ourselves out of Iraq and Iran's economies and energy industries through the sanctions we imposed on Iran unilaterally.

Secondly, associated with the idea of regime change is a variant of what Israeli advocates of attacking Iran envision, namely gratitude for whatever the United States might be able to do in support of a new government coming to power and being recognized by Washington and as many other important countries as possible.

There's also the strategic setback that could be dealt Russia and China. Here the frame of reference is the Defense Policy Guidance of 1992, which Paul Wolfowitz had a major role in drafting when he was still in the Department of Defense in the administration of President George Herbert Walker Bush. When the draft was being processed, and I was invited to the National War College to brief a group of armed forces officers, I was provided an oral summary of the draft and asked to comment. The purpose of the exercise was to ask what would the United States have to have in place by 2020 to remain the world's sole superpower? The answer was continued economic, financial, technological, military and industrial supremacy. One of the most essential requirements to retain supremacy in these five categories of power was held to be adequate amounts of low-cost energy. It was further agreed that key to meeting that objective was ongoing access to the prodigious and relatively inexpensive energy resources of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf.

In these regards, Iran is the last remaining piece on a chess board that relates to all five of the categories of potential power noted. Of the eight countries in the Gulf, it is a matter of no small geostrategic moment that seven are effectively under U.S. influence with regard to regional stability and defense issues. Unlike Iraq, which has only 48 miles of coast on the Gulf and is, therefore, barely a card-carrying Gulf country, Iran has 550 miles of territory on the Gulf coast. Also, Iran potentially has as many as 20 ports that could be developed to expand the level of its imports and exports; in contrast, Iraq has only three ports, two of which are in shallower water that tends to silt up. In addition, Iraq could not be further away in the Gulf from the Hormuz Strait, whereas Iran is directly across from it.

These dimensions make Iran potentially the greater strategic prize than Iraq, if only in part because it is the only country on the planet that lies adjacent to two of the world's last remaining vast energy reservoirs: the Caspian Sea and the Gulf. Iraq has only half that kind of access.

AMB. FREEMAN: I might just note that the American position of preeminence in seven of the eight oil producers has done wonders for the price of gas at the pump.

Q: I came back a few days ago from a trip to the Middle East that included Gaza, the West Bank, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Lebanon organized by the Council for the National Interest Foundation. We asked about Iran, and the answers that we got from

senior officials in the Arab countries that we visited, as well as former officials and others, indicated a certain ambivalence about the Iranian role in the region. On the one hand, they see a positive impact, in the sense that Iran is supporting Hamas, which is considered support for the Palestinian cause, and Hezbollah, which they see as support for Lebanese territorial integrity. On the other hand, they are nervous about this new influence, but they essentially blame the United States because of our policies in Iraq and also because of a certain absence in the region. I just throw this out to perhaps tie in some of the ideas that have been put together about the efficacy of public diplomacy and Iran's role in the region. It's rather ironic that when we have international conferences on solving the problems of the Middle East, Iran is not included in them.

AMB. FREEMAN: Old habits die hard, and there is a propensity among Arab governments and elites in the region to look to the United States to manage problems, as we once did. There is a great deal of distress that we now seem to be the problem in many cases. So I think the ambivalence that you detected toward Iran reflects this factor, as well as others.

DR. ARI: Yes, that is an interesting approach — to find a solution to the problem by an international conference. But the basic problem, I think, stems from the situation caused by the enrichment activities of Iran and how these are perceived from the outside. Some countries, led especially by the United States, think that such a process would create another nuclear power, making a nuclear power of Iran, and that Iran's nuclear program is aimed at acquiring nuclear weapons and not for peaceful purposes.

In the end, finally, Iran will try to produce nuclear arms. So the United States insists that Iran should relinquish this program and not continue to do nuclear enrichment programs. But many states think that peaceful nuclear programs can be accepted. In terms of the 1968 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), to have a nuclear program for peaceful purposes is acceptable. For this reason, an international conference cannot solve the problem, but should be taken into account.

DR. ANTHONY: Those with whom I have spoken in the region from Kuwait to Oman, and everybody in between, couldn't agree more on this. In this regard, two dynamics are in play. Without such serious, effective and measurable diplomatic and related engagement of Iran by the United States, the intraregional atmosphere for foreign and domestic investment will remain less than optimally receptive. At the moment, conditions are less than propitious for the ability of the region's economic managers to maximize their respective preparations and plans as well as their abilities to anticipate and make wiser investment decisions and become more efficient.

Capital tends to be a coward. It does not like to enter places that are seemingly insecure or a different kind of oil — turmoil — appears likely to occur. So a manner and extent of engagement that's serious and not pro forma is what is desired from one end of the region to the other.

Another aspect of the need for bold and decisive diplomatic movement by the United States has to do with the American community, which is growing and robust in these countries. Whereas within the GCC region there were 500 U.S. companies as recently as three years ago, there are now 750 companies. When the United States is seen to be

doing the right thing in the right way at the right time for the right reasons with the right people, it is much easier for Americans living and working in these countries to be trusted. When the opposite is the case, a consequence is often one of dire implications for American assets and interests in the region.

Q: I think there is a lot of wisdom in Mr. White's earlier remarks about what he called the do-nothing option. I don't think there is a realistic military option for the elimination of Iran's nuclear program. You can destroy facilities that you know about, but the know-how is in the minds of people, and that program would almost certainly be rebuilt underground and would lead to a nuclear weapon, if we were to attack. So really nothing short of the occupation of Iran could accomplish an elimination of the program, and that's certainly beyond Israel's capability, and even beyond ours. I think you're right that an Iranian nuclear attack could be deterred, and that those risks could be managed, but I also think it probably would not end the spread of nuclear weapons in the region. And an Iranian nuclear program would raise the risk that other countries would pursue their own nuclear programs. It would raise the risks of accidents and of the transfer of technology and perhaps the loss of control of materials or weapons in Iran.

Second, the situation highlights that the only existential threat to Israel is nuclear weapons in the hands of a hostile country. So I'm wondering why it doesn't occur to Israel to put its own nuclear program as a bargaining chip on the table? Certainly, it's thinking mostly about its nuclear weapons as a deterrent against attack, but there's obviously the possibility that deterrence can fail.

MR. WHITE: One of the major problems associated with allowing Iran to become armed with nuclear weapons is nuclear proliferation. Anyone would oppose proliferation anywhere and try to stop that. In fact, my personal fear, and the fear of a number of my colleagues in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research as far back as the late '90s, was that, if Iran acquired nuclear capability, Saudi Arabia would be next. People would say, how could that happen? The Saudis don't have a nuclear program. They'd have to start it from the ground up; they'd be vulnerable to Israeli bombing; they're much closer and an easier target. No, they would buy them. They would buy them from Pakistan, and buy enough Pakistani nuclear personnel in order to maintain them and instruct the Saudis in their use and maintenance, and then to construct large billboards in various parts of the kingdom in Farsi saying, "We've got it, leave us alone."

So, there is a very serious risk that there could be proliferation. But one of the problems we have is that Iran has gone in this direction, and some people would say, "Nothing is proven." Well, if you accept the most recent, November 2007, National Intelligence Estimate claiming that Iran stopped its program in 2003, that means it had a program to stop. I know there's some frustration among the drafters that people who have said that this was a deliberate attack on the administration haven't read the small print. The head of the National Intelligence Council, Tom Fingar, along with the Energy Department, which also dissented in the 2002 WMD estimate, take a footnote in the text and say, "Whoa, wait a minute. We have less confidence than the rest of the drafters that that program has been stopped in its entirety, because of certain gaps in the intelligence."

So, they had a program, and to some degree, that program itself was a product of regional proliferation. Tehran viewed Israel as a dangerous enemy that could menace and attack Iran, along with its ally the United States. Pakistan, next door, had a bomb. The Iranians knew they were in a very dangerous neighborhood. In fact, the Israelis and other parties in the region — even before this arose as a major issue — were just as concerned about Iran's development of long-range ballistic missiles. There's a lot of concern now because they could be married to a nuclear weapon. In fact, one of the allegations against the Iranians is that they were engaging in nose-cone design for a re-entry vehicle for one of those Shahab-series missiles.

But the origin of the Shahab program was not nuclear fear. It was the pounding that Iran took from Iraq's more advanced ballistic-missile capabilities during the Iran-Iraq War and the determination that no one would ever again outgun Iran in the missile department. There is a proliferation domino effect that we have to be concerned about in the region.

On the Israeli program, the Israelis will not put their program on the table. I think they've made it apparent that it is non-negotiable. They would, in fact, prefer that most people think it doesn't exist. This seems absurd, of course, because it does, but they keep it as shadowy as possible. They have no intention, from what I've heard, of ever putting that on the table, for example, in the context of the Egyptian proposal that's been on the table for 20 years: to declare a nuclear-free region. This would, of course, make the most sense all around. But the main obstacle has been Israel, which, with its small size, views a nuclear counterstrike as its ace in the hole. One thing has been unfortunate, however. Relying on a military solution to its problems has sucked Israel into two recent asymmetric wars, with the Palestinians and the Lebanese, to which nuclear weapons are not a solution at all.

An unfortunate aspect of American policy in the region is the increasingly militarized U.S. approach to problems. The second exercise of U.S. military might in the region after the first Gulf War in '91 — the 2003 war — involved the United States in a major asymmetric challenge that its regular military was ill-equipped to handle for the better part of four or five years. **AMB. FREEMAN:** Technology diffuses, regardless of efforts to halt it. The Chinese invented export controls in 400 B.C., and since then, various countries have tried to inhibit the export and diffusion of technology. Always, they have failed. There have been efforts since the twelfth century at arms control on a multilateral basis. They have inhibited the diffusion of dangerous technology, but not ultimately succeeded in halting it.

The Israelis may, in fact, have it right. They may have invented something that might be called "preventive proliferation." They anticipated eventual proliferation and therefore, jumped the gun and began it, and seem to be prepared to live with this logic. Ultimately, they have to be prepared to manage the consequences of their own nuclear program: proliferation elsewhere in the region. There is no prospect that one country can retain a nuclear monopoly in its region when it is engaged in conflicts with all of the other countries of the region. This brings me to the final point. In the end, guns don't kill people; people kill people. I hate that phrase, but it is correct. Security issues and the concerns that they drive are what create weapons-development programs and drive defense procurement — unless, of course, you develop a military-industrial complex with an insatiable appetite for funding and a marvelous imagination about the weapons systems that that funding might purchase. That might be an

exception. But this problem, like so many others, is going to have to be managed.

I don't agree that the only existential threat to Israel, by the way, is nuclear attack. I think the greatest existential threat to Israel is Israel's own inability to use anything but military means to manage its security problems. These ultimately can't be solved by military means, and they threaten the very existence of Israel. Israel's "success" in its settlements policy, it seems to me, has made a two-state solution essentially impossible, and raises existential questions about the compatibility of a Jewish state with the other values that Israel aspires to embody.

Q: Since Iran is not doing well economically, and if the U.S. decides to change its foreign policy and engage with Iran, would trade be an option to gain leverage over their nuclear-weapons program? And if that is an option, what could we trade with Iran?

DR. SEZNEC: One of the key items on the table is that Iran is trying to join the World Trade Organization (WTO). And for Iran to have successful development in industry, as the Saudis have today, they need to be members of the WTO. Otherwise, their products, assuming they could produce them and sell them to China, would be at the mercy of all the WTO requirements. They would not be able to compete with major WTO members. This would be a major bargaining chip. And it would make a big difference. I'm not sure it would sway the likes of Ahmadinejad and his ilk, but there is a whole community in Tehran that would really like to see trade come back. They would be willing to sacrifice a lot for that.

If I may mention another thought on the nuclear issue, we cannot really stop it. But we can slow it down, making it much more expensive. If at the same time that we had a policy of making these acquisitions very expensive, while decreasing the price of oil very substantially, that would hurt Iran. They wouldn't have the means and would have to really sacrifice a great deal in order to continue their nuclear program.

But how do we reduce the price of oil without taking the brunt of it? We would have to increase interest rates to bring the dollar up without taking our economy into recession. That would bring the price of oil down, but I don't think we are ready to do that either. In any event, I think that would be a possibility: keep the nuclear cost very high, but cut Iran's income substantially. But the cutting of their income is on our shoulders, and I'm not sure we're willing to do that.

AMB. FREEMAN: I think you have to consider the nature of economic power when you talk about leverage. Economic power attracts; it builds relationships. It's like a string; it can pull others with it but you can't push on it. If you have an economic relationship, you can threaten to cut it, or you can actually cut it and then drive the two parties at the ends of the string apart. But you lose your leverage as you cut it, because you create a new situation that people adjust to. This, of course, is one of the problems with our tendency to base our policy on sanctions. In the case of Iran, we don't have much of an economic relationship to leverage. We have excluded ourselves from that market. I think what Jean-François says is absolutely correct: Iran would like to be reintegrated into the global economy and join the WTO. This is as much for acceptance as anything else, but it also is related to their own economic health at home, which they value, and which we have hurt by our financial sanctions and the other punitive measures. If you give up your relationship, you give up your influence.

MR. WHITE: At a time when there are a lot of countries that aren't really that interested in American trade, Iran happens to be an exception. Iran is very interested in certain things that the United States has to offer. Chas. is absolutely right; the United States has done little more than take itself out of the Iranian picture. The Iranians very much want us in. In fact, the collapse of the Conoco deal, which came so close to fruition in the 1990s at a time when it could have been a breakthrough — and people did not want to see that breakthrough and made it a huge target to short-circuit — shows the extent to which the Iranians want the United States in its oil industry. The Iranians believe that the United States can find oil and natural gas and develop it the best. It has tremendous reserves, as was pointed out, from the Caspian Sea all the way down through the Gulf. These are unexplored and undeveloped, in part, because the United States won't do it itself and will do everything it can to interfere with others doing it.

Developing Iran's energy potential also will allow Iran to get into the European market more than she has. Of course, we have been ignored. This is what you read a lot about: this country or that country has ignored American sanctions and is now doing business with Iran. The fact is a lot of countries have not ignored them, and feel uncomfortable dealing with the Iranians and what that might mean for relations with Washington.

Iran has suffered considerably because of the lack of trade with the United States. There is a huge opportunity there, if the Iranians really thought we were going to come through with the goods. This is why, even though I do not want to deemphasize public discussion with Iran, I think that's terrific. But it's ok. It often leads the way to what I'm interested in. Nonetheless, the Iranians want to see the goods, and that means U.S. government engagement. Too many times, when the United States has promised rapprochement with a power and then gotten what it wants, it has forgotten its original obligations. The most recent case is Libya. Although Libya agreed to give up its WMD, it still is under the impression that it got short-changed.

AMB. FREEMAN: In fact, Libya got virtually nothing, and it is wriggling very hard, as we speak, toward getting off the hook, out of disgruntlement with the absence of benefit from the deals that it made.

DR. ANTHONY: Wayne White was quite correct to recall the Conoco deal in 1995, roughly \$2.3 billion in value, to develop oil and gas in the South Pars field offshore from Iran. The Israeli lobby was adamantly opposed to the deal and put enormous pressure on the Clinton White House. As a result, in March 1995, Clinton used executive privilege to cancel the concession. Two months later, in May, he issued another executive order, in which he inserted a territoriality clause in the sanctions against Iran. This was aimed at preventing other countries — among them China, India, Japan, and South Korea — from investing more than \$40 million in Iran's energy industries lest they risk incurring opposition from the United States.

In contrast, the sanctions against Iraq were universally agreed to and applied through the UN Security Council. The additional sanctions against Iran were imposed exclusively by the United States. It's only been since 2006 that the UN Security Council has joined in on various sanctions against Iran. When that happened, there was widespread sentiment within the American energy industry that this policy must not be allowed to stand.

Not least among the reasons noted at the time, and continuously so until the present, is that the United States is the world's single largest consumer, importer and waster of energy, as well as the loudest crybaby with regard to America's terms of trade with the oil it imports. The view among many since then has long been that Iraq and Iran are two of the largest pools of remaining hydrocarbon deposits on the planet. This was in keeping with the views of Dick Cheney in the 1990s, remarking on the fact that we not only kept ourselves out of both markets in the course of shooting ourselves in the foot, but demonstrated a remarkable propensity to reload faster than anybody else.

In essence, from an overall economic and energy perspective, there is a pronounced disconnect between official U.S. government policy and support of sanctions and the American private sector. It's not just the energy companies that are against the sanctions. They and many others see Iran potentially as a vast marketplace. Little wonder why. It has more than three times the population of Iraq, the world's second-largest gas reserves, and its third-largest oil reserves.

In addition, many in the financial services industry would love to underwrite the reconstruction, modernization and development of Iran's economy and the reintroduction into it of American expertise in terms of design, engineering, procurement and construction. So we're dealing with the implications of what we did in 1995 in the course of unilaterally imposing the economic sanctions. We're paying the price big-time, certainly in our private sector, for having done so.

Q: There's been lots of talk about the eventual economic collapse of the Iranian regime. What will that actually look like? A collapsing Iranian regime probably wouldn't be content to simply fade into obscurity and let the country crumble around it. Do you see it lashing out to grab resources when it's pushed into a corner? What's the long-term strategic benefit to the United States to either reach out with an economic relationship or to contain an economic collapse?

AMB. FREEMAN: Nobody's talking, by the way, about the collapse of Persia, which has been around for quite a long while and is likely to continue to be around for a very long time. What we're talking about is the existing regime decaying from within.

DR. ARI: Yes, it's a good option to find a solution, but there are some problems, because the oil price is increasing. Before Ahmadinejad came to power, the Iranian economy was very weak and the petrol price was half what it is today, around \$50 or \$60 a barrel. Now it's twice that, so it has strengthened the Iranian economy, and now internal responses or reactions against the regime have been reduced. These are very important dilemmas which we should solve. Yes, there should be economic isolation of Iran with the assistance of neighboring countries, as well as China, Russia and the Western countries that have important trade relations with Iran. As other panelists have said, the United States itself doesn't have any economic relations to use as economic leverage against this country.

DR. SEZNEC: I don't think the Iranian regime will collapse immediately. It takes a long, long time. I don't think Iran would become North Korea and let people starve to death. But there could be massive riots and widespread disagreement with the regime. That would put the regime under a lot of pressure and stop it from doing things like giving

money to Hezbollah and people of this nature. An economic collapse would imply that the goals of the present regime would be very much impeded. That could bring a change, but I think it would probably bring a hardening of the regime, marginalizing it even further.

DR. ANTHONY: Yes, and using the word and the concept of collapsed regime, this is a close cousin to induced, provocative, externally stimulated regime change. The two would go hand-in-hand by being domestically induced, because of the shambles of the economy and the plummeting material well-being and standard of living of the Iranian people, saying enough is enough, et cetera. That would still fit with the end game desired by those in the U.S. administration who want to see this collapse. And it would dovetail nicely with the Defense Policy Guidance of 1992, which envisioned America's serious competitors between then and 2020 primarily as Russia and China. Both of them are involved in Iran's economy big-time, and likely to be even bigger time in their involvement in Iran. So this is a ticking clock that weighs negatively on American strategic war hawks if the regime doesn't collapse or is ongoing. They need to find a way for the United States to continue being the world's sole superpower.

There is a consensus among many strategic analysts that this is China's century, but that's a consensus of the mind. It's in the realm of ideas and objectives. It can be avoided, not by accident or by coincidence, but if you work hard to preclude it from happening, and one way to preclude it from happening, certainly or sooner, would be to deny the gains that China and Russia currently have, and America does not have, in Iran.

MR. WHITE: The irony is that the more emphasis the United States, in particular, places on effecting regime change in Iran from the outside, the more it enhances the longevity of the very regime it seeks to overthrow, remove or reduce in power.

AMB. FREEMAN: This may or may not be China's century. I think rather that Fareed Zakaria in his new book on the post-American world probably gets it right: It's not the decline of the United States that's occurring as much as it's the rise of the rest. In that connection, the United States is having to adjust to a difficult change of circumstances in which we can no longer control and dictate the course of events at the regional level because of developments within regions and because there are now other extra-regional actors. China, for example, is building a huge automotive industry in Iran, which is an unexpected development. And Russia remains heavily involved, increasingly, in the region and with Iran. The EU has its own ideas, as do India and Japan, with respect to Iran.

We can't always set regional agendas anymore. We've cited some examples today. The United States is no longer driving regional events and, indeed, is excluded from the processes that drive those events. All of this leads to great frustration and the natural instinct, when one is frustrated, is to lash out. I'm very surprised nobody advocated military strikes on Iran today. I suppose they didn't because it's fairly obvious that such strikes wouldn't solve the problem, would create additional problems, would lead to a wider threat against American and other interests, and would lead to a war with no obvious end. Aside from that, a military strike on Iran is a splendid idea. There is a chance in the next six months that we will find out just how splendid it is. For my part, I hope not.