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WHAT TO DO ABOUT IRAN?

AMERICAN & GULF PERSPECTIVES

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. POLLACK: (in progress) -- Center with the Saban Center here in Washington in the hopes of someday, someday soon, making this into one think tank simply separated by 6,000 miles. And today is -- I see another small but important step forward in making that transition. We are hoping that in the future we will have more and more of these kind of events where we will have both speakers and audiences in both Doha and here in Washington.

Our thinking was that the topic of Iran was a great way to begin this entire process. Iran is obviously an issue of tremendous interest to audiences both here in the United States and to those in the Gulf. And, of course, it is critically important that Washington and the Gulf synchronize their policies toward Iran to maximize our ability to influence Iranian behavior. And so we thought it especially useful to hold a session today to inaugurate what hopefully will be the first of many such meetings by trying to get a sense of Washington's views on Iran and where Washington is moving on its thinking about Iran policy, and the Gulf's views on Iran and where the Gulf is moving on Iran policy to get a sense of what the Venn diagram between the two regions looks like. Where are there areas of overlap? Where are there areas where the allies or sets of allies will be able to find common cause? And where are there likely to be differences? Where may we wind up going in separate or even opposite directions?

Because we do have two different audiences and two

different sets of speakers, we're going to choreograph this a little bit. And again, I hope you will all bear with us. This is our maiden effort and there may be some kinks in the process. But the way that we're going to do things is we are going to sequence both the speakers and the questions. We'll start out here with Suzanne Maloney speaking. Then we will have one of the speakers in Doha. I don't yet know which one, so that will be a surprise for me. Then we will have Bruce Riedel here in Washington speaker -- speak. And then the other speaker in Doha. We'll then open things up to questions, and the way we're going to do things is I will take two questions here in Washington; Hady will take two questions there in Doha. We will put all four of those questions to all four of the speakers starting with the two speakers in Doha and then the two speakers in Washington. And then we'll take another round of four questions, this time starting with two in Doha and then two here in Washington. And so we're hoping to have a conversation back and forth across 6,000 miles of fiber optic cable that will hopefully go as seamlessly as we can possibly imagine, taking questions back and forth as we go. So here in Washington I will be keeping a list of questions. There in Doha, Hady will be keeping a list of questions.

So the last thing I need to do here is simply to introduce the two speakers that I have here with me at the table and then to turn things over to Hady to do the same for the Doha speakers and the Doha audience. Here I am delighted to have with me two of our most distinguished senior fellows. Sitting immediately to my left

is Suzanne Maloney. I think Suzanne is well known to all of you for her long and excellent work on Iran. She has worked on Iran in the academic community, in the energy sector, and in government, as well. Having done her time as a member of the policy planning staff at the State Department. She is currently working on a book on Iran's political economy, and after that in (inaudible) will be turning to look at the political economy of the Gulf region.

To Suzanne's left, my far left, is Bruce Riedel. Bruce, I think, is well known to you for his wide range of writings on the Middle East. Bruce, of course, had a very long and distinguished career in government before coming to us several years ago. Bruce served at the CIA, at the Department of Defense, twice at the National Security Council, including as senior director and special assistant to the president for Near East and South Asian affairs. Since coming to us he has worked on almost the entire gamut of issues related to the Middle East, but his focus most recently has been on al-Qaeda and on Pakistan and Afghanistan. And he's currently finishing up a book on Pakistan.

So with that, from Washington, Hady, I will now turn it over to you make the introductions from Doha.

MR. AMR: Thank you, Ken. And thank you -- I also want to welcome the audience here. Can everybody hear me? Can you hear me in Washington?

SPEAKER: (inaudible)

MR. AMR: Great. I just want to introduce -- across the

table is an old friend, Mehran Kamrava. Mehran is an expert on Iran and also an expert on the Arab world and the GCC. He's the author in 2008 of Iran's Intellectual Revolution published by Cambridge and has been based here in the Gulf for at least as long as I have. For at least three years. Four years or three years? Three years. Mehran was also one of the speakers at our very first event that we held at the Brookings' Doha Center in 2007 also on Iran and also on the Iranian nuclear issue. So we're pleased to have him back almost three years later.

To my left is Dr. Mahjoob Zweiri. He's also based here at Qatar at Qatar University. He was previously at the University of Jordan at the Center for Strategic Studies and prior to that was at Durham University and has his Ph.D. from the University of Tehran.

Both of our speakers here in Doha will give us the perspective of the GCC on issues facing Iran and so -- and before I turn it over to Ken I should also mention, you know, Ken, who is the moderator of this event, also has a distinguished history on Iran writing the Persian Puzzle: the Conflict Between Iran and America, and also more recently as the lead author on Which Path Persian: Options for New American Strategy Toward Iran.

What am I doing here? I'm just a moderator from Doha. So, Ken, I'll turn it over to you.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Hady. And, of course, you're not just the moderator; you're also the director of our Brookings Doha Center and there are few positions of greater importance on a daily

basis of Brookings, especially given the importance of our relationship with the BDC. So thank you for joining us.

Okay. I'd like to get right to it with our speakers. I'd like to ask Suzanne to begin. And if each of the speakers could take about 10 or 12 minutes to give some opening views and then we will open it up to questions. So Suzanne, the floor is yours.

MS. MALONEY: Thank you, Ken. Thank you, Hady. To those of you in Doha, thank you so much for coming out in the evening after what I suspect has been a long and hot day there. And to those of you here in Washington, thank you as well. And please note that there's coffee and some pastries right around the corner if you should feel the need.

I have the challenge of trying to kick off both our inaugural discussion held jointly with Doha early in the morning somewhat here and people may not be fully caffeinated and yet engaged. But I do have, of course, the easier task of I think the bunch which is that Ken had asked me to say just a few words about what the current state of U.S. policy and the current debate looks like here in Washington, leaving the greater challenge of what comes next to my much wiser colleague, Bruce Riedel and to our panelists in Doha. I will be brief because I expect to learn much more from the other speakers than I can contribute here at this moment.

But I wanted to start off by just making what I think is a sort of obvious statement, particular coming from someone who spent a couple of years serving in the State Department during the Bush

Administration, which is that the current policy, the shape of the 15 months of Obama Administration policy toward Iran has looked strikingly similar to the second term of the Bush Administration. I don't offer that as critique or praise of either administration, but simply as I think an observation that speaks to the limitations of our options given the field of play that we're dealing with. There have been some obvious important nuances to what has been described by this Administration as a dual track policy of persuasion and pressure toward Iran to bring Iran to the negotiating table to address the nuclear program and the range of other American concerns with respect to Iranian behavior in the region and Iranian behavior toward its own population.

Those nuances, obviously, include at least if we were to believe the press reports, several direct communications between President Obama and his counterpart on the Iranian side, the Iranian Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, as well as references in some of the public discourse which suggested a different tone in the U.S. policy debate toward Iran. Specific references in the same 2009 no ruse message videotaped message by President Obama himself to the Islamic Republic of Iran, a different tone than the sort of implications of regime change which were almost impossible to rest from the Bush Administration rhetoric on Iran.

Despite this attempt at a new opening, despite what has been I think a remarkable effort to improve the diplomatic landscape on Iran, the outcome of the Obama Administration's first 15 months

has been equally as frustrating as the Bush Administration second term. This dual-track policy of engagement and pressure, offering to come to the bargaining table while demonstrating and reiterating and foreshadowing the prospect that there will be severe penalties to pay for the Iranian leadership if, in fact, there isn't a real willingness to deal on the nuclear program has not yet produced either a reciprocal willingness from the Iranians to make significant or to sign off on any concessions, or it has not produced the sort of ongoing process that would have given rise to expectations that the negotiating process was going to be one that if not fruitful in the short term could at least be a process with the administration that the U.S. could invest in.

There have been a number of critiques from this side. Critiques from both sides of the political aisle of the Obama Administration's approach. I frequently hear from those who believe that engagement was not, in fact, pursued as strenuously and as wholeheartedly it might have been; that, in fact, had the Administration done more, it would still be possible to bring Iran to the table if there hadn't been the early foreshadowing of the next stage of the policy, i.e., the coercive sanctions phase that we now find ourselves in. I also hear criticism from those who say we should be making clear that the door is still open to engagement. And I think you heard a little bit of that in some of the recent statements of Secretary Clinton and others -- that in fact the purpose of our kind, coercive approach is in fact to return to the

bargaining table. So to some extent some of those criticisms are being heard and responded to on the part of the Administration.

Obviously, there are equally forceful criticisms here in Washington from the other side of the debate, which argue that in fact, particularly given the events -- the epic events of the past year within Iran's internal politics -- that engagement was a foolish venture from the start and became that much more unrealistic after the protests over the perceptions strongly held by a wide range of the Iranian population that the elections last June had been rigged. These arguments suggest that we have waited too long; that the efforts to reset the relationship with Russia and others have not involved enough heavy lifting by the Administration to demand that, in fact, we have a greater degree of cooperation and an international cohesion on the issue of potential pressure points for Iran and sanctions; that there is more that we could do unilaterally. There is more that we could do with our allies outside of the U.N. Security Council process and that we've gotten ourselves trapped in a process much as the Bush Administration did after the 2006 offer to negotiate was apparently rebuffed by the Iranians. The successive debates and negotiations over Security Council resolutions become a policy unto themselves because they require so much heavy lifting, so much investment of time and energy from various elements of the bureaucracy, but also from senior U.S. policymakers who spend a lot of their time on the phone with their counterparts in Russia, China, Europe, and elsewhere, trying to push

the sanctions' debate forward just a little bit.

And that, of course, leaves us with this sort of "what comes next" looming very large over even the current phase when we are at least some weeks away in the view of most from another round of Security Council sanctions. And that is the likelihood that the debate now, this binary choice between persuasion and coercion, between engagement and sanctions, may move to another binary choice which is going to be much more difficult to debate publicly and much more difficult to countenance in terms of the potential implications for the range of other U.S. interests in the region. A binary choice between containment of a nuclear Iran or military force to forestall that eventuality.

Let me just say a few words about why it is, I think, the Obama Administration has made less headway than certainly many of its senior partisans, some of whom used to sit in these chairs and in this building might have believed when they went into office. I think part of this is something that we've seen almost with a regularity in the past 30 years of U.S. policy toward Iran which is that each Administration has come in with a sort of set of big ideas about how to handle Iran. And when they run aground is when they hit reality. The reality of an Iran which is intensely unpredictable as we saw in a very striking way last June. The reality of Iran that we really don't have a very good handle on in terms of the specific debates within the halls of power in terms of who it is actually who influences the ultimate decision maker, the

Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the sort of reality that is the limitations on honeymoon of a new administration. This was an administration that came in obviously on the motif of change, and I think that there was at least the perception that this new approach itself would create real momentum. Real momentum for offers of engagement that hadn't proven very interesting when it was the Bush Administration. Real momentum to bring allies onboard with sanctions in a way that those same allies had rebuffed the prior administration.

And the reality is that ultimately that honeymoon is short lived. The boost of being a new, popular American president only takes you so far. And ultimately, even the real shift in a relationship -- and I listened to the folks here, Fiona Hill and Steve Pifer and others who focus on Russia, who suggested, in fact, the reset was -- has been a very meaningful shift in U.S.-Russian relationships. But it has not overcome what has been, at least a sort of time-tested, Russian approach to Iran, maximizing their options, and an investment in the strategic relationship with Iran. And a reluctance to embrace a really hard-line policy toward Iran. And so ultimately, the honeymoon meets the slightly divergent national interests of some of our international partners.

Just a couple of other comments on the limitations of our policy and why it is that this dual track approach hasn't proven anymore successful for the Obama Administration than its predecessor. The other piece to it obviously is that Iran is --

like it or not, whether we deliberately link it or not -- caught and meshed in the web of our other initiatives and interests in the region. Our efforts to make progress on a peace process which have not gone nearly as far as the Administration might have hoped. Our efforts to address the issues in Iraq, Afghanistan, and obviously to a greater degree than today, now Pakistan as well, are all interlinked with Iran. And our difficulty -- our tools are limited by our need to take into account all of these other sets of crises. And by the lack of momentum, the administration has been able to acquire overall across the region.

And finally, I think there is the open question of Iranian internal politics. And we're here today to discuss U.S. policy, to discuss the Gulf view, and I don't want to sidetrack us to great length to where is Iran and who rules Iran, and what are their perceptions. But it is undeniable that we're dealing with leadership today, different I would argue in its complexion and in the nature of the debates. That is, much more difficult to engage. Difficult to engage because it's less well known. Its many actors are less well known. And difficult to engage because of the political implications of engaging from here.

And so it has become that much more difficult to persuade these folks, whose level of mistrust, whose interest and willingness to put themselves out on the line, to engage, to deal directly with Washington, is certainly less than the balance of the array of power that existed in Iran five or eight years ago.

Let me just say one final thing on the issue of the Gulf, which is I think that the Washington relationship and approach for the Gulf -- here's a dualistic message. And if that's my theme, we have a dualistic policy. We have potentially a different dualistic choice. I think we also have a sort of twofold set of communications from the Gulf which complicate our relationship and our cooperation on Iran, which is we hear a very hard-line message in terms of rhetoric on the Iranian nuclear program. And we have had some very meaningful and important cooperation. But in terms of the relationship between the Gulf and Iran, it has not been as directly impacted by the level of cooperation. We've not seen, for example, Gulf States yet willing to potentially jeopardize either their political relationship or their economic relationship in the case of say the recent Kuwaiti negotiations on a potential gas import from Iran with their northern neighbor. And that makes this sort of trilateral relationship -- trilateral dynamic between the U.S., the Gulf, and Iran -- I think a real area of interest and importance for ongoing policy toward Iran.

Thank you.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Suzanne.

All right, Hady, over to you for (inaudible).

Mehran, please.

MR. KAMRAVA: Thank you. We just heard a very thorough and insightful analysis of some of the frustrations of both this and the previous Administration in dealing with Iran. And my brief is

to look at Gulf perceptions of U.S.-Iran relationship. But I want to start by looking at Gulf perceptions of U.S.-Iran relations from a slightly different angle and also as a segue to what Suzanne just said.

The primary reason for the failure of containment policies, which Suzanne so eloquently described, is the fact that the United States has refused to accept strategic realities. We just heard a very articulate discussion of strategic objectives as seen through the eyes of Washington with very little regard to circumstances and conditions here on the ground. And so when we look at actual existing strategic positions and priorities by the Gulf States, as well as Gulf States' relationship with Iran, we see why some American objective have proven such dismal failures. Whether it is in regards to -- whether it was the objective of regime change when it came to the Bush Administration or the Obama Administration's undecided and halfhearted attempts at some sort of lackluster dialogue with Iran. And so those are some of the primary reasons or the primary (inaudible) Gulf relations with Iran.

We also heard from Suzanne a very thorough and insightful list of some of the frustrations that the Obama Administration has experienced in sending signals to Iran. I think it is also fair to say that the Iranians have expressed or experienced their own frustrations in sending signals to the Obama Administration that the Obama Administration, for various structural reasons, has been unable to reciprocate or understand. And interestingly, just last

week the White House announced that it is indeed in possession of the latest letter by Ahmadinejad to the Obama Administration. Now, we can get into the failures of Iran's diplomacy, but that's beside the point. I think what's important to bear in mind is that there are frustrations on both sides, not just the Americans are frustrated by the Iranians' inability to commit to a certain course of action, but I think looking at it from Tehran's perspective, there are also frustrations from that side.

Now, let's look at it from the Gulf perspective and Gulf perceptions of U.S.-Iran relations. There are two levels. One is a macro level of analysis that we need to look at where we are looking at basically -- if we look at the GCC, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, we're looking at a small -- at a number of small states. And as such, the small states have to pursue specific policies that would enable them to survive. Small states pursue survival strategies and moderate their foreign policies accordingly, particularly if these small states are in a rough neighborhood. And so we need to keep in mind that when we look at the GCC we're basically looking at countries like Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE, which in the grand scheme of things are small states and so small states pursue specific policies and have a specific range of policy options open to them that may not necessarily be available to larger countries.

Then we also need to look at micro level. And we see that when we look at micro level, each of these small states, again with

the exception of Saudi Arabia, is pursuing a highly nuanced, highly differentiated approach, in its policy dealings with whether it is - whether the United States or Iran based largely -- driven by internal priorities, domestic policy priorities and options, as well as other larger international and geostrategic considerations. Take, for example, Saudi Arabia, which isn't a small state, but nevertheless Saudi Arabia is a very important member -- or it's the super power of the Arabian peninsula or at least things of itself as the Super Power of the Arabian Peninsula.

And we see an interesting set of dynamics in relation to Saudi Arabia. Up until 10, 15 years ago, Saudi Arabia considered itself as one of the diplomatic pillars of the Middle East, alongside with Egypt and others. And all of a sudden Saudi Arabia has to contend with this upstart in the foreign policy arena which is Qatar. And, of course, Saudi Arabia's relationship with Iran, the United States, and the rest of the world are influenced by the dynamics of its relationship and its tensions with Qatar, with the UAE, and its relationship with Bahrain and so on and so forth. So I think we need to make sure, again, these are some of the intricacies which Washington has often overlooked, wanting to push or impose on these Gulf States, one line of policy objectives that, of course, these states have often been reluctant. And Suzanne herself mentioned again very insightfully some of the difficulties that the United States has had in trying to bring onboard the GCC in following -- in toeing Washington's line.

So, very quickly let me mention some of the issues that are relevant to each of the Gulf States insofar as policy towards U.S.-Iran tensions or lack of relations are concerned. In Saudi Arabia -- Saudi Arabia has again viewed itself as one of those diplomatic pillars and its relations with Iran and its relations with the United States are defined as such. It is -- there are some policy debates, or at least there are rumors of internal foreign policy debates within the Saudi political establishment, some advocating a tougher line in relation to Iran, particularly when it comes to Iran's position and Iran's policies in relation to Iraq. But again, the Saudis are -- all of the Gulf States are either cursed or blessed by geography and they cannot avoid Iran or cannot afford to see Iran through the eyes of Washington. And so they have to see it accordingly.

Bahrain, Kuwait, and the UAE have pursued a policy of bandwagoning. This is a policy that small states often adopt. They bandwagon. They basically allow a super power or a regional power to do much of their foreign policy bidding for them, at least in security issues and in the security arena. And so we see that particularly when it comes in the case of Bahrain, oftentimes Bahrain allows Saudi Arabia to set the tone. Of course, don't mean to ignore Bahraini sovereignty or internal policy objectives and initiatives within Bahrain, but oftentimes Bahrain waits to see what the Saudi line is and how can we moderate ourselves accordingly.

Kuwait, again, has -- is in the process of purchasing LNG

and in the past has bought water from Iran. Again, this is one of those realities that you've got to deal with the giant neighbor up north. But in many ways Kuwait, Bahrain, and the UAE have adopted for what might be called bandwagoning. They've kind of allowed -- they've told -- they've been much closer in their policy orientations to the American policy objectives when it comes to Iran.

And interestingly, the UAE has been much more assertive in relation to Iran because of the dispute over the three islands in the Gulf. And so the UAE of all the three small countries -- Bahrain, Kuwait -- has been much more assertive. And interestingly, with the financial and economic decline of Dubai and Dubai's inability now to pursue a more autonomous foreign policy of its own as compared to three, four years ago what it was doing, now, of course, Abu Dhabi is going to become, in my opinion, much more assertive when it comes to its relations with Iran and much less eager to flex its muscle diplomatically. Of course, not militarily.

Qatar and Oman, on the other hand, have pursued much different policies. Qatar has not pursued bandwagoning. Interesting, if you look at Qatar-Iranian relations you see that there have been an unusually high number of expressions of fraternity, expressions of friendship over the last couple of years in particular. There have been a number of high level visits with the members of the Ruling Family visiting Tehran. Iranian high officials -- high ranking officials visiting Doha. Qatar has

pursued not necessarily bandwagoning, but a much more nuanced policy. On the one hand it's home to the largest American airbase in the world, while on the other hand it's got extremely friendly relations with Iran.

Again, interesting here, you see the survival strategies of a small state trying to ensure its survival being caught between a rock and a hard place, those two being Iran and Saudi Arabia. Of course, again, I call our attention to the fact that each of these states has their own issues with one another. They're not one plot or one plot piece of land where the Americans would say, well, Gulf States here. We want you to be assertive towards Iran. And, of course, that doesn't work out. Qatar has its own issues. Saudi Arabia -- I'm sure you've watched Al-Jazeera and you know what I'm talking about.

Oman, in turn has pursued its own foreign policy in relation to Iran. It's got a long history of interaction, culture and heritage in common, and of course, Oman's relationship with Iran again has been much friendlier. It's not necessarily as nuanced because Oman doesn't play to a global stage in the same way that Qatar does. Qatar punches consistently above its weight small states that play in the global arena, but Oman is a relatively small state and content with that designation. Doesn't necessarily have aspirations of being a much larger player at a global stage.

So I'll leave it there. I think I just want to mention some of the complexities of the relationship and some of the reasons

for the failure of American foreign policy when it comes to dealing with Iran.

MR. AMR: Perfect. Thank you, Mehran. And now I'll turn it back to Washington.

MR. POLLACK: (inaudible) global job and starting to lay out all those different complexities.

Bruce, what does the future look like for Washington?

MR. RIEDEL: Cloudy.

First of all, I want to join the chorus of saying how happy I am to be at this first event with BDC, live from Qatar. It's taken us a long time to get this technology together. It's a great moment to see it finally working.

We've just heard two, I think, very important and insightful analyses from Suzanne on the complexities of the bilateral U.S.-Iranian relationship and from Iran from the complexities of the Gulf thinking about Iran.

What I'd like to do is come back to the American side, but broaden the picture out a little bit and give you a little bit of a broader lens where Iran fits in Obama's overall foreign policy objectives and what some of the complications that arise from those overall policy objectives mean for U.S.-Iranian relations.

I think the place to start is the president's nuclear policy. This president has embarked on a really radically new U.S. approach towards the question of nuclear weapons. This is the first American president who has pledged the United States towards a

policy of no nukes in the future. And while I think some people at the beginning dismissed that as just a bunch of progressive, liberal, tree-hugging nice things to say, I think the president's demonstrated he's really quite serious about this. He has now gone to Prague twice to push his agenda, and he just finished hosting the largest summit this city has seen since the end of the Second World War to try to push that agenda forward.

Iran figures very large in this. If you're trying to persuade the rest of the world to give up their nuclear weapons and we have Iran acquire nuclear weapons on his watch, then his dreams of being the president that starts moving the world towards a nonnuclear future will look very hollow. So in that sense this broader objective of a world free of nuclear weapons raises the stakes in the U.S.-Iranian relationship to a very, very high level. He cannot afford to let Iran cross that nuclear capability without seeing this larger objective very much brought into question.

On the other hand, Obama also has to look at the question of Iran through the prism of the two wars that he inherited from his predecessor. Actually, if you think about it, three wars as I'll explain in a minute. Those three wars make Iran a much more complicated problem to think about and expose a lot of American vulnerabilities in terms of dealing with Iran, which argues for caution. So if the (inaudible) proliferation nuclear one argues for raising the stakes, I would submit that the wars in Afghanistan/Pakistan, the war in Iraq, and the war against terror --

although we don't use that phrase anymore in the United States -- actually make America have to think very cautiously about what it's going to do with Iran.

So we need to look at Iran not from the usual American perspective of only seeing it from the west, but also see it from the east and from the south. If you look at it from the east, from the standpoint of the war we're fighting in Afghanistan and the spillover in Pakistan, Iran has tremendous potential to make what is already a very, very difficult situation even worse. The Iranians have tremendous influence in the western side of Afghanistan. The only city in Afghanistan that actually works is Herat. And the reason it works is because it's linked to the Iranian electrical grid, not to the Afghan electrical grid. You can't be linked to the Afghan electrical grid. There is no Afghan electrical grid. Herat is a city that works. But if Tehran wants to turn off the lights, the lights will go off. Iran can do all kinds of other things in Afghanistan very quickly to make Obama's war far more difficult to succeed than it already is.

For several years now the Iranian Revolutionary Guard has been developing a relationship with the Afghan Taliban. There's no love here. This is the quintessential Middle East marriage made of convenience, not of love. But that relationship has already been forged. So far it's been kept at a very, very low level. Should the Iranians decide because of tensions in the U.S. relationship that they want to make life miserable for President Obama, all they

need to do is start putting a few more supplies in the link to the Taliban. Particularly, surface-to-air missiles would immediately make the NATO mission in Afghanistan far more difficult than it is today.

When you look at what the Pentagon says about Iran, particularly when Admiral Mullen, Bob Gates, or General Petraeus talks about Iran, remember they're looking at this problem very much with their eyes on the situation they have in Afghanistan. And if you think they're nervous about it, you should talk to the Italians because the Italians run the PRT in Herat. And as the Italians like to say these days, Italy now has a 400-kilometer long border with Iran. Richard Holbrooke's Italian counterpart spends more of his time in Tehran than he does in Kabul and Islamabad because the Italians realize that they are the most vulnerable in this entire situation.

Iraq, similarly, in many ways you can say that the United States today is already engaged in a struggle with Iran for the future hearts and minds of the Iraqi state. That struggle is already complex enough. If you interject into it increasing tensions between the United States and Tehran on other issues, life will get more difficult for what the United States wants to do in Iraq.

The two examples, Afghanistan and Iraq, are perfectly illustrated if you look at what the two presidents of Afghanistan and Iraq like to say all the time about the Iranian president,

Ahmadinejad. They are his enthusiastic supporters. When Karzai and the Obama Administration had their falling out last month, who got invited to Kabul? Ahmadinejad. Do you think the message wasn't received loud and clear here? I think it was.

From the standpoint of our third war, the struggle against terrorism, I think it's simple to say that if you were sitting in NYPD or the FBI or the National Counterterrorism Center, the last thing you would want in the world is to add Hezbollah to the list of people you're worrying about who is going to be putting car bombs in Times square. We've got our hands full with Al-Qaeda, with Lashkarityva , with the Pakistani Taliban, with Josh Mohammad and a host of other groups in the syndicate of terror based in Afghanistan and Pakistan, if you add the Hezbollah problem widely credited in the counterterrorism community as the A-team of international terrorists to the problem it starts to look very, very difficult.

One last point about both Iraq and Afghanistan as they relate to Iran, 2011 promises to be the crunch year in both of these conflicts. We're supposed to be getting out of Iraq in 2011 and the President has also pledged some kind of drawdown in Afghanistan in 2011. Both of those objectives will be far more complicated if you have to put in the Iranian dimension as well.

Last, but not least in the region, of course, though, is that third party -- the Israelis. If you look at the history of U.S.-Iranian relations since 1977, it's always been about a threesome, not a twosome. And the threesome, the third party in the

relationship, has often been one of the most important dynamic factors in determining American foreign policy towards Iran. We don't have to go back to Iran Contra to understand the influence that Israel has on American policy towards Iran. And here I think there is a real irony, which is as there is more friction in the U.S.-Israeli relationship on the Palestinian question, there is an inherent tendency to compensate by moving closer to the Israeli position on Iran. And you saw it last month in the efforts of the Administration to explain the tension and the relationship between the President and the Prime Minister over Palestinian issues immediately buttressed by the -- but on the existential question of Iran we stand shoulder to shoulder.

That puts the United States more and more into the binary process that Suzanne talked about where the only real choices come down to living with an Iranian bomb or using military force to prevent Iran from carrying a bomb. I think the President is going to hear from his advisors, particularly in the military, a distinct lack of enthusiasm for a military option for all the reasons I've laid out here. He's going to hear from his political domestic advisors that they better come up with a third way out of this problem.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Bruce. Hady, over to you.

MR. AMR: Thank you, Bruce and Ken.

Dr. Mahjoob.

MR. ZWEIRI: Thank you, Hady.

Just to build on what (inaudible) already, I think we have diversity of positions when we speak about Iran and the Arab world. But the question is why we have this kind of different opinions on Iran. I think this goes back to the three main elements. And I'll come to -- I want just to build on these elements to reach the point about the recent developments and what's going on now.

The image of Iran in the Arab world is being perceived differently. In a country like Saudi Arabia where Saudi Arabia is being perceived as a very important country defining the rights of Palestinians and Arabs after the oil crisis in 1973, suddenly 1980 is a country which raised the flag of Palestine defining the Palestinian rights and presenting itself as Iran does, you know, I am the man who can define the rights of Palestinians, the rights of (inaudible) and the people who are oppressed by others. So basically this kind of image Iran has presented to the Arab world has affected actually the -- has been perceived differently. So in a country it is being received positively and in other countries it may be perceived in a negative way.

The second point is what is going on inside Iran. And this is what Suzanne has mentioned now. I think the positions in the Arab world towards Iran have been affected by what is going inside -- what is going on inside Iran. If you go back to 1997 when Mohammad Khatami was, you know, became the president of Iran and look at how the relations have been developed from that time and comparing these relations in 2005, there is a huge difference of

attitudes. This is because of the slogan, the attitude, the performance of the president, the language he used to use at that time, his way of speaking about others -- all of these elements affecting the image of Iran and affecting actually how others perceive Iran.

And the third point I think which affected the relations between the Arab world and Iran is the Palestinian culture. And this is not a new issue. When the (inaudible) were in power, they had different positions to Israel. They were the friend of Israel. At that time, most Arab countries were the enemy of Israel. In 1978, when Egypt decided to sign the peace agreement with Israel and later on countries like Jordan and other countries and Palestinian authority has been established, this kind of change of attitudes and change in direction of policies is telling us that the Palestine matter is the core or one of the issues will be always on the scene when you speak about Arab-Iranian relations because there are different positions, there are different ideas about how to deal with this issue. Now, the Islamic Republic of Iran is the enemy of Israel, part its legitimacy built on this kind of hatred and, you know, calling for wiping Israel off the map. So this is part of the legitimacy of the regime there. So, on the other hand, if you look at the other side or the other part of the world (inaudible) Arab countries, they have different attitudes toward Israel.

One of the issues here we have to remember is that we cannot say that there is an Arab position -- there is an Arab state

position and within that, you see, the public opinion position and the state's position. And I think this point now is helping us to understand what is happening to this perception post the election of 2009. The perception of Iran in the Arab world has been changed, especially within the public because of what's so-called unfair elections in Iran. And the question now within the elite, political Islam, the people who are active and Islamists, those who are presenting (inaudible) academic or (inaudible), they now (inaudible) question now the issue of credibility and the legitimacy of the regime raised post-election in 2009. And this is a new development when we speak about Arab-Iranian relations (inaudible).

The issue of -- here we come to the point where, where is the issue of the nuclear program? Here we have to bring to their attention that there are different priorities. When you come to the Arab world, to the Arab States, the priority is what Iran is doing in Iraq, what Iran is doing in Lebanon, what Iran is doing in Palestine. But the priority to the United States is Iran is developing a nuclear program.

In October 2007, there was a meeting between foreign ministers of Arab countries and Condoleezza Rice. And this is a statement by someone who was there. He was telling me that, you know, we were speaking about our concern of the Iranian role in the region and Condoleezza Rice was speaking about the American concern of Iran developing a nuclear weapon. So they were speaking in different directions. So this is now going on. Now, in that

context, Iran -- the United States wanted more support from Arab countries, wanted to isolate Iran, but this is not happening now. Iran is seeing itself as a country actually that's hard to isolate, as Ahmadinejad was saying.

So the nuclear issue now after three or four packages of sanctions, it seems that we are moving towards one of the four options which I'm summarizing them. One is a diplomatic solution. Diplomatic solution I define is both countries, Washington and Tehran, sit and cooperating with some Arab countries and Turkey together somewhere and try to find something in common to build and try and not -- and to bring some of the elements together. What Iran can contribute and what the United States can contribute in some of the issues in the region. This is unlikely to happen because of Israeli's role.

The second part -- the second point is a diplomatic solution with full -- with imposing a new sanctions on Iran. So basically there will be new sanctions improved by the Security Council, but at the same time Washington and with the support of some Arab countries that, you know, we have to work through diplomacy, but putting more economic pressure on Iran. This is -- the action from Iran will not be positive. They would be always statements. There will be kind of remembering the long history of crisis between Washington and Tehran. And this is -- will keep the crisis going for a long time.

The third option, which is a military option. And that I

can speak about two options within that point. One is a military option which is going to the Security Council and getting kind of (inaudible) situation of Iraq, which is unlikely to happen because of the points being raised in Washington now.

The second one is Israel doing something without consulting with the United States. If we go to the statements said recently by the vice president of the United States that Israel will not act against Iran unless, you know, consulting us, it's also unlikely to happen. But it seems to me that the new sanctions on Iran will be affecting more the performance of the Iranian economy. And I think there is more thought in the United States and in the Europeans that this may lead to kind of internal change which will help us without spending (inaudible) on military option. The change may come from within inside Iran without even asking our friends to help us, especially Arab States.

Thank you.

MR. AMR: Thank you very much. Ken, should we have a couple of questions from Washington and then a couple from here?

MR. POLLACK: Absolutely. Again, what we'll do is we'll take two questions here from Washington and we'll take two questions from Doha. And then we'll put them to the four speakers, starting with our two speakers in Doha and then turning to the two in Washington. And we will repeat that cycle over and over until noon.

I will ask everyone to please identify themselves as I call on them or as Hady calls on them and to please make your

questions brief. And I will also ask the speakers to as best they can keep their answers brief.

Okay. Bob, why don't we start with you over here.

SPEAKER: My question is very brief. Recently, Turkey and a number of other countries, Brazil, have offered to mediate the stalled TRR deal that was signed in October. And at the U.N., despite the histrionics, Ahmadinejad said we're committed to that deal. We want to complete it. And I know Suzanne said we don't want to talk about internal politics, but what about the diplomacy? What about -- why is the Obama Administration not saying Turkey, Brazil, you're our allies. We want to work with you. Go for it. We'll support what you can accomplish as opposed to what they're seeming to do, which is to be kind of annoyed by this effort because it gets in the way of what most people I've talked to consider a pretty meaningless sanctions resolution.

MR. O'CARROLL: I'm Chad O'Carroll from the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. I'm just wondering if you think it was prudent for --

MR. AMR: Ken, we can't hear.

SPEAKER: Can you hear me now?

MR. AMR: Yes.

MR. O'CARROLL: I'm Chad O'Carroll from the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.

I'm just wondering if people think it was prudent for the Obama Administration to spurn I make four direct requests now from

Ahmadinejad for dialogue. There are two debates at the U.N. he challenged and I think there's been two letters. Was it a good idea to spurn these like they have?

MR. POLLACK: Great. Thank you. Hady, why don't you take two questions from Doha, and then why don't you take us right into the responses from the speakers in Doha?

MR. AMR: Great, thank you. Can I see a show of hands of who would like to ask questions?

Okay. Why don't we take these two at the front here. And please identify yourself briefly. And also because there's an audience in Washington, please try and keep your questions as short as you can and make them questions. Thank you.

Yes, also please stand up.

MR. AJOWEE: Samir Ajowee from Al Jazeera channel.

Do you think that there will be a war between the U.S. and Iran? Thank you.

MR. AMR: That was a great question. I loved it.

SPEAKER: Thanks. So, okay. I have -- so my question to anyone --

MR. AMR: Everyone. You can specify if you want.

SPEAKER: No, no, no, (inaudible) to be (inaudible).

America now is going to -- may launch a war against Iran or impose sanctions, but America now is ally to the lackies of Iran in Iraq. How can I explain this? Thank you.

MR. AMR: Excellent question. Gentlemen, would one of you

--

MR. KAMRAVA: Excellent question for Mahjoob to start answering.

MR. AMR: Listen, you can feel free to take any or all of the questions here. Both of you.

MR. ZWEIRI: You know, Turkey -- Turkey tried to do a lot of kind of communication with Iran, convincing Iran to show more positive attitudes toward these proposals -- I mean, the proposal of Barad before he left about, you know, exchanging uranium. And Turkey is trying to be the place where they can exchange that uranium. And Brazil, the same thing.

The problem is Iran is behind one thing, which is getting security guarantees from the United States. This issue -- Washington is not ready to give to Iran even on paper or even in a statement. If you go back to the proposal of 2006, 2005 suggested by EU3, there were always -- the first proposal, you know, mentioned for one paragraph something about security guarantees or security -- something to Iran that, you know, the regime will be fine. And the second proposal, the paragraph became two sentences. The last proposal is speaking about different security arrangements. So Iran has its own concern of American attitudes and it needs something about security guarantees. And those -- Brazil or Turkey -- ready to get something from Washington about that, I think Iran may show some positive indications.

I mean, the issue of war from previous experience in the

region -- look at the last 30 years -- every issue taken to the Security Council ended by war. I mean, this is kind -- if you go back to the last 30 years, all issues in the Middle East taken and the Chapter 7 of the Security Council, the end was a military option (inaudible). Look at the crisis when it came to decide to attack Libya. Look at the issue of Iraq. Look at the issue -- even -- but it is all by the United Nations.

So if you go back to the history, yeah, there will be a war. But again, the question will be who is ready to start it? I mean, whether the United States, according to what you are hearing from Washington is ready to do it now, look at what is going on inside -- look at the latest developments in Iraq today when (inaudible) was saying, you know, we will not accept forming a government in Iraq without an Iraqi being involved. Now he is working with Americans (inaudible) a new coalition. What is going on? Where is Iran from that -- with the national (inaudible)?

So basically what is going on, you know, who is ready to start the war should be ready to see whether they are managing the war or not. The question will be do you want to see another Iraq in the region? Do you want to see another third state in the region? These are the questions I think the advisors of President Obama and others they need to answer. Another friend state, what does it mean? Who is paying the price? The region or the others?

MR. AMR: Thank you. Mehran, feel free to answer any or all of these questions.

MR. KAMRAVA: Yeah. Very, very quickly. I heard the word despite Ahmadinejad histrionics. I encourage you to read the text of Ahmadinejad latest speech at the United Nations. In fact, it was uncharacteristically measured and reasoned. Unfortunately or fortunately, Ahmadinejad has such a character and such a persona in the Western media that even when he says something in a reasonable fashion we call it histrionics. So I strongly encourage you to read the text of the speech and it might be even better to read it in original Farsi so that there's no room for mistranslation.

Is it prudent of the Obama Administration to have spoken with Ahmadinejad? I think it's about time the United States started recognizing that Iran has legitimate strategic interests in the Gulf. It's this inability to recognize Iran's interests or the interests of the various Gulf States that have brought us to where we are and has resulted in this impasse of no peace, no war. And so I think if there is any legitimate or any meaningful headway to be made, I think a measure of sobriety and realism would be in order.

War between Iran and the United States? With due respect to Mahjoob, I strongly doubt it for the simple reason that, of course, Iranians would retaliate and would set the region ablaze. All you need to do is to look at the statements of Iranian military commanders. Any state would retaliate if it's attacked, and of course, I think Iranians would retaliate. And this is something that the Gulf States are keenly and painfully aware of. And, of course, so I don't think that would happen.

And then lastly, American alliances -- Iranian allies in Iraq or you used the term "Iranian lackies," I think that one better way of looking at it is that there are multiple actors. There are multiple and often very complex interests at work. And the simple dictum that, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend and the friend of my enemy is my enemy," doesn't always work in real politics. And so oftentimes we see very complex and apparent seemingly contradictory alliances. And that's just the way politics and diplomacy play out.

MR. AMR: Thank you. Washington.

MR. RIEDEL: I'll take the war question on.

I think when you think about the question of an American war against Iran you should start with two questions. How do we start it and how do we end it? Let's leave aside the question of whether Israel starts. Let's say this is an American war with Iran. How do you start it?

I think it's very difficult to conceive this Administration or any administration going to the United Nations Security Council and asking for a Chapter 7 authority for military force against Iran. If we can't get the Russians and the Chinese to come onboard for economic sanctions that bite, they're certainly not going to come onboard for a resolution authorizing the use of force.

Secondly, are we going to go to the Congress and ask for a use of force resolution from the United States Congress? Bear in mind that even the Bush Administration when it invaded Iraq and Afghanistan went to the Congress first. Not to mention the small

problem of strategic surprise which is somewhat largely lost when you got to the Congress of the United States and ask for a resolution to use force. What are the chances of you actually getting such a resolution passed through the Congress? I think that the progressive wing of the Democratic Party may want Iran not to have a nuclear weapon, but I don't think there's going to be a lot of votes out there saying, yeah, and we want to do it by starting a third war in the Middle East.

Also, if you're going to start a war you have to start it from bases. You cannot fight a war against Iran from Outer Space. That means we're going to have to go to the government of Qatar and ask Qatar if it's prepared to be part of the war against Iran since CENTCOM's forward operating base is in Qatar, there is no war against Iran that's militarily feasible without using that base.

Iraq. Are we going to use airbases in Iraq for a strike against Iran?

Afghanistan. Are we going to use airbases in Afghanistan for a strike against Iran?

Second question. How do you end it? Unfortunately, in wars you don't usually get to decide how the war ends unilaterally. The other side usually has a big part to play in deciding how the war ends. The only surefire way of ending the war with Iran would, of course, be to occupy Iran. As Ken has often pointed out, if you like the war in Iraq, you're going to love the war in Iran, which is, what, five times bigger? Three times bigger?

SPEAKER: (inaudible)

MR. RIEDEL: Exactly. We can live on the comfortable illusion that after an exchange of airstrikes and terrorist incidents the Iranians are just going to at some point say, okay, enough is enough. Let's have a cease fire. But that's an illusion; that's not a plan.

MS. MALONEY: Bruce has nicely left the diplomatic questions to my end. So let me try to tackle the first two questions here from Washington in particular which both I think get to this critique that is being voiced from various institutions and elements here in Washington -- that the Administration didn't really give it a college try when it came to the issue of engaging Iran, particularly because of the events last June, but also because of the frustrating process of the diplomacy in Geneva which appeared to be this important breakthrough and then was quickly disavowed and apparently scuttled when they went back to Tehran.

Both questions suggest that there's a kind of lack of receptivity or at least the perception of a lack of receptivity on the part of the Obama Administration to engaging in diplomacy toward Iran, particularly as we've shifted into this sanctions mode. I think that that perception speaks to the extent to which the process of getting a sanctions resolution became the policy. Well in advance really of the shift at the start of this year the Administration began foreshadowing that if we cannot get a deal, if we cannot start a process that's meaningful, we will move to

sanctions. And so really as early as September there was already I think here in Washington an expectation that the pressure would start any day.

And because of that and because of the investment of time and energy, I think that there is a, you know, an inevitable sense of reluctance to begin undercutting your own initiatives, undercutting your diplomacy with Russia, China, and Europe as well. On the sanctions debate by beginning to entertain what I think in the case of the overtures from Ahmadinejad personally, are really sort of fanciful gestures. A debate at the United Nations is not going to be terribly productive to producing a durable agreement or a real process for addressing concerns about Iran's nuclear program. That's diplomacy by spectacle and I think that there's legitimate skepticism toward that sort of telegenic activity. It really only benefits Ahmadinejad who wants to see himself as a world leader on stature with President Obama.

In terms of the role of mediators, I think it's a good and open question, although I don't know that any of the mediators that have been suggested -- Turkey, Brazil -- are necessarily as well positioned as they may think themselves to be in terms of bridging the gap, in terms of really providing a useful interlocutor to a process that's already pretty crowded. We already have five partners here in Washington on nuclear diplomacy toward Iran. And adding another, there needs to be a real clear sense that there's a value added to that.

All that said, I think that, you know, given the sense of ambiguity about what comes next and given the obvious downsides to the use of force and the obvious political difficulties of embracing a policy of containment, you know, I think that there is almost an inevitable likelihood that, you know, negotiations diplomacy is going to be once again elevated on the U.S. toolkit in the coming months. But really it will depend upon the receptivity, the ability and willingness of the Iranians to come to the table in a serious way.

MR. POLLACK: Great. Thank you, Suzanne.

Hady, why don't you start us off with two more questions from Doha and then we'll take two more here and we'll do it again?

MR. AMR: Great. Can I see a couple of hands? Great. Let's go here.

SPEAKER: (inaudible)

Israel has a history -- track history of a preemptive strike for its national security. They did that in Baghdad and they did that recently in Syria. And they are threatening seriously -- threatening to do it in Iran. And that goes, I think, I believe, with the blessing of the United States.

Now, my question is twofold. Number one, what if Israel did the third time, okay, and whatever it did, bad or good, is in the eyes of the beholder, of course, what would be the reaction of the U.S. Government? That's one.

On the other hand, what if Iran took these threats

seriously and they themselves had a preemptive strike on Dimona in Israel as protecting their own national security? What would be the U.S.'s reaction to that, too?

MR. AMR: Can we take another question from the audience here? I'm surprised. This is -- okay, here we go. Okay, please stand up and identify yourself.

MR. FALLAH: Hi. (inaudible) Fallah from Qatar University.

How do you think the change in the public opinion in case there is a war on Iran by the United States or by Israel -- how do you think the change in the public opinion will affect America's interests in the region?

Thanks.

MR. AMR: Thank you. And Ken, over to Washington. Did you not hear the question?

MR. POLLACK: We did. We absolutely did. Are there any questions here?

I'd like to actually pose -- oh, Ward, please, first.

SPEAKER: I've been interested, intrigued to hear the implications by some participants, especially on the Gulf side, that there may be a productive deal to be had between Iran and the United States. I mean, as we know, the TRR deal was, in fact, not particularly favorable from the U.S. perspective. It was only a useful idea because the thought was it would get the parties working together, build confidence, and work to something which would

actually play more of a role in halting Iran's march to a nuclear bomb.

But I'm curious, given that that was rejected by the Iranian side, what deals might there still be to be had? And especially I heard the references to security assurances. I'd be curious to hear what security assurances the sense is that Iran wants.

MR. POLLACK: And I will take the prerogative share then to ask the last question. It's really a refinement of the first question because just as I think it's an interesting question for our audience in Doha and here as well to hear Bruce and Suzanne speculate on the U.S. reaction to an Israeli strike, I would also love to hear Mahjoob and Mehran talk a little bit about what the Gulf response to an Israeli military strike would be.

Okay. Why don't we start here with Bruce and Suzanne and then we'll flip it to Doha and my guess is that these will probably be our final comments as well.

So Bruce, Suzanne, who would like to start?

MS. MALONEY: These are all, I think, important and terrific questions. I don't know that I have any terrific answers to them. I think, you know, the question of what deal is there to be had is one that the world is wrestling with. Is there a possibility of reviving some version of the TRR deal that is acceptable to this side and acceptable to the Iranians? I think it needs to be pursued in part because if we simply leave that deal in

tatters, what I fear is that we begin to enable the Iranians to set new redlines. And we begin to set our own new redlines. That until and unless we can get that deal revived we won't come back to the table.

And from their side, you know, the unwillingness to engage in the specifics of that deal, the unwillingness to send the LEU out of the country then becomes a new sort of element that they're going to trumpet and triumph, much as they took the instance on suspension of your enrichment and made that their redline.

So I think it's important to start with some territory that at least there appeared to be some recent activity on the Iranian side and, you know, with my imperfect understanding of the Iranian system, it seems hard for me to imagine that the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Committee, who has, you know, long experience in his very short career with the Supreme Leader and has a close relationship with the Supreme Leader, made any kind of tentative preliminary agreement to the TRR deal without some sense that he was going to get some backing from the Supreme Leader.

So it suggests that there is some high level receptivity to the sort of arrangements that would begin to provide a little bit of confidence here and would begin to build the trust that you talk about. So I think it's an obvious useful starting point, but it shouldn't be the only point at which we begin to talk to the Iranians if we can find some real receptivity and some real willingness to take some actions in a reciprocal fashion.

And so I think on that basis there needs to be a consideration as to whether even as nuclear diplomacy remains stymied or even if it remains stymied, there is some value in trying to energize dialogue on Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere.

With that, let me turn it to Bruce for some of the other questions.

MR. RIEDEL: I just had one thing on the diplomacy side. There is an implicit deal that might never be actually ratified or acknowledged by either Washington or Tehran, and that deal is that Iran stops one screwdriver short of actually putting together a nuclear device. It never tests one. It has the capability and it is seen universally as having the capability, but it doesn't actually cross the threshold of making devices and building an arsenal.

It's obviously not a great deal, but it is something that Washington might come to see as a tolerable solution to this problem. Unlikely to be seen as tolerable, however, in Jerusalem. Israel, for the last 30 or 40 years, has enjoyed the strategic position of having a monopoly on nuclear weapons in the Middle East. Never talks about it in those terms, but that's the reality. It's enjoyed the strategic invulnerability of nuclear weapons and none of its neighbors has it. And as the speakers in Doha have rightly pointed out, it has adopted a policy known as the Reagan Doctrine going back to 1981 of not allowing any state to have a nuclear weapon.

If Israel were to strike without prior consultations with the United States, I think it's fair to say there would be a fair amount of anger in the Administration, but I think at the end of the day you're not likely to see the United States cut off military assistance to Israel or suspend economic support for the Israeli economy. The United States will find itself having been drawn into a conflict which it in the end will probably have to clean up and finish.

MR. POLLACK: Hady, over to you.

MR. AMR: Thank you, Ken, and Bruce. Gentlemen, you know, there was one speaker in particular, you know, how would the Gulf react to an Israeli attack on Iran.

SPEAKER: Yeah. I'll be very quick. An Israeli attack on Iran would in the popular perception, in the popular eye, be seen as no matter how much the Americans distance itself -- distance themselves from it would be seen as an attack with American complicity and approval. So, in the region I suspect, particularly in places like Bahrain and Kuwait where there is significant political difficulty, domestic political difficulty, the already tenuous spaces of political legitimacy will be further eroded. And so we'll see domestic political turmoil, or at least heightened political tensions domestically or heightened domestic responses on the part of innately authoritarian political systems. So that would be one of the most likely outcomes if Israeli or the United States were to attack Iran: erosion of domestic political legitimacy and,

therefore, the consequences and ramifications that come with it.

There was a very good question. What if Iran attacks Israel? At the height of threats that the Bush Administration was issuing to Iran, one of the interesting things that we witnessed, at least early on, was the coolness and dismissive nature of Iranian responses to this really harsh rhetoric that was coming out of Washington. Iranian responses became increasingly less cool and in some ways more panicked towards the tail-end of the Bush Administration, but I think there is a strand of thought within the Iranian policymaking circles that says let's not play into these hands or let's not play into these threats. And so I would sincerely doubt if Iran were to engage in a preemptive attack on Israel because it thought that an Israeli attack on Iran were imminent.

There was a question about change in public opinion in terms of U.S. interests in Iran. During the Bush Administration we saw a serious erosion of American soft power across the Middle East because of the very muscular assertion of American interests and the undiplomatic rhetoric emanating from Washington when it came to the Middle East in general and the Arab world in particular. President Obama has done significant benefit to reasserting American soft power, repairing American soft power. I think if there was an attack on Iran, American soft power would once again be seriously eroded across the Middle East. And the goodwill that America has been able to rebuild during the Obama presidency so far would

dissipate in relatively rapid order.

I have a note here about the productiveness of a deal between the United States and Iran and Iran's March towards a nuclear bomb. I think we need to not take that as an article of faith and whether or not Iran is building or is marching towards a nuclear bomb, I get the sense that at least in D.C. it is taken as an article of faith and I think we need to, Hady, have a separate discussion on that.

But I would say this. Very few countries respond to threats in a way that the threatening country would want them to respond to. Revolutionary countries tend not to respond to threats in particular, countries that are populist where issues of face are very important. So I think it's important to kind of have a foreign policy and a diplomacy that is somewhat more subtle, more mature, and doesn't engage -- it says you negotiate with us or else. This carrot-and-stick approach certainly hasn't helped, and I think that's one of the reasons why we see that the Iranians have been so adamant in not responding to American rap or at least American wings and signals at the same time as this threat that you talk with us or else. And I think that is very important.

I just want to go back. Something to -- very quickly, if I may -- to something that was said earlier. I don't want this to go without a response. Quintessential Middle Eastern marriage of convenience was how I think Bruce talked about Iran's revolutionary guards and their dealings with the Afghan (inaudible) Guard or

Afghan Taliban. I want to remind Bruce, who I'm sure doesn't need a reminder, that we saw a quintessential marriage of convenience between the United States and Taliban. And as a Middle Easterner who is married, I want to take issue with your characterization of marriage of convenience as quintessentially Middle Eastern.

MR. AMR: Thanks, Mehran. Mahjoob, just a few words before we warp up.

MR. ZWEIRI: We should not undermine another front of war which is so-called -- I call it intelligence war. Let me remind you the last three years the United States has succeeded to communicate with three more people, which is assumed that they are very important. One is Sharam Amiri and one is (inaudible), the assistant of the defense minister of the former defense minister of Iran and the other a businessman in Georgia. So there is another level of war going on now. I think the United States is trying to collect more information so maybe to avoid such a military action.

Let me correct myself. I did not say that there will be a war. What I said is looking at the recent history of the region, the quick answer will say there will be a war, but I'm not sure that there will be someone who is ready to start this war. If any kind of attack to Iran, you know, takes place, there will be -- if Israel (inaudible), there would be a reaction against Israel. Even if there is kind of -- our perception of Iran is not in as good shape as it was. But I think when Israel comes to the scene there will be something against Israel and they will say, okay, look. We will

think later about Iran. But right now Israel is important.

I think, yeah. Okay.

So basically if there is a military action I think there is more interest in the region to see a diplomatic solution. There are lots of economic developments and the countries are interested to continue in these developments. They are not interested in war.

Thank you.

MR. AMR: Thank you, all. And thank you everyone in Washington. This was great.

MR. POLLACK: Yes. First, thank you to all -- to our entire audience, both here in Washington and in Doha for being our guinea pigs for this experiment. Please, if you have comments about the format, about how things went, we greatly appreciate it. We plan on doing this again. We'd like to make it go even smoother next time and your feedback would be greatly appreciated.

And with that, please join me in thanking our wonderful speakers, both here in Washington and out in Doha. Thank you all very much. (Applause)

SPEAKER: Thanks, everyone. And I'd like to invite everyone to join us for refreshments in the other room where we normally have our events.

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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