

# NATIONAL COUNCIL ON U.S.-ARAB RELATIONS

## 17<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL ARAB-U.S. POLICYMAKERS CONFERENCE

### ***“TRANSITIONING THE WHITE HOUSE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARAB-U.S. RELATIONS”***

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2008

RONALD REAGAN BUILDING & INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTER  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

**2:00-3:30: "GEO-POLITICAL DYNAMICS (III): IRAN AND IRAQ"**

**Chair: Dr. John Duke Anthony** – President and CEO, National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations.

**Speakers: Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft (USAF, Ret.)** – President and Founder of The Scowcroft Group; former National Security Advisor to Presidents Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush; concluded a twenty-nine year military career that began with graduation from West Point at the rank of Air Force Lieutenant General serving as Deputy National Security Advisor; former Director, Kissinger Associates.

**General Joseph P. Hoar (USMC, Ret.)** – former Commander in Chief, U.S. Central Command, with responsibility for planning and operations for twenty-seven (27) countries in the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and the Horn of Africa. Following his retirement from the military, General Hoar formed the consulting firm of J.P. Hoar & Associates, which is engaged in business development in the Middle East and Africa.

**Mr. Wayne White** – Adjunct Scholar, Middle East Institute and Policy Expert, Middle East Policy Council; former Deputy Director of the Near East and South Asia Office, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State.

**Dr. Kenneth Katzman** – Senior Middle East Affairs Specialist, Congressional Research Service, United States Congress. Author of numerous and regularly updated briefing reports for Members of the United States Congress on Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the GCC region.

*Transcript by Ryan & Associates*

[DR. JOHN DUKE ANTHONY] Thank you. General Scowcroft. Lieutenant General, retired. He's one of America's foremost and most prominent analysts on foreign policy issues. He's had a distinguished career in and out of government, on the inside dealing with the challenges and opportunities and also burdens of promoting America's national security interests and key foreign policy objectives across the spectrum, be they strategic, economic, political, commercial, defense, and then the people to people private sector relations.

He is the founder and President of the Forum for International Policy. This is a non-partisan, non governmental organization, which provides independent analysis and perspective on major foreign policy issues. He's also President of the Scowcroft Group, an international business advisory firm, and he served as assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, to President Gerald R Ford and President Nixon as military assistant, but National Security Affairs Advisor also to President George H. W. Bush. And it was particularly during that tenure in the White House that one of the longest wars of the 20th century, namely the Iran-Iraq War, starting in September of 1980 and ending with a cease fire August 18th, 1988. This was on General Scowcroft's watch.

And in many people's minds, that was a successful U.S. mobilization and deployment of force. Twenty four other nations stood with the United States in an internationally concerted action to bring about the ceasefire. There was cooperation with all the members of the United Nations Security Council, with 15 out of 15 members, on July the 15th 1987, passing Resolution 598, the first unanimous resolution in the United Nations Security Council since the Korean War, directly dealing with an issue of war and peace. General Scowcroft was centrally, pivotally involved in helping one, to bring about an end to the Iran-Iraq War; two, to prevent the Iranian Revolution from spreading to the western side of the Gulf to eastern Arabia and at the same time part and parcel of the ending of the Cold War with a defeat of the Soviet Union through another internationally concerted action pertaining to Afghanistan. General Scowcroft.

[LT. GEN. BRENT SCOWCROFT] Thank you very much Doctor Anthony, it's a great pleasure for me to be here with such a distinguished group of speakers and a wonderful audience, and I want to congratulate you on the subject for this year.

It's a very critical time, and the title of the conference "Transitioning the White House" is very important. Now we're supposed to talk about Iran and Iraq, but I want to make a couple of preliminary comments because I think there's some danger in separating the various issues of the region because they tend to spill over on each other in a variety of ways. And what I want to say is just a few words about the Palestinian peace process. I think it is a major source of the problems in the region. It's a major source of anti-Americanism in the region. It's a major rallying point for extremists in the region. And the solution to that problem would make a great contribution to the other issues that beset us in the region.

I am personally very disappointed that the efforts of this administrations have not produced success, but I think that the day that the new President sits in the White House, the first thing he ought to think about, there are a lot of first things, but one of the very first things is renewing the Palestinian peace process, because it's one of those things that if you're not moving forwards,

we're moving backwards, and I think that's a real, a real danger. We cannot succeed in that without the direct personal involvement, I don't think, of the President of the United States, in a heavy way.

Success in this venture though, would first of all change the psychological climate of the region. It would restore the general attitude that the United States is a force for good in the region, a force for progress in the region, not simply in there for its own narrow national aims. It would change the psychological climate in no other way. It would move Iran from offensive to the defensive, because Iran plays on the Palestinian peace process, through Hezbollah, through Hamas. Now they are organizations that are not wholly dependent on the Palestinian issue but they get their strength and they feed on the Palestinian issue. So to me, this is one thing that the President has to focus on.

Now turning to Iraq, if this conference last year had focused on Iraq it would be gloom and doom. The attitude has changed much, and I think the attitude has changed much because the situation has changed significantly. Progress is being made. But it's a very fragile process, and it's, I think, easily subject to reversal. It has been something of an issue in the Presidential campaign although not so much recently. And to me, what we need to focus on is what we really need in Iraq. And it seems to me what we need in Iraq is a country that is an influence for stability in the region, not for conflict and chaos. And it's getting to that point now that I think it is reversible, and so I think while the U.S. can probably begin to reduce some troops as the security situation improves, we have to be very careful about pulling out before we have a situation there that is clearly able to be sustained by the local system. And therefore, I would caution against a withdrawal of the United States according to a calendar, rather than according to the situation on the ground.

In Iran, I think there are two general problems with Iran. The first one is Iran and the region, and the second is Iran and nuclear weapons. Thus far, what we can do or can't do with Iran is for the United States pretty much of a mystery, because we have not been prepared to explore with them what the possibilities are. Now it's difficult to explore with Iran because in a sense there are two different structures there. There is a governmental structure and there is a fundamental power structure, and it depends a lot who you talk to. But setting that aside, it seems to me that making discussions subject to preconditions before you will sit down and talk is not a recipe for understanding or for finding out what goes on. That is one of the purposes of talking, and talking in itself is not necessarily a concession.

On Iran in the region, I think we need to know more about what Iran's fundamental designs are, with respect to Iraq for example. There's no question that they take great comfort from our problems in Iraq, and I think they undoubtedly contribute to those problems. But what do they really want to see? What kind of an Iraq? They were subject to a seven-year war with Iraq, which I'm sure they wouldn't like repeated, and therefore they have a concern about a powerful Iraq. Would they rather have an Iraq which splintered into its major constituent parts, a Shia state in the south, a Sunni state in the center, and a Kurdish state in the north? From a power position, that might be very attractive to them.

But a Kurdish state in the north is no less a problem for the Iranians than it is for the Turks, given the spread of the Turkish population in that region. But we don't know, we don't really know if there's anything here in respect to Iraq that we might be able to work with the Iranians on.

Then there's Iran and nuclear weapons. There is no doubt that Iran considers itself in a difficult region. And I think that a turn to nuclear weapons is in many cases what appears to be a logical result for countries that live in difficult regions. But it's not that simple, and for the United States, and for the rest of the world, it is not just Iran developing the nuclear weapons, it is what that means to the whole non-proliferation regime around the world. Because if Iran is allowed to develop the enrichment of uranium to the point that it can develop a nuclear weapons capability, then it seems to me we have made a very deep hole in the non-proliferation regime.

It is difficult for me to see that that would not be followed by perhaps Egypt, perhaps Saudi Arabia, perhaps Turkey in the region, and by similar states with similar problems around the world. That is not a better world. What can we do? Again, I think discussion is important. This time discussion I think needs to be preceded by a very careful understanding among the negotiators on this issue, and that is the British, the French, the Germans, the United States, Russia, and China. None of those parties want Iran to develop nuclear weapons, but they all have different sorts of concerns. It seems to me that what we need to do is to agree first among those parties. We do not want Iran to develop nuclear weapons. What are the steps to be taken to avoid that as an outcome? That will take a level of cooperation, which so far we haven't really achieved. Will it work? I don't know. But it seems to me that is the approach to take rather than assuming that Iran cannot be dissuaded, and that it is either acquiescence or the use of force. I'll stop there.

[ANTHONY] Thank you General Scowcroft. The next speaker is Retired General Joseph Hoar, who had a distinguished career of 37 years in the United States Marine Corps. And I first came to know him when he was Commander in Chief of the United States Central Command, whose area of responsibility then was just under 20 or just a few more than 20, which has grown considerably since then.

He served as the Chief of Staff to General Norman H. Schwarzkopf of renown in terms of Desert Shield/Desert Storm the reversal of Iraq's aggression against Kuwait, the restoration of national sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity to Kuwait.

He also served as the Commander overseeing Operation Southern Watch to prevent another massacre of the southern Iraqi people that ensued after the liberation of Kuwait in 1991. He served also to enforce the naval blockade in the Persian Gulf, in the Arabian Sea. And he was in charge of overseeing American military and civil humanitarian operations in Kenya, as well as in Somalia and also in Rwanda.

General Hoar, it's a pleasure and a privilege to have you here, to reflect on this issue that was one that you dealt with before. Now that you're out of uniform, not constrained so much by the policies, what can we learn from you in terms of focusing on this particular thorny controversial issue?

[GEN. JOSEPH P. HOAR] Thank you, John. I want to say, as I think most everybody else has, what a wonderful conference this is, and how well organized it is. And I suspect that the conferees all feel the same way. I think we're blessed to have an opportunity and I'm delighted to be here to participate.

As you recall, the subject is challenges and opportunities for Iraq and Iran. One of the difficulties that we face is that we can change neither geography nor history of the region, and both are really important. And I'm not going to go into any great detail, but with respect to the geography, and General Scowcroft touched on this a moment ago, the solutions to both of these problems are in some measure greater or lesser, dependent on the neighbors. And if you start over in Central Asia, with India, with Afghanistan, go up into Central Asia, Russia, the countries in the Caucuses, Turkey, Ukraine, obviously Syria, Lebanon, Israel, not to mention the GCC countries and Egypt, all of these countries have a role to play to a greater or lesser degree. And we can't expect that part of it to change.

But unfortunately here in the last several years, we've had opportunities to seize that might have made some difference, particularly with respect to Iraq. Many of you probably know it, was alluded to this morning, that going back to right after 9/11, the Syrians were willing to engage with us, and at one point talked about starting all over with a blank sheet of paper, with respect to coming to an agreement with Israel. How much different our ability to have dealt with Iraq might have been, had that process gone forward in 2002.

Different for Syria, different for Lebanon, certainly different for Israel, and so these are the kind of things that impinge, and certainly make more complicated, how we're going to deal with these two countries.

Also, there's the issue of history, of the First World War, and one type of imperialism of the Ottoman Empire, was replaced by two other empires, the British and the French. The legacy of that period is still with us today.

Now I don't know that you agree with me, but the invasion of Iraq was mistake right from the start. It was wrong because Iraq was contained. They were not a danger to us. When Mr. Wolfowitz was asked about this, he indicated well we better do something, it's costing us a half billion dollars a year. Well, that's true. The tab was a half billion dollars a year, but an Arab country was paying that half billion dollars. The U.S. Government was not. And so the priorities then as now should be Al-Qaeda, Afghanistan, neutralizing the Taliban, continue to work on homeland security, and obviously progress on the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

There were early mistakes made without question, but today we should point out that as in every insurgency, if you plan to bring change about, you have to look at root causes. Root causes today in Iraq is the lack of political reconciliation among various regional groups, among religious groups. And we have been unable to encourage the Iraqis to move forward on some of these very, very difficult issues; the business of provincial elections, dividing up oil revenues, what to do with militias, and a whole host of other things. And there's been some minor improvements but it's useful to point out that both in Kirkuk and in Mosul these problems are bubbling up right now. And so while the surge helped and while security is better now than it was before, security

improvement is ephemeral without change on the political side. The politics of this thing is going to actually make the difference in the long run.

I would just say very briefly because Brent covered it, but timetables are not a good idea. The enemy always gets a vote. I really like the sort of discussions that are taking place at the bilateral level between the United States and Iraq. We're talking about a particular date, but it's also tempered by the possibility that things may change between now and then. So before I leave Iraq, we probably ought to say a few things about what could be done in the future. I would say to begin with that the new President ought to concentrate on political change, on reconciliation. He's got one of the very best ambassadors in Ryan Crocker out there. What he needs is to provide support and the direction from Washington, so that everybody knows the President is involved. He can let General Petraeus who will be at Central Command starting tomorrow, to deal with the nuts and bolts of the security issue. And then, if I were in that situation I'd find the best historian in the Ottoman Empire that I could and then get the best cultural anthropologist to keep him company, and I'd have them follow me around every place that I went, just to make sure that we got it right, finally.

Now, let's talk a little bit about Iran. The first thing is, by attacking Iraq, we automatically made Iran a regional power. We took out their major adversary in Iraq, and we neutralized, if only temporarily, the Taliban, on the other side. And so now we see not only that they are regional powers, but clearly indications of aspirations to be perhaps a hegemon in the area, their role in Iraq, their role in Syria, in Lebanon as well. And I can tell you, and I think you've heard it already, that there is real fear among the GCC countries about where all of this is going. All of them have minorities, in one case it's not a minority, it's a majority of Shias, and as the Sheika correctly pointed out, they can't exchange Iran for some place else. A friend of mine in Oman said maybe North Dakota would be nice as a replacement, but it won't work. So they have to deal with the facts on the ground and so do we.

I mentioned earlier the European involvement. In no place is it more obvious than in Iran. The British extracted concessions for oil going back to 1872. One of the major reasons for overthrowing Mosaddegh in the early 50's was the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was about to be nationalized. One writer at the time said, speaking of the United States, by following British policy the U.S. will gain nothing but loss of prestige and hatred. And we really have to place this, our relationship with Iran, in that context.

And so the answer is really engagement, just as the five Secretaries of State said at the George Washington CNN conference a while back. When the Iraq Conference report came out, the Baker-Hamilton Report, Jim Baker was asked about engagement by Tim Russert on the Sunday morning talk show, and Mr. Baker said famously "engagement does not constitute endorsement." And that's how we should be going into it. And I again emphasize Brent's point about preconditions. We need to sit down and we need to cast a very broad net of the players in the region and those other players like China and Russia, that are on the National Security Council, the U.N. Security Council, that will have a role to play in all of this.

We need to bring in the IAEA. I had some experiences with them over several years, and it's very easy to disparage them, but I think they're a very effective organization. And the end result is going to be compromise.

Now, you shouldn't let me get away without talking about the possibility of an air attack on nuclear positions in Iran. So let me try and talk about that for a few moments. I would say first of all that it's one of two possibilities. The first is that this may be the best example in recent times of a highly coordinated threat of force against a country in order to bring about a diplomatic solution. The threat of force is far more useful than its actual application as I think everybody here understands. And so it's possible that that's what we're observing, I'm not sure. However, I can tell you that for people that think this is serious, I would put it in the utter folly department. The people that fly airplanes and drop bombs that I talked to seem to think that "A", we don't know enough about where the facilities are and we don't have the right kind of weapons to do the job.

Again, logistics and geography play a key role. Sure, we can force the Straits of Hormuz. Sure we can do a lot of things. But I should also share with you a conversation that Hamad bin Jassim, at the time he was the Foreign Minister of the State of Qatar had in Tehran. He's now the Prime Minister. Hamad bin Jassim went to Tehran and explained to his interlocutors that the State of Qatar had supported the United States in the attack against Iraq, but was not going to support the United States in an attack against Iran. And his interlocutors said to him you've got it all wrong. If we're attacked by the United States, we don't have the missiles to strike the United States. But we can certainly strike all of the facilities up and down the coast of your friends.

And so Qatar, as I think you know, has about a \$20 billion capital expenditure in a joint venture with Qatar Gas and Exxon Mobile. And there are similar arrangements all over the region. This is perhaps why UAE is investigating getting anti-missile missiles. And I know that in some cases from personal experience that some of the GCC countries are carrying on engagement right at this very moment. And so it is going on.

The point is that we're in a very dangerous situation. I think Brent described it very well. It's in our interest to engage. It's in our interest to broaden the base and bring as many other players in as we can. It's in our interest to find a great compromise here that will work to everybody's advantage. Thank you.

[ANTHONY] Thank you General Hoar. Our next speaker is Wayne White. And Wayne White has the distinction of having been the Iraq specialist in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the U.S. Department of State for the better part of a quarter of a century there.

And he and I just a few days ago were talking about how difficult it was during all that period for a conference to be held on Iraq when there were only three or four specialists on Iraq in all of the United States. From the period of June 1967 when relations were broken between Iraq and the United States until March 19, 2003, the sum total of all Americans over in Iraq at one time including the embassy staff did not exceed 17. So Wayne White was unique in having his eye focused on this particular issue the entire time. Wayne White.

[WAYNE WHITE] Thanks John Duke. One thing I'd like to say is just thanks for putting together such a terrific conference. These things are worth it. This is my second time and I'm very glad to be invited and also like to thank the support staff that works with John Duke for doing such a terrific job for us speakers in bringing us together and taking care of all our various needs on the way down here.

In the tradition of my State Department alma mater which is the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, I'm going to try to be realistic and in at least one instance out of the box. And with that in mind, I'll get into this.

On Iraq, I think it's clear from the intense wrangling over the U.S.-Iraqi Status of Forces Agreement, the SOFA, or a memorandum of understanding, or whatever title will eventually bear this agreement in recent months that Iraqis want the American role in Iraq to be reduced quite considerably. Since this is likely to occur regardless of what Washington wants or doesn't want, it's best for all concerned on the American side to get used to the idea that for better or worse, the Iraqis will be progressively taking over at a pace far faster than would have been anticipated just six months ago.

I say this because forces in Iraq opposed to even the current revised agreement for U.S. troop presence beyond December 31 are broad based, reflecting high levels of opposition to occupation among large numbers of Arab Iraqis. We even detected back in 2003 in polling from the Bureau of Intelligence and Research that a vast majority of Shia at the beginning of the occupation opposed occupation, but were essentially playing along in order to benefit from the democratic process that would presumably demographically usher them into power. So our welcome there has always been somewhat tenuous.

I cannot predict the likely result of the final face-off over this draft agreement, but already the Iraqi side has used it to considerably erode U.S. situational control beyond December 31 in a variety of ways. In fact, in order to survive politically, Iraqi politicians like Prime Minister Maliki are now competing on the basis of the extent and stand up to U.S. demands, affecting anything related to perceived or real Iraqi sovereignty, quote, unquote.

As a result of U.S. declarations that there can be no more changes in the draft, or even threats that without an agreement come January the U.S. would cease aspects of its military support in Iraq, this has only further inflamed those elements opposed to even the most recent draft inside of Iraq. And whatever the reason for the attack into Syria so recently, it has greatly increased demands for a ban on all U.S. attacks from Iraq against neighboring states, which just happened to be a preexisting Iraqi demand related to the existing draft.

Quite a number of Iraqis believe their country would be less fraught with violence were the U.S. to leave. I, like General Scowcroft, am more skeptical, at least in the near term. Additionally, I believe the Maliki government is overconfident, underestimating the extent to which its gains on the ground this year were due almost exclusively to the Iraqi Army, and not inconsiderably because of robust U.S. air and ground support, or a threat of same in backing up the Iraqi Army, not the Iraqi government per se.

Meanwhile, the government itself, the civilian government, remains deeply corrupt at the local level, often quite dysfunctional, and still somewhat alienated from the general population. In addition, anecdotal reports suggest a number of Iraqis regard the government as illegitimate, since it is viewed by some quarters as a government formed under American occupation, an attitude certainly not made any better by various failures in performance on the part of the government.

Of greatest importance perhaps is the government's failure to affect satisfactory reconciliation, with much of the Sunni Arab community during the period of reduced violence beginning in mid-2007. This was a huge missed opportunity. In this context, I believe Shia opposed to reconciliation considerably underestimate the ability of Iraq's Sunni Arab community to hold its own against the government. If it were to choose to do so in support of which it almost certainly would receive considerable concrete assistance from nearby Sunni Arab countries.

Finally, all major ethno-sectarian communities continue to pursue maximalist agendas in Iraq; in some cases on essentially zero-sum communal issues. This is a very dangerous mix. In this situation, the removal of U.S. forces from important areas where they still play a substantial role in separating still unreconciled parties, even as some put it sitting on some particularly troublesome areas such as neighborhoods in Baghdad, could in itself spark renewed violence.

Nonetheless, regardless of my fear that there is a significant chance for a rebound in violence as the U.S. reduces its presence, Washington has no choice but to bow to the wishes of the host government, in this case fairly solidly backed by most Arab Iraqis. In that respect, regarding my concerns and concerns of others about the potential for resumed violence, I can only hope that my fears are very much misplaced. If they are not, however, not only will there be considerable suffering on the part of the Iraqis, but recent U.S. claims of success in Iraq would ring pretty hollow.

On Iran, I'd like to address only one issue. A recommendation for those who fear or believe that Iran is in pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability, or growing close to attaining it, or keeping that open as an option related to its nuclear enrichment cycle. For the purpose of argument, let's assume Iran does have a nuclear weapons effort embedded in its nuclear power program, or intends its nuclear power program to be used for that purpose at some point. Such an assumption automatically would lead many toward dramatic options aimed at taking out or slowing the Iranian nuclear program, especially enrichment through military action at some point in time.

However I hardly think that even the current Iranian regime would be so incredibly foolish as to attempt an eventual nuclear strike against Israel, only to receive in return with utter certainty, a far more devastating nuclear counterpunch from Israel's own vast nuclear arsenal.

Therefore, even if Iran does seek nuclear weapons, the chance of this happening probably is down near one percent. Quite a number of Israelis would be unhappy, to say the least, living even with that small chance of such a horrific scenario. However, quite frankly I'm not Israeli, and I must look at this through an American lens, and in keeping with American nation interests.

I do oppose of course the proliferation of nuclear weapons anywhere in the world, and I support all diplomatic efforts, and far more robust than the ones we've seen today to use to see if international concerns can be resolved with respect to all of this. I also am not unconcerned about the potential nuclear domino effect mentioned by General Scowcroft. I think that is quite serious.

Nonetheless, I also know how futile efforts to stop determined and properly endowed nations from going that route have proven in a number of cases in the past, such as right next door, Pakistan. Military action to take out or severely damage Iran's nuclear program could well initiate a serious crisis in the Persian Gulf region, possibly rather prolonged, one that will be destabilizing and one that would certainly among other things, many other things, cause global energy prices to rebound dramatically.

Following the torturous Iraq saga, it is time to stop looking to forward leaning military solutions to challenges in this already very battered region. Frankly, amidst the current world financial meltdown among other things, the U.S. simply cannot afford the potential consequences of military action against Iran. And for different reasons, neither can the region. In essence, in this case the proverbial cure, military action, probably would be far worse than a disease, the presumed effort to begin simply learning how to live with a nuclear Iran. Thank you very much.

[ANTHONY] Thank you very much Wayne. We now have Dr. Kenneth Katzman who's the senior specialist, writing reports and advising members of Congress on issues pertaining to Iran, Iraq, Arab-Israeli conflict, and other trans-national issues. He's prolific in the voluminous reports that he prepares that are accessible to people engaged in foreign affairs, policy analysts, policy makers, and policy implementers. Dr. Katzman.

[KATZMAN] Thank you John, and thank you for having me again. I always enjoy speaking before these great conferences and Happy Halloween everybody.

In regards to Sheika Lubna's great speech at lunch, Iran is a neighbor of the UAE It's a neighbor that's sitting on three islands owned by the UAE, but it is a neighbor to the UAE, that's correct.

The title of my talk today, and I have a few extra copies, is called "Iran Capturing Iraq." "Iran capturing Iraq."

I've been asked to address Iran's influence in Iraq. With the conventional military and WMD threat from Saddam removed, Iran now seeks to insure that Iraq can never again become a threat to Iran, whether U.S. forces are in Iraq or not. I used to ask, with panels like this, two years ago, I would ask my peers on the panel does Iran want the United States in Iraq or do they want us out of Iraq? And the answer that would universally be given two years ago is both, or neither.

Well now I think the answer is becoming clear, clearer. Having secured Shia control over Iraq, Iran now -- they were ambivalent two years ago until Shia control was consolidated -- now that it is consolidated, Iran wants the United States out of Iraq. I think that's becoming clearer. By supporting Shia factions, Iran's influence in Iraq has at times hindered U.S. stabilization efforts and has heightened the threat of U.S. perception threat of Iran generally.

However, Iran is now itself facing difficult choices because its Shia protégés in Iraq are now at odds with each other. This even Iran did not expect. During 2003 to 2005, Iran calculated that it suited its interests to support the entry of Shiite Islamic factions into a U.S. led election process, because the overwhelming majority of Shia, numerical majority, would produce a Shia government, which is exactly what happened.

Iran in fact helped assemble the Shia Islamic block called the United Iraqi Alliance, which includes the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, the Dawa Party, and the faction of Muqtada al Sadr. A senior Dawa leader is Prime Minister, Nouri Maliki. Several leaders of the Supreme Council control other positions. The Sadr faction's ties to Iran were initially limited after the fall of Saddam because Sadr's family was not in exile in Iran or elsewhere. Sadr's family was still in Iraq, and his ties to the Iranian leadership were not formed really at all.

It's only later that Iran, when Iran started to really reach out to Muqtada al Sadr when they saw that Sadr had his Mahdi Army, which I'll call the J Shah Mahdi or JAM. It was becoming a powerful force and Iran said that this is a force that we cannot ignore. We need to place some bets also on this group. And Iran began supplying arms to the JAM through the Quds force, the export of the revolution force of the revolutionary guard, which it's the unit that goes abroad. It started really as the unit that helped form Hezbollah's militia. And it evolved to a sort of a force that goes abroad and helps Shia movements, not only Shia but movements outside of Iran.

What happened though was Iran's strategy, which was going so well actually tripped up Iran in 2007. Why is that? Because the United States, President Bush decided on the troop surge. And he told Prime Minister Maliki we are going to help stabilize this deteriorating situation, but in exchange you must allow us to go after Sadr and the JAM. Maliki really had no viable choice other than to say okay. And what happened was the United States, the troop surge forces, started going after the JAM. And what happened, Sadr broke with Maliki, the alliance unraveled, Sadr pulled out of the United Iraqi Alliance, he pulled his five ministers out of the cabinet, and we began getting battling between the JAM and the government forces, Shia dominated government forces throughout southern Iraq.

It is primarily Iran's arming and training of the JAM that has added to U.S./Iran tensions over Iran's nuclear program and broader regional influence. And I, where I may differ with Wayne, is that the key threat from an Iranian nuclear program is not necessarily that Iran is going to attack Israel or use the nuclear weapon, the threat is that Iran will be emboldened because no one will be able to retaliate against Iran. It will be emboldened to further all the aggressive policies in the region that Iran has been perusing. That's the key, I think, drawback to a nuclear Iran.

We have of course specific evidence that Iran is shipping numerous types of weapons to the JAM. General Petraeus has testified to this, and we now have some of these JAM elements are now consolidating it to what's called special companies or special groups. Some call them rogue breakaways of the JAM. I happen to consider them still JAM, who are still simply continuing radical activity.

And so I described this break between Maliki and Sadr. Now provincial elections are scheduled in Iraq for early 2009. And Maliki in advance of that wants to suppress the strength of the Sadr faction, and this I think explains why he launched his offensive on Basra against the JAM in 2008, and I totally concur with Wayne that part of the reason the government forces did gain the upper hand was not their own ability but really Petraeus and the U.S. military and the British military supporting them. I think had that not happen, the Iraqi, the ISF was very close to fracturing in Basra and would've had to retreat in humiliation.

So Sadr seeing what's going on has now tried to retrench and is bringing in the JAM and saying they will do political, social, and cultural work. Some U.S. commanders say they've gone to Iran; they're waiting to come back. Some are maybe coming back, trying to influence perhaps the elections, the provincial elections.

Now, how is Iran consolidating? You know, to head a lot of this off, the United States decided actually on direct talks with Iran. This was unprecedented. The United States since the revolution had not really had direct talks but we've had them in Baghdad with Iranian representatives. And those seem to be not making too much progress but at least they were on going. Now in May, Iran seeing that it is basically consolidated control of its protégés in Iraq has said we will not attend these talks anymore. And I think this reflects Iran's growing confidence in its position in Iraq that it no longer feels it has to talk to Ambassador Crocker.

Iran has also exploited its close ties to build broad political and economic influence. Iran has pumped lots of loans into Iraq. We've had at least two increments of one billion dollars each in credits extended. And not only is Iran doing development work in the south, it's also doing development work up in the north with the Kurdish in the Kurdish area, building roads and doing construction. So Iran is not just pursuing a Shia only strategy, a Shia Arab only strategy, it is also perusing to some extent a north-south strategy in expanding its tentacles inside Iraq.

Now the big test is the U.S./Iraq strategic pact and I think it is clear from this Iran wants us out of Iraq. Iran is working overtime to scotch the pact entirely. Iran is making a lot of progress to do that. They stiffened the resolve of Maliki and his allies to insist on a timetable for U.S. withdrawal on that pact. President Bush acceded to that request, to that demand really. But now even that is not enough. Iran continues to try to pressure various parliamentarians. General Odierno said Iran is trying to bribe Iraqi parliamentarians to vote against the pact if it gets to the Parliament. And Iran is also continuing to help the Sadr faction, which is going against the pact on the street level, with regular demonstrations against the pact every week.

So Iran is really using all its leverage to try to scotch the U.S./Iraq Strategic Pact. And this is because Iran does not want Iraq to serve as a potential aircraft carrier for a U.S. potential strike, not that any strike is imminent or going to happen, but Iran wants to make sure that the United States does not capture Iraq. Iran feels that it has captured Iraq, the title of my talk, and it is continuing to tighten that grip and the Arab-Persian differences that many said would cause the two to split apart have not materialized. Maliki has visited Iran three times. He has invited Ahmadinejad to visit, who visited in March. And all the signs are that Iran is increasingly tightening its grip over Iraq. Thank you.

[ANTHONY] Okay, we have a number of questions here stimulated by the presentations. And I'll try to lump several of them together if I see a linkage as such. One has to do with Israel and there are more chances for Israel to wipe out Iran than Iran to do the opposite. So how serious is this as a consideration or concern in terms of any outcome?

I'm just going to read them first and then have the panelists think about them very quickly. Please comment a little bit further on specifics of the policies that led to our security gains in Iraq, especially the financial support of Sunni insurgents to switch their target from the United States to Al-Qaeda, as well as the military surge.

Without either the U.S. incentives to Sunnis or U.S. ground and air support as has been noted here, when the U.S. begins to seriously consider downsizing or withdrawing, are these gains likely to be, as General Hoar indicated, ephemeral?

Withholding Ahmadinejad, if Iran is indeed pursuing nuclear weapons, isn't it just a natural reaction to balance the other nuclear power in the region, namely Israel? And despite the surprise expressed by the international community, wouldn't mutual agreed destruction be a positive or negative force in the region. The illusion wasn't made to Pakistan and India, both of which have nuclear weapons and haven't used them or come close to using them against each other.

One for General Scowcroft, could you be a bit more specific of what kind of great initiative the new American President might realistically, might feasibly launch, given the domestic pressures, the special interests, and how difficult this might be as a sell to elements of the American public?

Another one is from 1980 to 1990; Iraq enjoyed tremendous strategic depth in the Arab world, and was considered a bulwark, the bulwark against the spread of Iranian influence. Is it possible for that strategic depth to be restored and if so how?

The United States has sold 1000 bunker busting bombs to Israel. Comments, especially regarding how delivery systems accompanied or preceded the sale of such bombs.

And lastly, for the moment, is the Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear facilities at Osirak in 1981 totally unanalogous in terms of the situation faced with regard to Iran?

General Scowcroft, you want to take the first one about realistically feasibly given domestic and special interests constraints and pressures might you conceive of a successful or at least a beginning initiative.

[SCOWCROFT] Yes, I'd be happy to. I think it is feasible and realistic. One of the things that we haven't really thought so much about is the growing sentiment, especially among Palestinians, that they don't want a two state solution. It seems to me that the perils of that for all concerned should put an impetus behind a renewed effort. I think that we're actually closer to a solution than most people realize. If you look back at the Taba Accords in late 2000, early 2001, the two sides agreed on almost everything.

Now there are some problems that one side or the other has to give way on, but this is not like starting all over again. Enormous progress has been made. One of the difficulties right now is in the recent negotiations is that both sides are relatively weak. They don't represent strength back home. And therefore it's difficult for them to reach out. What I sense is that if the United States had proposed a solution fundamentally along the lines of the Taba Accord and said, "This is what we think is fair to both sides. If you two can agree on modifications in it, fine." But we didn't do that. And I think that's still what a, what the next President will have to do.

It's going to be probably somewhat more difficult because Israel is in a state of political turmoil right now. And how that gets resolved could have a considerable impact on the ability to negotiate. But it seems to me that the notion that the United State provides the meeting room and we say you two sit down and you come up with a solution, that that time has passed, and we need to be more assertive and I think it would work.

[ANTHONY] General Scowcroft, you may want to comment on this one as well, but I'll ask it to General Hoar first, and others can comment if they like. With regard to the bunker buster bombs, the U.S. has sold one thousand of these to Israel. Comment on the implications of that and association with any delivery systems before or subsequently. And what about this strategic concept of mutually assured destruction that seemed to work in an East/West context during the Cold War, but hasn't really even entered into serious or favorable consideration as being applicable to this particular situation between say, Israel and Iran, having mutually assured destruction, although it would not be really mutually assured. One has several hundred and the other, so far as we know, doesn't have one yet. And related to that, I appreciate the humor in this person, prefacing. I hope this question will not be thrown away, please. If Israel has 200 atomic bombs, why can't Iran have only 2 to protect itself from Israel?

[HOAR] I'll give it a shot. I don't know enough about what we have sold to Israel, but I know in talking to some of my peers that are aviators, and people that have been in this business for some time, they say the likelihood, lack of intelligence for one thing, and the second thing is we know these nuclear sites are dispersed.

And that secondly conventional weapons are not powerful enough to get down to the depth at which these structures are built. I can't comment beyond that because I don't have any firsthand knowledge, and I suspect that some of this is not for public consumption in any case.

In respect to the mutual deterrent. I'm not really sure. I'm not really that familiar with the inside operations of Iran, but I have had some experience talking to the Pakistanis about their nuclear program. I think that this whole concept that it wouldn't happen because the outcome might be too terrible to contemplate doesn't necessarily have to be true in that part of the world. I always was concerned that there were people in the Pakistani government that seem to take that possibility with India very lightly, and I'm not sure that that's true with respect to Iran or not. Brent or one of the other gentlemen would probably have a much better sense of that than I.

Scowcroft: Let me just make one comment about Iran and nuclear weapons. Most of the nuclear weapon states now have been very careful about safeguarding those weapons for being stolen or given to somebody else. I'm not so sure that the IRGC would have such constraint about that.

And it seems to me that one of the real problems of Iran with nuclear weapons is that they could easily get in the hands of terrorists, for whom deterrence is not an issue at all.

Do either of the two of you want to comment on either of these? I'll pass to some other questions if you.

[WHITE] Well it's just my opinion, while General Scowcroft raises a very interesting point. I'm less convinced that Iran would be inclined to allow that to happen. I think most countries that we've seen get the capability have guarded it very jealously. And one problem the Iranians would have is they would be dealing with something very dangerous that they've never dealt with before.

And if a terrorist group did get its hand on one of these, it in some ways could be very, not that hard to trace back where it got it if it ever used it, and then Iran would bear horrific responsibility and perhaps retaliation would result for usage.

I don't think either of us can come to a firm conclusion on this subject, but I'm less pessimistic on Iran being able to maintain control over its own program and products, you know, coming from it. It's something of another dimension, from some of the other things that Iran, IRGC, is the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, has been involved in.

[KATZMAN] Now I just want to, the idea of a strike or no strike is I think sometimes a little bit, I think what many have worked on in study groups recently, the idea is not necessarily to eliminate every site. The idea is to use either the threat of force or some force to compel Iran to then allow broad inspections, tagging and shut down of the program. So one not need necessarily know where every site is or strike every site to still potentially be effective. No one's recommending this as a first option but this is some of the thinking I think on the strike option.

[WHITE] There is one other disturbing possibility that a number of experts have suggested, and that is, particularly if the Israelis struck the Iranians, they would do it at great range, their strike package would be limited, and they wouldn't be able to take out a considerable portion of the program. They would hit key nodes. And what some fear is it would propel, if Iran didn't already have a program, it would propel Iran to immediately initiate a crash program to use what was left of its program to attain that capability.

We saw that happen in Iraq, after the 1981 Osirak raid, Iraq made a robust effort with its residual capabilities, and believe me they were a lot less robust than what Iran has today to come up with a bomb. This became particularly true, as General Scowcroft knows during the Desert Shield/Desert Storm period. And when inspectors got into see what Iraq had, they were astounded at the progress Iraq had made toward a nuclear device, at least an explodable nuclear device. And so if you go in and beat the hornet's nest, and damage it, you could actually be dealing with a wounded animal, something that would be more determined than it had ever been before to attain this capability, and actually would have enough residual capability to do so. And that's a very disturbing aspect.

Something else that needs to be said, and I think General Hoar made some great points about what aviators think about the operational plan to go in and hit such an array of targets, is that part of the plan, a huge aspect of the original 2006 plan to go in and hit these targets, the possible American plan, and I have to emphasize there are a lot of American plans for various things, this does not mean people were on the brink of executing that plan. It included days and days of efforts to knock out Iran's other offensive capabilities, her anti-missile capabilities in the Gulf, much of her Air Force, much of her anti-aircraft, defensive system, nationally, in order to take down all of her submarines. All the things she could use to retaliate for a strike against her nuclear sites.

Now what you have to keep in mind is once all this has been done, and we're talking two or three thousand air strikes over a period of a week, you're not talking about what some people in the media refer to, sort of surgically taking out the Iranian nuclear sites, you're talking about war with Iran. And this could unleash a titanic crisis in the Gulf. Some people think it might even dwarf Iraq in its ultimate consequences. This is why some of us balk so sharply at the very notion of going at this problem militarily, even if we get to the point where it's hard to get Iran to back down.

[ANTHONY] This next question is also Iran-centric, but it has various pieces to it that I'm trying to mold into one. And any of you can take a whack at the answer. Will the reduction in oil prices effecting Iran's budget impact Iran's designs on Iraq?

Another one related to that. Assume for the sake of argument Iran does not exist beside Iraq, and assume that it doesn't interfere in Iraq's affairs, do you not think that the Iraqis would still resist the occupation in any event?

Thirdly, with regard to North Korea and the way that the United States has handled it diplomatically, strategically, politically, engagement wise, quite differently than Iran. Is there no applicability of what the United States has done towards North Korea and its nuclear situation to that pertaining to Iran?

Is it that North Korea does not reside inside the jugular of the world's energy preponderance that drives the economies of global economic growth? Is that the difference?

Is it Iran's strategic real estate, 550 miles coastline on the Gulf, including the other side of the Hormuz Strait, versus Iraq's having less than 50 miles on the Gulf?

And could you comment as well about the reality, or feasibility of the statements that go practically unchallenged about Iran's threats to close the Hormuz Strait, shut it down, when the totality of the maritime traffic going into the Hormuz Strait goes not through Iran's waters, but through Oman's waters, two mile wide zone going in, two mile wide zone going out, and a two mile separation zone between the two.

Joe, you want to take a stab at that first? Because you have to look at that issue.

[HOAR] Well, absolutely. You will recall that during the 80's that we were involved, what Hal used to do, which was called the tanker war, escorting reflagged Kuwaiti tankers through the Gulf. And there was a good deal of activity with the Iranians during that period. I don't know whether Tony Less is still here this afternoon, but Admiral Tony Less presided over the largest naval engagement since the second World War in the Persian Gulf, in I want to say '87. And so there were ships sunk, airplanes shot down, oil platforms destroyed and so forth. And so we've had some experience with this.

The earlier question about forcing the Strait of Hormuz, all of this is possible. We have enormous capabilities. But it's important to note also that the way the Air Force goes about this is that you take out all the air defense first. There's no sense in flying in to try to hit strategic targets with people shooting missiles at you. It tends to cause you to lose your concentration. And so the first thing that goes is the bad guys' air defense. And then incrementally you are able to do some of the other things, which explains why we heard just a moment ago about the numbers of sorties and so forth.

But the Iranians have very sophisticated surface-to-surface missiles, Silkworm, the Seersucker and several others that are very effective. They have small boats that were armed with missiles. It would be a difficult task, and it would be very complicated, and of course we could prevail, but it would take more than a couple of carriers to do this. You would need to get Air Force units deployed into someplace in the GCC -- UAE, Qatar, wherever. You'd have to get permission to do this. There wouldn't be a lot of support for this, I don't think. I think it would be difficult politically to make it happen. We would prevail but it would be at some cost. To Wayne White's point. The result would be that we would have the makings of a very large fight on our hands as a result.

[SCOWCROFT] I'd like to just add one thing. Think what it would do to oil prices.

[ANTHONY] What lessons have been learned, or were learned, from our cooperation with Iran or Iran's cooperation with the United States with regard to Afghanistan after 2001?

[KATZMAN] Thank you very much. Well, you know, one of the reasons that Iran has criticized the United States is because they feel that they were helpful at the Bonn Conference in November 2001, in establishing a transition regime in Afghanistan. They cooperated in setting up a transitional cabinet. They accepted Hamid Karzi as interim leader. And then three months later they were called part of an axis of evil. So, Iran I think has some justification to have that stick in its craw because they indeed were helpful.

Zalmay Khalilzad our representative to the Bonn process called the Iranians very helpful. He met directly with the Iranians during that conference and then of course they ended up on the axis of evil.

Now, the problem is here we are fast forward six years later and Iran is now apparently arming to some extent the Taliban, which is quite striking since Iran nearly went to war with the Taliban when the Taliban were in power in 1998. And in fact Iran mobilized tanks and were ready to attack Afghanistan, but lacking in confidence, they didn't pull the trigger and actually conduct

that invasion. Which brings me to another point; that Iran generally is not confident of its military capabilities. And I think an exhaustive look at Iran's record shows that their performance on the battlefield has been quite poor and inadequate.

[ANTHONY] The remaining question, this would require some explanation to the generalists, the Mujahedin e-Khalq, quasi Marxist Leninists by allegation. Practitioners of violence and extremism, which has been based in Iraq, what should the United States policies be towards that reality? What are the implications if the United States does nothing regarding that reality, and does that reality not complicate even further all that we've been talking about this afternoon.

[WHITE] Well the Mujaheddin e-Khalq, or the People's Mujahedin, is basically an Iranian dissident group that took refuge in Iraq and was exploited by the Saddam Hussein regime. In fact it became essentially its military arm became another brigade in the Iraqi Army essentially. It was very militant. Back in the days of the 1979 revolution, the 1979 hostage taking at the American Embassy the Mujaheddin e-Khalq had an extremely anti-American attitude, and was in fact an infamous editorial on the part of the Mujaheddin e-Khalq, which lobbies all over the United States, even on Capitol Hill trying to make friends, was critical of the deal that released the hostages as being too moderate.

So, it did earn itself a reputation at one time for being a terrorist group. It was designated an official terrorist list group by the United States more than anything else because it had pretty much become a military organization inside of Iraq.

In the late 1990s, as part of an effort to please the Iranians, who were of course concerned about this group and its residual activities in Iran, at a time when Mohammad Khatami was newly President of Iran, and there was a possibility of rapprochement between the United States and Iran. There were a number of other little gestures and exchanges that looked quite promising at the time, but as everyone knows, that's pretty much history. And so the Mujaheddin e-Khalq was, even its declaration of being a terrorist group at a time when residually it wasn't really doing much in that area, was to some degree a sop to the Iranians at a time when reconciliation was hoped for.

In any case, after the invasion, instead of trading the Mujaheddin e-Khalq as a, well we took, took prisoners its personnel in Camp Ashraf in Iraq, was well, not treated like a terrorist group. It was essentially kept in a camp, but a camp that was not well guarded. Many of them slipped away and a number of the former Camp Ashraf people are in the west.

It's a very messy issue because of the Iranians have a very interesting criticism of the United States. You designated this thing as a terrorist group, so what are you doing about it? And we did go ahead and designate it and therefore we are to some degree on the hook, you know, for having not done anything to bring these people to justice for anything much, allowing many of them to just simply slip away from Camp Ashraf, and then there are allegations which are very difficult to prove that even the C.I.A., the U.S. Intelligence Services may have actually exploited some of the MEK personnel because of their knowledge of Iran to conduct operations inside of Iran. That's not really confirmed.

I'm not an expert on that, somebody might be able to speak to it. But anyway, the group is still largely at Camp Ashraf. There are discussions right now because we are handing off a lot of responsibilities to the Iraqis, what do to with these people, in many cases it includes families. But it has become just a problem associated with the occupation of Iraq more than anything else, and an embarrassment in that the United States hasn't cracked down more harshly on the group in light of the fact that we went ahead and declared it a terrorist group. And it is an anti-Iranian group, and therefore the Iranian regime can legitimately demand, make demands as to why people aren't doing anything about it. It's a rather contorted story and it's somewhat of an embarrassment for the U.S.

[ANTHONY] This last question will have 2 or 3 parts to it, and General Scowcroft may want to take 2 of the 3, or actually 4 parts to it.

One is, there have been three wars in this area in the last 30 years; the first Iran-Iraq War, then Desert Shield/Desert Storm, and now Operation Iraqi Freedom. And perhaps one could've added the Iranian Revolution of 1979. In terms of the lessons learned from what we have done, certainly for the first two of these that I mention, the Iran-Iraq War and Desert Shield/Desert Storm, where the United States was roundly lauded and applauded from one end of the Gulf to the other. But the exact opposite since Operation Iraqi Freedom, where all the countries in the Gulf, with one exception, that would be Kuwait, that saw its situation in an existential circumstance, advised us that we didn't know what we were getting into, we would be in over our head, we would rue the day, it would make things further complex in the region, and America's friends would feel the rug was being pulled out from under them because they would be seen and tarred with the brush of moderates, etc. Being America's Arabs, lackies, running dogs, that old jargon.

Why such a contrast between the lauding and applauding of America's response and policies and positions and actions and attitude towards those first two big ones, but the exact opposite largely for the, the one that we're still dealing with there?

And then secondly, was it not true that under the Kissinger Secretary of Stateship that was either an agreement or on acceptance or on acquiescence or on accommodation to the Shah's wanting to become a nuclear power? And of course, the relationship with Iran during that time between the United States was intimate, strategic, economic, political, and commercial, writ large. This was before the Shah really hit the fan there, and it's been something quite different now. Could you square that, that we are on record as having been not uncomfortable, let alone opposing the idea of Iran being a nuclear power?

So those are the two pieces that pertain to you, and I'll ask the others of the others.

[SCOWCROFT] Well, on the first one, I think the difference in the attitude of the region towards the United States and some of the people in the region know better what their attitudes were than we. We were seen in the first two conflicts to be trying to help the region. We were out trying on behalf of the region.

And indeed, when Saddam went into Kuwait, one of the first things he did was say now let's have a conference on the peace process. And we said no, we deal with your aggression. But then quietly we said to the region let's do this and then we will address the peace conference, and we did at the Conference on Madrid.

Whereas, as you pointed out in the last Gulf War, we were advised by everyone else except Kuwait, which is a special thing, but not to do it. So we were seen not to be helping the region with its problems, but dealing with a problem we have within the region. And I think that accounts for, that's why I said I think if we start with the Palestinian peace process, we can reverse that, and get back to where we were before.

In the first Gulf War, we had Egyptian troops, we had Moroccan troops, we had Syrian troops. It was a very different kind of an attitude, and it seems to me that's part of what we need to get back to. That we're there not for our narrow goals, but we're there to help the region with its problems, which also helps us in a more general way.

The Shah. No it's not true. My guess is the Shah in the back of his mind eventually had the notion of being a nuclear power. I think had he continued in power he probably would've gone down that road. And yet this was, we supported him; we didn't think it was maybe the smartest thing for him to do. We supported him in his goal to develop nuclear energy. We said you know, you're one of the richest oil companies in the world, why do you need that? Well he said, the oil's going to run out eventually. Now whether it's that or whether it was a nuclear program in disguise, I don't know. But that simply is not true.

[WHITE] One thing that should be pointed out is that the flagship project under the Shah which they didn't finish, which has now just been completed according to the Russians who stepped in to help the Iranians in recent years, was the Bushehr light reactor project and that was a West German project. The Shah was shopping around for nuclear options outside the U.S. orbit, as opposed to where he was getting most of his conventional weapons, which was from the United States.

[ANTHONY] I think this last one has been answered, but correct me if I'm wrong on this. If the danger of carrying a strike against Iran is that severe, and the lack of communication with them is not working, doesn't this turn it into a common sense issue and simply call for dialogue? Also, doesn't the nuclear club usually adapt to new members and work with them even after freaking out before they became members.

My own reaction would be that Libya might be an example where, no, something happened there where it became a non-member, and perhaps South Africa would be another example, but I defer to our specialist here. Last response, yes? Ken, go ahead.

[KATZMAN] I get this question a lot, about double standards and wide applicability of proliferation issues, but I think on this issue, Iran really has to be looked at somewhat differently. One must consider the very long history of animosity between the United States and Iran. Iran has over 30 years consistently sought to frustrate virtually every U.S. initiative in the Middle East. And I think that has to color how one looks at Iran's nuclear program. I think it's not

applicable to just simply say well, Pakistan has it, India has it. I mean, Pakistan did not undermine U.S. interests. India did not undermine U.S. interests to any great extent. So I do think there is not universal applicability when looking at new nuclear states.

[WHITE] I think there's a little daylight between Ken and I, but I do agree on one point. A lot of Iranian friends of mind constantly raise the argument that, you know, why don't we raise a problem about Mexico having a nuclear program. Mexico doesn't have the same track record as Iran in supporting terrorism and other aspects of what we know about Iran. So I do believe Iran represents a separate case. However, as I cautioned in my presentation, it's one thing to try to find robust diplomatic ways even along the lines of the Iraq Study Group recommendations, which I helped to craft, to increase the pace of diplomacy and its intensity in order to try to see if we can't fix this problem.

It's another thing to take this thing on militarily, which could be far worse than Iran even possessing it, because the writer of the question is actually right. I don't know whether the words freaked out are exactly applicable, but people are pretty upset about nuclear proliferation in any form. I certainly am and I do think that even though it would be rather distasteful that we might well be able to live with a nuclear Iran. I really do believe that, because of the constraints that Iran would find itself under.

Ken I think as a point that Iran might find that it could throw its non-nuclear weight around a little bit more in that scenario, but that's not throwing kilotons or megatons of nuclear weapons around the region, which is of course the case that's being made by people who want to go the entire distance and generate a massive crisis in the Gulf in order to forestall the tiny chance that something might happen there.

It's a very difficult issue, but I will say one thing, that I do believe Iran is not, you know, Brazil, Mexico, or many of the other countries that are responsibly using nuclear power. The trust within the nuclear community is such that I can recall some years ago when the only controversy surrounding the shipment of four metric tons of plutonium to Japan was the passage of the ship, and the danger of contamination should something happen to the ship with such toxic cargo aboard, not the fact that Japan was taking delivery on what could be fashioned into 500 nuclear weapons, maybe even 1000. And very quickly by a country with that kind of industry. There is a certain level of international trust, and it's not just the United States. It's not just a few narrowly focused countries here. There is a large body of concern throughout the world. It includes the International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA. It's not just being egged on by the United States; certainly the U.S. has more ramped up interests than some of the other players. But Iran is a case that has to be considered more delicately, I believe, because of its past policies. And Iran has only itself to blame for being in this special case situation.

But again that doesn't justify going to the most extreme and almost self destructive methods of dealing with this problem, because believe me, this could be a gigantic strategic boomerang, that could come back and harm the United States, the GCC states, and other states in the region just as seriously.

Frankly, given what people who know about the situation tell me, over the long term, I have some reason to be more concerned about Pakistan's possession of nuclear weapons, than I am Iran's, just because of the dangerous possibility of instability we see in Pakistan. I hope this doesn't come to be, just like I hope I'm wrong on some of the issues I reviewed on Iraq. But I personally would be more concerned about the future of Pakistan and its program 20 to 25 years down the road than I would be about an Iranian program. It's just my personal opinion.

[ANTHONY] On that last note, we've had an extraordinary assemblage of talent here, more than a century and a quarter of work, diligent efforts to understand this region and understand these issues and challenges and opportunities for American foreign policies and the overall U.S. relationship with the region. Please join me in thanking all four.

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