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## **ROBERT ROSENKRANZ**

Good evening, everyone, and welcome. I'm Robert Rosenkranz, chairman of Intelligence Squared U.S. Debate Forum, which is an initiative of the Rosenkranz Foundation. It's a very special pleasure for me to welcome you today to our inaugural debate of our inaugural season. With this series of live debates, and with our national radio audience, we're pursuing a lofty and ambitious goal. We're trying to raise the level of public discourse in American life. We see a Congress that's mired in partisan rancor, we see much of the media increasingly ideological. We see policy intellectuals in the think-tank world preaching to their respective choirs, and the discussion of contentious policy issues everywhere, dominated by intense emotions, rather than by facts and reasoned analysis. But Intelligence Squared is not about the search for bland middle ground. Rather, we want to encourage each side of an argument to sharpen its own thinking by listening to opposing views, and responding to inconvenient facts. We want our audience, who voted on tonight's resolution coming in,

to vote again after hearing the debate. As our great Judge Pierre LeBeau said, “You know you have a mind, when you change it.”

[LAUGHTER]

Whether or not you change your mind, I hope you’ll come away with the recognition that there is an intellectually respectable position on the other side. For that is the real point of our initiative. We want to promote a civil society in America that is truly *civil*—where we increase our respect for opposing views, we reduce our anger and emotion, and we call on the best within ourselves, as we confront the challenging issues of our day. We’re thrilled that WNYC is recording our series of debates, and that through National Public Radio, you’ll be able to hear this debate in most of the major cities across the country on local NPR stations. My wife Alexandra Munroe commissioned the study that was the first concrete step in this initiative, and she has made invaluable contributions every step of the way.

We value the sponsorship of the *Times* of London, their support, and indeed the excellence of the debates themselves is part of a team effort. I want to especially thank our moderator Robert Siegel, the voice of “All Things Considered,” and the extraordinary group of panelists who are the true stars of tonight’s event. But one individual merits special acknowledgement—our executive

producer, Dana Wolfe, a former “ABC News Nightline” producer who brought extraordinary determination, intelligence, and experience to this project. Thank you, Dana. [APPLAUSE] I’d like to close by quoting two political leaders, one American, one British. Al Gore, at the Clinton Global Initiative last week, speaking on the subject of global warming as a crisis, said, “The debate is over.” And now, Margaret Thatcher. “I love argument. I love debate. I don’t expect anyone to just sit there and agree with me. that’s not their job.” Well, at the risk of showing my own partisanship, I’d like to declare a victory for Britain.

[LAUGHTER]

Of course Oxford-style debate is a long and vigorous tradition in Britain, and Intelligence Squared was founded in London, where it’s an esteemed institution and a major success. There it attracts a live audience of 800 of London’s most influential figures. I’m honored to welcome the founders, media entrepreneurs Jeremy O’Grady, and John Gordon, and pass the microphone over to John, who will share his thoughts and introduce our moderator for the evening.

[APPLAUSE]

**JOHN GORDON**

Thank you very much, Robert. We’re absolutely delighted that Intelligence Squared has come to America thanks to the

Rosenkranz Foundation. It’s great for the baby that Jeremy O’Grady and I have been nurturing for 25 or more years and that we created four years ago has now come over the pond.

]Intelligence Squared in London has really taken off. Everyone there loves debate and even though it’s very much part of our tradition, it’s not very much a part of the tradition in London--there isn’t any regular series of debates other than Intelligence Squared. I hope this evening you’ll enjoy the two particular pleasures I think that we enjoy from the debate, one is that, this is probably the first time that you’ll have the opportunity to hear oratory. I mean there is very seldom—few outlets where you can hear somebody speaking for eight or nine minutes in trying to persuade you to vote for or against a particular motion. And I think the other great sort of pleasure of debate, which again I’m sure you’ll experience this evening—particularly if you’re undecided as to the motion—is the great pleasure of hearing the proposer arguing the motion, agreeing with them, and then eight minutes later actually agreeing with the other side. And it’s that intellectual ping-pong that is particularly exciting.

We’ve been slightly surprised by the enormous take-up of Intelligence Squared, there’s been a vast amount of interest from companies around the world interviewing us, writing articles about it. It’s almost sort of emblematic of the stereotypes of

various countries, for example the French who have written about it and interviewed us, are particularly surprised by the fact that the speakers who are normally extremely rude to each other in English debate end up going out to dinner with each other.

[LAUGHTER] The Germans who’ve interviewed us twice and written an article in *Der Spiegel*, were actually surprised by debate, full stop. [LAUGHTER] As a consensual society they’ve just never really sort of experienced the idea of debate. And the Japanese, with whom we did an interview on Tokyo FM very recently, a live interview to 20 million people, in the course of the interview it was clear that they completely misunderstood what we were doing. [LAUGHTER]

They asked us, how many people have gotten married during the course of a meeting. [LAUGHTER] They rather thought we were a dating agency. [LAUGHTER] So we’re rather curious to see how you are going to respond to this very quintessential British sport of adversarial debate. I’d like now to hand over the microphone to our very distinguished moderator this evening, Robert Siegel. Robert is a senior host of National Public Radio’s award-winning evening news magazine, “All Things Considered.” He got started in radio news when he was a college freshman in 1964, and he’s still at it. As a host, Robert has reported from Europe, the Middle East and all over the United States. He

served for four years as director of NPR’s news and information department. I’m now very pleased to turn the evening over to Robert for the debate, “We must tolerate a nuclear Iran.” Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Thank you, John Gordon, for your introduction, and I’d like to welcome all of you to the inaugural Intelligence Squared U.S. debate. I’d like to begin with some housekeeping. First the obligatory announcement at all public gatherings— could you please turn off your cell phones, pagers, PDA’s, things that beep, talking toys or whatever else you might have with you tonight, that might interrupt the debate. Also, if you have something that you might be tempted to unwrap in the course of the evening, this is being recorded for broadcast in radio, and the sound of wrapping paper crinkling is often a substitute for crackling fire, or it was in the old days. So please do the unwrapping now, before we begin.

I’d like to explain the proceedings, what’s going to happen this evening. First, the proposer of the motion will start by proposing that side of the argument, and the opposition will follow. We will alternate from the pro to the con side, each presentation being eight minutes. I’ll be the time cop, and I’ll give them two-minute

and one-minute warnings, and if they keep on talking, I'll tell you to turn your cell phones back on and interrupt them.

[LAUGHTER] After all six speakers have spoken and finished, we'll then have a question-and-answer session in which we will welcome your questions, and also your brief statements, and they will respond to you. When that question-and-answer session is complete, each debater will make a final statement lasting no more than two minutes. Now, during the closing statements we then come to this perforated ballot-ticket that you were given on the way in.

You were asked as you entered whether you were for or against the motion or undecided, and once again we will ask you, after you've heard from all of our speakers, to vote again, and you will do that in a manner I'll describe. If you don't have one of these now, we'll take care of that when the time comes and the usher will provide you with a ballot. Then after we've heard all the closing statements, we shall announce the results of both the poll that we took on the way in, and also the voting after you've heard these, what I hope will be very interesting and persuasive presentations. I'd like to introduce our panel right now. First, those who support and propose the notion that we must tolerate a nuclear Iran. George Perkovich is a U.S. foreign policy expert and vice-president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for

International Peace. Welcome. Karim Sadjadpour, formally based in Tehran, is a writer and Iran analyst for the International Crisis Group. Sanam Vakil is assistant professor of Middle East Studies at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies. That’s the side that proposes the motion we’re going to hear debated.

To my left this evening, are Patrick Clawson, who is an author and also deputy director at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Reuel Marc Gerech, an expert in Middle East affairs, formerly with the CIA, currently a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, and best-selling author and co-founder/editor of the Washington-based political magazine *The Weekly Standard*, William Kristol. Bill Kristol rounds out our panel. So let us start the debate, proposing the motion, “We must tolerate a nuclear Iran,” George Perkovich, please take the podium.

**GEORGE PERKOVICH**

[Thank you. I’m intrigued by the “Dating Game” idea so maybe we can return to that in the question part. It’s an evening event, everybody’s tired from work. To judge the motion, “We must tolerate a nuclear Iran,” you must evaluate the alternatives to it. Ideally, the United States and other leading actors can prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Indeed, all six of us here



agree emphatically that the U.S. and the international community must do everything possible, and more than has been done already, to try to prevent this. We all agree with that, we all work on that much of our time. We can talk about some of the steps that that might entail, including the United States being willing to engage in direct negotiations with Iran if Iran is willing to do so, which is a big question. We should talk about security guarantees to Iran, which Patrick has written about in the form of, “We will not attack you if you don’t attack us.” We should right now be mustering Iran’s neighbors— perhaps secretly, some of it openly—into a much tighter, cohesive network to try to cooperate on intelligence, air monitoring, perhaps moving ballistic missile defenses into the region, to show Iran that its freedom of maneuver will be diminished if it moves forward with nuclear weapons.

We have to be much more direct with President Putin in Russia. Russia is the biggest impediment of getting the Security Council to take strong actions, and we can talk about that later. The general point is, prevention, all of us agree, is the best option. Yet prevention is not the proposition we’ve been asked to debate here tonight. The question we are debating, is whether we can tolerate a nuclear Iran. That question assumes that diplomacy has failed, and we’re on to other options. Then we have to ask,

well, what are the alternatives to tolerating an Iran that possesses nuclear weapons. Well, one might say, well, we kill ourselves. If we can't tolerate, we kill ourselves. That's not a good option.

The second option will be, well, we'll kill all of them. Make the problem go away. Also not a good option, there are 74 million of them, three times the population of Iraq. Even if somehow it were morally justifiable, it wouldn't necessarily solve the problem. The most feasible strategy that is the alternative, the most feasible strategy for *not* tolerating a nuclear Iran, is an attack—a combination of attack on its known nuclear facilities, on its air force and navy to try to prevent its capacity to retaliate immediately, and on the Revolutionary Guard, to try to hasten regime change. This ought to be examined, and there are a long list of questions that arise from this. But the key thing in terms of the motion before us is, that you should not assume that this is a question of will power. In other words, if one says, “I will not tolerate a nuclear Iran,” that somehow that solves the problem, that the will power to act—meaning to conduct a war—somehow achieves the objective of eliminating Iran's nuclear capability.

There's no reason actually to conclude that it would—that even if you had the will, you could eliminate that capability. But you have to factor that in, as well as the consequences of a potential

action. Now if I thought that a military attack of this type I described would actually eliminate that nuclear capability, and do it for a sufficient time, I would be for it, *if* the consequences of our attack were not going to leave us worse off. But to conclude that the consequences *won't* leave us worse off, you have to ask a bunch of questions. To his great credit, Reuel Gerecht, our colleague, has written an essay last April in the *Weekly Standard*, that's a very detailed treatment of a military option, which he ultimately advocates. Reuel talks about a campaign, a military campaign, that he says would be “a series of actions and counter-actions between the U.S. and Iran, that would probably transpire over many years, perhaps a decade or more.”

Now there's a long list of questions that arise when you contemplate a war with Iran lasting a decade or more. You'd have to know if we buy some time, maybe two or three years, in the first attack, what happens. Well, the most likely thing that happens is the inspectors have to go, that's been our major source of intelligence. So now when you want to figure out what else to attack over these years, your capacity actually to pinpoint things has diminished. The probability of hitting false targets, wrong targets, killing innocent people, being subjected to media treatments then of the mistaken bombing, goes up, and with each mistaken bomb, U.S. credibility in the world, in the region, in

Iran, is diminished. There are other questions. What are the odds then an air war will improve the prospects for democracy in Iran? What are the odds that another war will make Iran less threatening to the U.S. and Israel?

What are the odds that another war led by the United States will increase America’s capacity to solve the other problems in the world—Iraq, Afghanistan, the war on terror, international trade? You name the issues, will our credibility be enhanced if we conduct another war in the Middle East? Now Reuel wrote his essay before the war in Lebanon. I would argue that war has even further raised the bar, the difficulty, of thinking that a war against Iran will actually solve this problem. We believe that another war would leave the United States and the world worse off than we would be by pursuing an alternative strategy. If you agree, you should vote in favor of the resolution. We argue there’s plenty of evidence to conclude that if more energetic efforts to prevent Iran from getting nuclear—

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Two minutes—

**GEORGE PERKOVICH**

—fail, it will still be possible to deter and contain Iran from using nuclear weapons against anyone. Iran’s president is alarming, he is indeed alarming. But the leadership in Iran is collective, and it

includes many old men. These old men did not get old by being suicidal. Iran, Persia, has thousands of years of grand history, and there’s no reason whatsoever to think that Iranian nationalists would sacrifice their nation and their civilization in a nuclear war of their making. There is other evidence of Iran’s deterability. Iran has not attacked the weaker United Arab Emirates with which it has a dispute over two resource-rich islands. Iran did not attack the Sunni extremist Taliban government in Afghanistan, even when that government killed, murdered, nine Iranian diplomats.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

One minute.

**GEORGE PERKOVICH**

Iran has a Jewish population that is free to leave but chooses not to. There is no evidence that Iran is not deterable. Indeed, as Reuel has written, “The Islamic republic ceased to produce holy warriors by the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988. The potential for chiliastic rapture has just dried up.” The bigger point is this. Voting for the motion does not mean doing nothing, or turning the other cheek to Iran. Voting for the motion means deciding that another war will not solve this problem, and that a robust, extremely tough strategy of deterrence and containment would be the most effective way to keep a nuclear Iran from threatening the United States and its friends. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Thank you, George Perkovich, for proposing the motion before us, “We must tolerate a nuclear Iran.” And now to the podium we call the first opponent of that motion, Patrick Clawson.

**PATRICK CLAWSON**

I thought George gave a very eloquent statement of why we should not go to war with Iran, and if that were the proposition that we were debating, I think his arguments were spot-on. That however is not the proposition we’re debating. The proposition we’re debating is that we should not tolerate a nuclear Iran. That’s quite a different matter. In fact, there are many things that we could do, even if Iran got a nuclear weapon, that would suggest to me that we would have non-military ways in order to persuade Iran to give up that weapon. Most of the countries of the world which developed—which had nuclear weapons have given them up, and not through war. So there are in fact many things that we can do, that would show we cannot tolerate a nuclear Iran, short of war. So I would rather spend my time discussing the proposition as stated to you, namely that we cannot tolerate a nuclear Iran, rather than discussing whether or not to go to war with Iran.

I would like to suggest that when it comes to a nuclear Iran, the

proposition is very well-stated, because it leaves vague exactly what do we mean. Are we talking about the nuclear family in Iran? Or what are we talking about here? [LAUGHTER] I for one have no objections if Iranians care to choose to live in nuclear families. But what we are likely to have is a very gray case. We in fact do not have a smoking gun to show that Iran has a nuclear weapons program. It's unlikely that we're going to wake up some morning to find that Iran has exploded a nuclear weapon. What we have to deal with instead, is what Iran openly declares that it is doing—namely building this complicated thing called a nuclear fuel cycle, to make the materials for having a nuclear weapon.

The Iranians themselves have described well why they're doing this. In a remarkable speech, their chief negotiator for their nuclear weapons program wrote that having a fuel-cycle capability almost means the country that possesses this capability is able to produce nuclear weapons, should that country have the political will to do so. Now that's the judgment of the Iranian government. The Nobel Peace Prize-winning head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohammed Al Baradei—who you may recall was no friend of George Bush on the Iraq matter—says that if Iran does what Iran announces it's intending to do, that Iran will be, quote, “a few months,” end

quote, away from having a nuclear weapon. So our real question is, do we want to see Iran have that kind of a capability, on the edge of having a nuclear weapon but not quite there. We’re not going to have the dramatic moment where Iran explodes a nuclear weapon necessarily. If we need to act, we need to act much before then. We need to act when Iran is getting this capability to make the essential elements for a nuclear weapon. That is what we have to concentrate on stopping.

Indeed, why do I think that that is something that not only we cannot tolerate, but we *need* not tolerate. Let me count some of the reasons. First is that what the Iranians are doing, is exploiting a loophole in the system that we have constructed to make sure that the world does not have a hundred countries with nuclear weapons. The Iranians have correctly identified a real weakness in our system of stopping the spread of nuclear weapons. Indeed, Muhammad Al Baradei has proposed a five-year moratorium on the construction of all fuel-cycle facilities worldwide, and has said that any such facility should be under international control, because the technology is so dangerous.

If Iran gets away with building this, it will not be the only country. We will not only have to tolerate a nuclear Iran, we will have to tolerate a nuclear Turkey, a nuclear Egypt, a nuclear



Saudi Arabia. A nuclear Algeria. A nuclear Venezuela. A nuclear South Africa. A nuclear Brazil. When we start having 20 or 30 countries with nuclear weapons, and we start having a multiple system of deterrence, it's going to be very interesting if we have to go through the Cuban Missile Crisis another 20 or 30 or 40 times. I'm not confident it'll turn out so positively every time. I don't think that deterrence is something that we can count on working every time, the way it did work with the Soviets, once the Soviets got so tired and Brezhnev took over, and couldn't care less about revolution. But in any case, I say we cannot tolerate a nuclear Iran, because if we tolerate a nuclear Iran, we will be tolerating many, many more nuclear countries, and that is not something that will lead to peace in the world.

Furthermore, we need not tolerate a nuclear Iran, because there is much that we can do to stop it without having to talk about going to war. The fact is that Iran has acknowledged to the International Atomic Energy Agency that it's been carrying out these clandestine nuclear activities for 18 years. But they haven't gotten very far. Now, a lot of that has broadcast our success, in fact having a system which does limit what Iran can do. We have had a lot of successes in our efforts in stopping Iran's program. You may recall that we were very worried when the Soviet Union fell apart that its scientists and nuclear matter would show up

around the world, causing proliferation. We started a big program called the Nunn-Lugar Program to prevent that. And in fact, none of it has shown up in Iraq. None of it.

Indeed, the Iranians have had to, on the whole, do things themselves. The only thing that they were able to buy was a set of blueprints from A.Q. Khan of Pakistan. I don't know about you, but I can't assemble furniture from Ikea when I buy it with the blueprints. I certainly can't program my VCR with the instructions that come with it. So buying a set of blueprints didn't really get the Iranians necessarily that far ahead. Indeed, that's why their program has taken 18 years, and is going very slowly. President Ahmadinejad of Iran claimed this last spring that they were going to have—

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Two minutes—

**PATRICK CLAWSON**

—3,000 centrifuges up and operational by the end of the year. I don't think he's going to have 300. And we can, by reinforcing our system of controls on Iran's access to advanced technology, by mobilizing the world community, slow down Iran's program dramatically. To the point where Iran *might* be able to make one bomb, but I don't think it'll be able to make a lot of bombs, and it certainly won't have a way to deliver that thing. And if this bomb

ends up being some two-ton monstrosity that they can barely fit into a bread truck, then they won't have easy ways of delivering this thing. So, there are always ways in which the control on technologies makes the real difference. That's why we should continue our efforts to limit Iran's access to these advanced technologies, rather than tolerating a nuclear Iran and saying, well, now you're in the nuclear club. Okay, join the club, you can do what you want. No. We should, even if Iran's program progresses dramatically, continue to press them, continue to work on them—

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

One minute—

**PATRICK CLAWSON**

—and not tolerate it. Furthermore, as George laid out at the end of his presentation, there are excellent reasons to think that, in fact, the Iranian government is pretty cautious, in spite of this Ahmadinejad of the moment. On the whole, right now the Iranians think that they're on top of the world and the strategic situation's very good for them. But that too will change, and our job is to press them, press them so that the cautious element—which I entirely agree with George is very much there in the leadership—comes to the fore, and the Iranians decide that this thing too risky, it's not good for Iran's security, and we can get them to stop this program, or if the program's advanced a long

way, we can get them to reverse it. Most of the countries that have had nuclear weapons have given them up. So we do not have to tolerate a nuclear Iran, we can get them to stop, or if necessary to reverse.

[APPLAUSE]

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Thank you, Patrick Clawson. We now turn to the proponents once again, and to Sanam Vakil.

**SANAM VAKIL**

Thank you. It’s a pleasure to be here tonight to tell you why we must tolerate a nuclear Iran. It’s time for the United States to rewrite the balance of power. Iran has been using its nuclear program to bolster its legitimacy, domestically in Iran, regionally in the Middle East, and internationally, And this tactic is coming at the expense of American credibility and influence in these arenas. So by engaging Iran over its nuclear program, Washington can take this tool of coercion out of Tehran’s hands, and once again have a larger degree of influence as well as credibility within Iran, within the region of the Middle East, and internationally. Let me tell you how Tehran is using its nuclear program to its advantage. Let me start with the domestic.

By engaging, the U.S. would prevent the Iranian regime from using the nuclear program as a pretext for regime preservation.

Through its domestic policies, Tehran has advanced its power under the guise of this program. The administration of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is tactically manipulating its nationalistic nuclear ambitions to foster support domestically. Important though, is if you ask the average Iranian, what is nuclear energy, or what is uranium enrichment, they wouldn't be able to tell you. This is what the government has homed in on. They've been able to exploit the double standards that exist within the international community, vis-à-vis Iran's nuclear program, compared to India's, Pakistan's, North Korea's, and even Israel's. This is what the government draws strength. An edict was issued roughly six months ago through the National Security Council preventing negative media from being reported on nuclear issues domestically, and the government uses censorship of media to control popular access to any nuclear-related information, among other information as well.

This way, the government has been successful in perpetuating nuclear nationalism, and controlling the effect of that nationalism. For Iran, the nuclear issue is linked to the nation's place in the modern world, national pride, and resistance against the West. An effort to prevent Iran's program from advancing is further associated to discrimination, and perpetuated by fears of sanctions and regime change. More interestingly, as I observed

this summer during my visit to Tehran, Ahmadinejad has more support throughout Tehran today and in other cities on foreign policy issues than he did last year after he was surprisingly elected.

This is due to his confrontational approach, compared to the policy of détente that was pursued under the Hatami administration. You might ask why. That’s because many Iranians feel quite happy and proud that he has taken on the nuclear portfolio and succeeded in garnering more concessions for Iran, compared to what was going on during the tenure of President Hatami. So these confrontational tactics are also domestic tactics pursued by the government, acts of deflection to perpetuate a constant state of fear domestically, with regards to sanctions and even a military strike, and these tactics are designed to strengthen the hand of the regime and the unclear program. This is why we should tolerate a nuclear Iran. We should think about the Iranians at home that have to suffer under the regime. The same time, the government is using the opportunity of the nuclear threat to launch a domestic crackdown on elites within the system. They’ve closed down reformist newspapers. They’re purging universities of secular academics. They’re detaining students. They’re purging bureaucrats from the system. All in an effort to silence opposition, and all under the

paradigm and all under the guise of the nuclear program.

The regime is ever more united in the face of opposition. Let’s also consider a counter-factual. If we do not tolerate Iran’s unclear program, we are playing into the hands of Ahmadinejad. He dreams of becoming a war president. Why was he elected? He was elected on an economic platform. He was elected to be a populist President. But since he’s been in power for the past year, he has yet to meet the demands of the people, and he has been pursuing foreign policy issues, not economic ones. Any nuclear strike, military strike, or sanctions would give him just cause for continuing to neglect his electoral mandate.

So let me offer you even one more final reason why we should tolerate a nuclear Iran on the domestic agenda. The government is further playing to these domestic nationalistic sentiments of the Iranian street, and playing up against the Iranian street that has historically been very pro-American. They’re using their imagery of the war, and they’re using fear of sanctions and regime change to change the sentiment in Iran against the United States, and this is a huge loss for Washington. Let’s turn to the region. Ahmadinejad has also exploited the nuclear issue to no end. This issue has gained a lot of support among the Arab and Muslim street. He’s spoken of the double standards that exist among

U.S. policies in the Middle East. He's taken on the plight of the Palestinians, challenging the order in the recent war this summer, and he's earned praise in capitols from Cairo to Jakarta. There's also a credible—

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Two minutes—

**SANAM VAKIL**

—threat of proxy war. It's a notable one, and the regime has cultivated relations with proxies to counterbalance the very large American presence in the region with two unfinished wars on Iran's borders. So Tehran's message is simple—it's a regime not to be reckoned with [sic]. The U.S. is in a weakened position in Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Afghanistan, and with this growing conflict within the religion of Islam. Tehran is exploiting this to its advantage, drawing on the Arab street for support at the expense of the United States. Internationally. The regime's confrontational regional and domestic approach of the nuclear program has also divided and weakened the international community at Washington's expense. Unable to unite the international community and drive a consensus on sanctions, only weakens Washington's position further. Jacques Shirac recently defected, and China and Russia are unable to back Washington—



**ROBERT SIEGEL**

One minute—

**SANAM VAKIL**

—on any sanctions in this nuclear jockeying that’s going back and forth. Let’s compare Ahmadinejad. He’s able to rally 118 NAM nations to support Iran’s ambitions, and the United States can’t rally the P-5 and the Security Council? That’s depressing. So, Ahmadinejad says he supports dialogue, let’s take him up on this offer. I leave you with this. The U.S. is losing the Iranian street, it’s moving into dangerous territory in the Arab and Muslim world, and it’s losing support in the Security Council. Let’s take the lever away from Tehran. Let’s not allow them to exploit their nuclear program at our expense anymore. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Thank you, Sanam Vakil. Our next speaker, opposing the motion, is Reuel Marc Gerecht.

**REUEL MARC GERECHT**

Bigotry against tall men. I just want to start off by thanking George for using my own words against me. [LAUGHTER] I sort of had the sensation of arguing with my wife and I inevitably lose those encounters. I will suggest that perhaps he maybe used some of my words a little selectively. I mean, I think Patrick

handled the geo-strategic issues rather well, I’m not going to go back over those. I also am not going to go over a point-counterpoint on the individual repercussions of a bombing run. I did that, as George said, at great length in a *Weekly Standard* piece and there’s no reason for me to torture any of you here who read it the first time through. But I will focus on a couple of issues which I think tend to get overlooked, particularly in American and Europe audiences. When I hear the other side talking, I hear them talking about Iran as if it’s a status quo country. I almost never hear them talk about God. I almost never hear them talk about the religious inspiration that still fuels the regime at the very top. What people have been anticipating inside of the Islamic republic for the longest period of time, is that it would go thermidor.

They thought it with Rafsanjani, who by the way should really be considered the father of the Iranian nuclear weapon. They thought it with him, even though at the very same time he was unleashing the Intelligence Ministry, the Revolutionary Guard Corps and assassination teams and bombing teams that went around the world in the 1980s and ‘90s. They thought it about Rafsanjani when he was calling these ecumenical movements, bringing in Sunni militants into Tehran on a regular basis and having outreach programs. By the way, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al

Qaeda’s number two, has been probably Tehran’s favorite poster boy for over 20 years. I will just add there’s something deeply suspicious about members of Al Qaeda moving through Iran before 9-11 and moving through Iran after 9-11.

It’s also very unusual for individuals who are under house arrest in Tehran to be placing cell phone calls to operational units of Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia. That is not the *usual* routine that people have when they’re under house arrest. I think we have to understand that absolutely, when you deal with the vast majority of Iranian people, certainly Iranian men—these are the ones we’re primarily talking about—that that chiliastic drive that you saw in the 1980s, they were really the mothership of much of the jihadism mentality that we see today transferred over to the Sunni world, it’s dead. It died. If nothing else it died with the end of Khomeini who was sort of the charismatic inspiration. Unfortunately for the hardcore and for the elite, it’s not dead. I would argue it is as alive today as it was before.

That doesn’t mean, once again, that you will not find individuals in that league who cannot be, quote, quite pragmatic. I was quite struck by the commentary of the fellow on CBS, the very, very old fellow, who went to interview Ahmadinejad and he said he seemed like a very rational man. That is I think a very Western comment,

because we have this sort of false juxtaposition that individuals of die-hard belief and faith cannot be rational. They absolutely are. I mean Khomeini was a very, very rational man, he had a certain love of Neoplatonism that people don't talk about but he was a more or less rational man. The same is true of Ahmadinejad but Ahmadinejad is a die-hard believer. So by the way is Khomeini, so by the way I would argue is Rafsanjani. What we have to worry about, is in fact that the anti-Americanism at that level has not diminished. You have to think, do you want to do what is necessary to try to stop them from getting nuclear weaponry, because you're not primarily talking about an exchange of nuclear weapons being a firing-off between the United States and Iran. The Iranians realize that will probably end up very badly for them.

What are you interested in is, will this give them an umbrella for protection of terrorism. I think if you look at the Western track record dealing with the clerical regime, that you have to say we've done a very poor job of responding to them. In many ways we have been at war with the Islamic republic since its inception, except we have not responded. They have bombed, they have attacked, they have killed American soldiers, we did not respond. I suggest to you that what you're going to see if they get nuclear weapons is a new inspiration, I think it's already out there, and I

would expect that Ahmadinejad is once again trying to do what Khomeini and Rafsanjani had tried in the 1980s and failed.

That was to lead the radical Islamic world on a new anti-American jihad. I think you’re going to see them try to do it again, and the acquisition of nuclear weapon is a key to that element. It is their safeguard, it is their protection. Once they have that I would argue that in fact the odds of them being able to strike the United States through proxies or directly will go up astronomically. Should you take that risk? I would say no, that you have to say, do you want to give individuals who run what I would call sort of a more sophisticated version of bin Ladinism, do you want to let them have the nuke? I would say under no circumstances. Is it worthwhile to take the repercussion from that in Afghanistan, which I don’t think are that much, in Iraq, and I might add, the way Iraq is going it’s going to be so bad—

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Two minutes—

**REUEL MARC GERECHT**

—it’s going to be very difficult for the Iranians to try to make a difference. If you are willing to absorb the repercussion of that, I would say yes, absolutely, the nightmare scenarios that you would have when you have this hardcore elite, which I would argue will become more and more radical. Because in fact the

vast majority of Iranians have sheared away from the visions and the dreams and the promises of the Islamic revolution. They are not going in the direction of their citizenry, would that they were. They're going in the opposite direction. The people inside of that regime, particularly I would argue the most important people, the clergy, the dissident clergy that I would argue are still the hope for that regime in the future, have in fact lost ground if not been completely stuffed. I would agree with Sanam that public diplomacy is a very good idea. The United States should try to wage as best a public diplomacy as possible. But public diplomacy is not going to—

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

One minute—

**REUEL MARC GERECHT**

—the nuclear weapons issue. Would that we actually could improve our position inside Iran, and I would just add by the way, the United States has a far better position inside that country, and it has maintained a relatively, if not pretty seriously hostile position against the Islamic republic now for over 25 years, while the Europeans have constantly tried to use engagement, yet their position inside of Iran I think is far, far less. Hostility towards the clerical regime has not cost us inside that country, it has in fact gained us a following. So you have to decide, are you willing to take a really serious risk, and I would add just tactically, you

have to say yes. Because diplomacy you know isn't going to work unless you threaten the possibility, you have to be serious about it, of using military strikes. The only reason the Europeans—and they will tell you that if you talk to the Germans and the French and the British—

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Time is up, Reuel.

**REUEL MARC GERECHT**

Time's up?

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

We'll hear from the Europeans later I think. Thank you very much, Reuel Marc Gerecht. [APPLAUSE] Now our third and final speaker in support of the motion, and that is Karim Sadjadpour.

**KARIM SADJADPOUR**

Okay. Thank you so much for coming, it's really a privilege to be here and it's a privilege to be personally speaking for Bill Kristol. It's a big privilege and a big challenge. When I was in high school my father used to watch the Sunday morning talk shows. My favorite guest was always Bill Kristol because he was always so thoughtful and sensible and sensitive, I just assumed he was a liberal. I must admit I was a late bloomer intellectually.

[LAUGHTER]

I would just like to first start off by reiterating the point that

George made, that I think all six of us here are after the same thing at the end of the day—an Iran which is democratic, which is free, which is prosperous, and which is not armed with a nuclear weapon. That would be the ideal option. So the question is not whether or not the Islamic republic is a cruel regime. It is, I can tell you as someone who has been detained in Tehran by the Revolutionary Guard, it is a cruel regime. The question is not, again, why or whether or not Iran should have a nuclear weapon we should tolerate. I think personally it would be disastrous if they were to acquire a nuclear weapon. But the question on our panel is, should we tolerate it, and that begs the question, should we go to war with Iran to prevent it. Which cost would be higher, to actually accept Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon, or going to war with them to prevent it.

I would suggest that the latter option would be far more dangerous, bombing Iran to prevent it from acquiring a nuclear. I'm a bit surprised tonight that the other side of the table is seeming to—I'm a bit too junior to contradict them too much—but they're running away from the argument somewhat because both Reuel and Bill are on the record saying that they would bomb Iran. So hopefully, we hear that from Bill in the next round. [LAUGHTER] I would just argue similar to what Sanam said, that if Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was here tonight, he would be



arguing on the other side of the table, meaning I think he very much wants to see a confrontation between the U.S. and Iran.

I will just suggest why in three different contexts, why the Iranians, particularly the hard-liners in Tehran, would like to see a confrontation between the U.S. and Iran. The first context is the regional context. What was very interesting for me following the right-wing Iranian media was these comments which Secretary Rice made after the war in Lebanon in July. What she called it was “the birth pangs of a new Middle East.” When I was following the Iranian right-wing media, it was very interesting how much they agreed with Secretary Rice, they said indeed it is the birth pangs of a new Middle East. Indeed this is a proxy war between the U.S. and Iran for hegemony in the Middle East, for Arab and Muslim hearts and minds. In fact we’re very well-placed to fight this war, and what’s very disconcerting right now is that these same newspapers in Tehran which are very fascist when it comes to domestic politics, are Jeffersonian democrats when it comes to regional politics because they say, actually, democratic elections are very much in our interest.

Hamas came to power in Palestine, Hezbollah came to power in Lebanon through democratic elections, the Muslim Brotherhood had a very strong showing in Egypt. Hardcore religious came to

power in Iraq via democratic elections. So in fact, we are winning this war for Arab and Muslim hearts and minds, and given the U.S.’s low standing in the region, it looks like history is now on our side. Opinion polls which are conducted show that among the Arab street, the three most popular leaders are Hassan Nasrallah of Hezbollah, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, and Khaled Meshaal of Hamas. So right now Iran feels in a very good position, and I think that bombing the country they would feel even better-placed to fight this war for Arab and Muslim hearts and minds.

We should take into account that if we bomb Iran, oil prices are likely going to go up to \$150 a barrel. Currently the regime is making about \$200 million a day on oil revenue, so we double that, they’re going to make \$400 million a day on oil revenue. I would argue that that will put them in a far better position to support Hamas and Hezbollah financially than if we don’t bomb the country. I think that just, if we’re serious about fighting this war, which is becoming very much this self-fulfilling prophecy of the clash of civilizations, we’re going to have to figure out a way to resolve our differences in the Middle East without using bombs. The second point is from a non-proliferation perspective, from a nuclear perspective. What would happen if we actually bomb Iran to try to prevent them from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

Let’s play out the scenario, in fact I played out the scenario with a Navy captain.

Say we bomb these sites. First of all we don’t know where many of them are, some of them are underground, some of them we don’t have intelligence on, so we can’t be sure that we bombed the right sites. Second of all some of them are near population centers, we would be killing Iranian civilians. Quite frankly, you know, if you talk to nuclear physicists they say, well, Iran actually has quite a bit of know-how right now. It’s like baking a cake. They have the ingredients, they have the recipe, and they have the cooks, they have the scientists. Unless you’re going to kill the scientists, you’re going to kill the cooks, I mean, it’s going to be very difficult to set back this program a long way. At most, in talking to nuclear physicists, it will take Iran two to three years to recalibrate. At that point, if we bomb them, international public opinion may well side with them, and the Iranians may say in fact we now are after a nuclear weapon because we now have been shown that we need it to protect our sovereignty.

At that point, when you bomb these sites and you don’t know where Iran is recalibrating these facilities, maybe underground, if we really then want to avert the prospect we’ll have to send in ground troops. At this point, with our troops spread thin in Iraq

and Afghanistan, that doesn't look like a welcome prospect. Now from the domestic perspective, this is the one that for me I feel most strongly about. When I first started this job, I didn't get involved in this work because I was passionate about centrifuges and cascades and things like that, this is what George was saying—

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Two minutes—

**KARIM SADJADPOUR**

—but about the prospect of the future for the Iranian people. There's this widespread notion that all Iranians are in favor of a nuclear program, which I would like to debunk. I think that, on one hand Iran is a nationalist country, and many people feel strongly that we're a great nation, why this double standard. India and Pakistan can have this project, why can't we. But at the same time this is a country that we forget experienced an eight-year war with Iraq. Not really one family was left unscathed by this war, there were half a million casualties. No one romanticizes the conflict or the prospect of further militarization. Quite frankly this is a very technical project, the idea of enriching uranium as opposed to importing enriched uranium from abroad, so the idea that your average Iranian in Shiraz or Tehran wakes up in the morning and says, you know, if only we could enrich uranium today our lives would be so much better half, has also

been very much exaggerated.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

One minute—

**KARIM SADJADPOUR**

But I would argue that you present to the Iranian people two options. You present this publicly to the regime. A, pursue this nuclear program unequivocally, come what may, for the sanctions, isolation, potential militarization. Or B, you take certain nuclear compromises and you reenter the international community. You’re going to have the people put a lot of pressure on the regime to change their behavior, and so far this has not been a policy option which has been issued by the U.S. Thank you very much.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Thank you. [APPLAUSE] That’s Karim Sadjadpour, and now speaking against the motion, Bill Kristol.

**WILLIAM KRISTOL**

Thank you, Robert. Let me begin by thanking Bob Rosenkranz for bringing Intelligence Squared to New York and to the United States. I don’t know if Intelligence Squared has a slogan or motto in London, but over here you might want to think about, “Fair and balanced.” [LAUGHTER] “We debate, you decide.” You might almost call this a no-spin zone here, you know. With Robert Siegel, it’s Bill O’Reilly... [LAUGHTER] I shouldn’t have

said that, this will ruin his career on NPR, and I’ll never be invited back to “All Things Considered.”

I personally came in undecided, um, as many of you did, and even leaning slightly to the other side, but I’ve been convinced by Reuel and [LAUGHTER] Patrick’s brilliant arguments. Bob said he wanted intellectually respectable positions on both sides, and I have a high opinion of George and Sanam and Karim. But I’ve got to say that, unfortunately, they’re intelligent people but the arguments, while respectable, are not convincing. I was put off by Karim’s false praise [LAUGHTER] of me for a second, and I salute Sanam for her genuine concern obviously for the Iranian people who I think we all agree deserve a much better regime than they have, and I think we all agree, we haven’t talked about this, deserve much more aggressive efforts on the part of the United States and other democracies and Europe could do much more here, to help them liberate themselves from this regime. George is one of the more reasonable Democrats in Washington. I’ve known him for a while and he worked for Senator Biden and I know that to be a fact, but the tip-off for all of you was when he said that he didn’t believe we should kill ourselves. [LAUGHTER]

**GEORGE PERKOVICH**

I thought that was the safe position.

**WILLIAM KRISTOL**

That was a courageous break from the mainstream of the Democratic Party... [LAUGHTER] I want to pay tribute to George, I'm doing my best to ruin all these people's careers—

**GEORGE PERKOVICH**

That's the conservative position against euthanasia—

**WILLIAM KRISTOL**

I'm doing my best to ruin all of their careers. Look, we should not tolerate a nuclear Iran. Three quick reasons, and a couple of them have been touched on but maybe not developed. George says, and I think everyone probably agrees that we have to be tougher in our diplomacy, think more seriously about sanctions, and move perhaps outside the Security Council to get sanctions if we can, explore financial pressure to really squeeze Iran which I think the administration is beginning to do. Secretary of the Treasury Paulsen is working pretty seriously on this, and that would be done I think outside the Security Council through a sort of coalition of the willing on the Finance Ministry side. This is all good. None of this will work unless it's backed up by the threat of force. Diplomacy will only work if there is a real threat of force, not just saying options are on the table, but a sense that we really won't tolerate the outcome if Iran does not yield, if the moderates to the degree there are some in the Iranian regime, aren't empowered by the pressure we're putting on to prevent the

headlong rush to nuclear weapons, and manage to change course domestically.

Diplomacy can't work without the threat of force, therefore, it would really be disastrous to diplomacy to say, we must tolerate a nuclear Iran. So whatever people might think one would have to do, and sometimes one has to do things in the real world seven or 10 years from now or three years from now I suppose, we should not say we should tolerate a nuclear Iran and therefore you should all vote “No,” just to help diplomacy along. [LAUGHS] But I'm serious about that, and I'm serious that I believe shouldn't at the end of—I will satisfy Karim and say that I would bomb Iran in a pinch. But it is important to not even signal weakness.

The only reason the Europeans got serious in 2003 is that we went into Iraq, that we hadn't yet encountered the difficulties we've encountered in the subsequent three years, and Iranians were worried and the Europeans were worried that Bush really would use force. That's what made the Europeans much tougher than it looked as if they would have been prior to 2003. So for diplomacy to work, you need the credible threat of force, you therefore could not say that we would tolerate, or certainly not that we must tolerate a nuclear Iran. So for diplomacy to work



you need the threat of force. The credible, real threat of force. Real plans, real attempt to lay the groundwork for it if it comes to that. Secondly, deterrence. That is the ultimate argument obviously on the other side, we can deter Iran, we deterred the Soviet Union, we deterred China. Pakistan and India have nuclear weapons and so far at least haven't used them. That depends on the nature of the regime. Is this the Brezhnev regime, so to speak? Conservative, cautious old men, as George said? Or is this a much more radical regime, or at least a regime with radical elements in it, and do we have confidence that the radical elements won't prevail internally? I don't think so.

This is a rising, confident, ambitious, aggressive regime, that thinks it's carrying forth a historic mission, sort of a jihadist mission on behalf of Islam in general, particularly Shia Islam but perfectly willing to work with Sunni jihadists and also to compete with Sunni jihadists in radicalism which is itself very dangerous and of course that's the story in some respects of the last 25 years in the Middle East, with the Wahabes and the Iranians competing to radicalize Islam and unfortunately, succeeding.

Letting Iran progress towards nuclear weapons just increases the strength of all the worst radicalizing forces, the jihadist forces, within Islam. It would be disastrous in my opinion not just for

Iran to get nuclear weapons. It’s disastrous for them to succeed in progressing towards nuclear weapons over the next two, four, six, eight years. Every month that we huff and puff and the Europeans huff and puff and we put off another Security Council resolution and they progress and Ahmadinejad comes here and is treated well by the Council of Foreign Relations and—

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Two minutes.

**WILLIAM KRISTOL**

—and pays no price for anything he says or anything he does, every month and every year that that happens, the worst forces in the Middle East are strengthened, every government that’s teetering and isn’t sure which side to join basically, our side, the moderate side or the radical side, decides they have to cut a deal with the radical side. Individuals decide that looks like the way of the future, this is the classic, dangerous scenario. One hopes that the more moderate people, the more moderate forces in the Iranian regime, are going to prevail, and the only way to help them to prevail, is not to reward Ahmadinejad.

That is what we are now doing by holding open the possibility that we would tolerate a nuclear Iran. It’s not just that it would be terrible if they got nuclear weapons. There, I think incidentally, it’s not just tolerating a nuclear Iran, it’s tolerating a

nuclear Egypt and a nuclear Saudi Arabia, and then a whole bunch of nuclear countries which itself creates a very dangerous world. It is also the process of getting towards a nuclear Iran, is itself extremely dangerous—

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

One minute.

**WILLIAM KRISTOL**

I don't like to use models from the '30s or the analogy of the '30s or Hitler but in this respect it is like the '30s. Hitler's success at each stage strengthened him internally, he didn't start out in firm control of the regime of which he was chancellor. There were others who thought he was reckless. Every time he did something reckless and got away with it, it discredited his internal credits, it empowered fascists elsewhere in Europe and other regimes began moving in that direction. The democracies became demoralized, we ended up fighting a war against a much more powerful fascist alliance-axis than would have been the case if we had acted much earlier. We face that prospect unfortunately if we let a jihadist radical regime successfully pursue nuclear weapons in the Middle East today.

[APPLAUSE]

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Thank you, William Kristol. I'm now ready to announce the results of the pre-debate vote. Before the debate, you may recall

you were asked whether you were for or against the motion or whether you don't know. Here's the pre-debate tally, for which we will not need the U.S. Supreme Court to sort out the answer. 58 votes for the motion, that we must tolerate a nuclear Iran, 103 votes against the motion, and 58 don't know. So that was the vote before the debate. We're now ready for the question-and-answer portion of the program. If you would like to put a question to our panelists please raise your hand. Someone on either one of the aisles will find you with a microphone. I'll call on you. As you're asking the question, please stand up. If you're a member of the working press and asking a question, please identify yourself. Otherwise it's your call, and I'm going to begin in the front row, with this young lady.

**WOMAN**

Hi. I'm not sure how much of it is a question, but I think it is. I'm on the “for” side, but I have to say the most compelling argument on the “con” is, not the prospect of Iran having a nuclear weapon but the prospect of Venezuela, Egypt. So I feel strongly that yes, we must set a precedent, so that we don't have 20, 30 nations with nuclear weapons. But then I wonder, how realistic is that? You look at the nations that are pursuing nuclear weapons, and these are nations that feel marginalized and threatened. It's definitely I think a pursuit, both for protection and also for machismo or for popularity in their home.

So is it really realistic to think that we are going to now have 10 more nations with nuclear weapons in the 10, 20 years? The kind of comment along with that too is there’s an interesting vicious cycle that’s set in place when, by starting another war you are creating this vicious cycle of other regimes feeling threatened, and then spurring them on to produce nuclear weapons. Will we be giving Chavez more of an impetus to get into the nuclear weapon battle?

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Well, since the argument of the one-too-many nuclear Irans was made by the opponents, may I ask the supporters of the motion, George Perkovich, to answer it. Does tolerating a nuclear Iran imply tolerating many other new nuclear powers?

**GEORGE PERKOVICH**

Well, I think we’ll come to this later. We’re now confused about what it means to tolerate or not to tolerate, because I happen to agree with everything Patrick said because he didn’t talk about going to war. I agree with Reuel and Bill, we should do everything we can to try to prevent it. So if what we mean by “tolerating” is that we really, really don’t like it, we’re going to do everything we can to stop it, but we would accept living with it if that was the alternative other than war, then I think we agree. If the alternative really is what Bill said, but not what Patrick said, that not tolerating it means that you are willing to go to war over it,

then I would say to your question, there’s only been one case in history where there was a military effort to stop a country from trying to get nuclear weapons.

That was the Israeli bombing of Iraq in 1981. You can argue what the effects of that were in various ways. Iraq went to war or was at war with Iran, and then, we had another war with them in ’91 and then we had another war with them in 2003, and their nuclear program continued when we didn’t think it was from ’81 to ’91, but when we thought it was or some people thought it was, it turned out it wasn’t. We’re there now. Every other case of getting a country to stop involved politics, negotiations, giving them benefits, security guarantees, trade-offs, and deals. So we should be concerned about if Iran succeeds, what happens. But the way the rest of the world’s going to respond to this is going to be if you marshal diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions, plus rewards. That’s the way to do it.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Reuel Marc Gerecht, why don’t you reply to what George Perkovich is saying.

**REUEL MARC GERECHT**

I would just like to say that I’m very uncomfortable being in the majority if that poll is correct. I think the other side should demand a recount. But I mean, just a quick comment on that. I

don't think it's any coincidence that Gamal Mubarak announced that Egypt is going to have a civilian nuclear program. I think the timing of that, because of the Iranian nuclear program, was intentional. I would add that there's a great deal of suspicion that the Saudis were in part financial backers of the Pakistani nuclear program. It is impossible I think to overestimate the fierce hatred and competition that exists and has existed between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic republic from 1979, Bill alluded to it.

Much of the Islamic militancy that we see today, the fuel behind bin Ladinism, actually grew out of that competition in the 1980s. It would be surprising not to see the Saudis make some play for a nuke. I would also add, I wouldn't at all be surprised to see Turkey go in a nuclear direction. I think the Iraq war certainly showed to the Turks they cannot rely upon NATO as an institution of their defense, and I think the animosity that does exist in Turkey, even if it goes in a more Islamic direction which I think it will, will not diminish its profound suspicions of the Islamic republic. I think it would be a good guess that the Turks too would start working on a nuclear program.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Next question, do we have someone on that side? Won't you hand the microphone...and then we'll come over to the other side

of the room next. Could you stand up, please.

**EUGENE LINDEN**

Eugene Linden’s my name. Given the present situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the possibility of \$150-a-barrel oil, do we really have a credible military threat?

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

You mean does, is the threat from the United States credible?  
Patrick Clawson.

**PATRICK CLAWSON**

In a word, yes. First off, if the United States military were to take action Iran’s nuclear sites, this would be the Navy and the Air Force, which are not overly committed in Afghanistan and Iraq. It would be quite a doable thing to destroy the key nodes in Iran’s nuclear program. We don’t have to flatten the whole thing, don’t have to go in and Dresden and knock it all down. We just have to knock out the key nodes, and there are some key nodes without which that program cannot function, and it would take a number of years to rebuild. The question arises as to what Iran’s response would be if we did this. Well, we don’t know, it would depend upon the circumstances.

But I would suggest that there was a time when in fact as far as the Iranians are concerned, we did bomb them, and we did take military action against them. That’s the end of the Iran-Iraq war,



when we after all, in what we see as a tragic accident, shot down an Iranian airbus and killed 200-plus Iranian civilians. But they saw that very bluntly as the United States entering the war. Indeed, this being holy defense week, and the Iranian newspapers have been full of interviews with people about the war and how it happened, and Rafsanjani has asked, well why did you end the war? Because America ended the war against us. So the fact is that the last time we bombed Iran the result was within a week, that the Iranians accepted a cease-fire, it stopped a war which had killed 700,000 people. We paid no price in our relationships with the Iranians. That’s because the Iranian people were sick and tired of that war. So the task is up to us to paint this nuclear weapon as the device which the mullahs are using to consolidate their power and their control and to keep their grip on the country. Because if Iranians perceive that what we are doing is getting rid of the tool by which the mullahs are going to consolidate their control, that’s a very different situation than if Iranians think that this is a national bomb needed for national defense.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

I wanted to see if the other side agrees that there is a credible military threat, no ground troops, simply air strikes. Karim.

**KARIM SADJADPOUR**

Obviously the United States is powerful enough to bomb Iran,

that’s not the question. The question is the day after we bomb Iran, just like the question in Iraq should have been the day after we bomb Iraq. Obviously the United States could change probably every regime in the world apart from a few, China, Russia, India. But what are the repercussions for the day after? I would argue that at the moment even the Iranians believe that Iranian soft power is dominating U.S. hard power in Iraq. I would just put on the table that it’s fundamentally incompatible to think we’re going to stabilize Iraq, while simultaneously dropping bombs on Iran, not to mention other countries in the region. If we really want to try to tranquilize Lebanon, we will see a resurgent Hezbollah if we drop bombs on Iran. We want to tranquilize Palestine and strengthen the moderate Palestinians we’re going to strengthen Hamas, if we do that. I just want to make a further point that, Bill and Reuel have written that it’s unclear what would happen domestically within Iran if we dropped bombs. Maybe actually, we could over time strengthen the Iranian moderates. This always reminds me of a quote from John Limber, the great U.S. diplomat who was actually taken hostage in Iran for 444 days during the 1979 revolution.

He was someone like many Iranians, my father included, who believed that when the Shah was deposed, the Shah’s government would be replaced by a secular democracy, and what we saw of

course was that Khomeini came to, to power. He later wrote in his memoirs that, that what he learned was that when sudden upheavals happen, revolutions are not won by those who can write incisive op-ed pieces. [LAUGHTER] I think likewise in Iran we should have no illusions that if we bomb the country it's going to be moderates who come to the helm either within Iran or within the region.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Sanam Vakil?

**SANAM VAKIL**

Could I just add one more thing. If we also think about bombing Iran, we also have to think about not just nuclear nationalism that persists within the country, but just inherent nationalism, the patriotism of Iranians that they feel for their country, Iranians who don't even love the regime but love Iran. The same way that you might love the United States of America or wherever you're from. These are the Iranians that will come out in defense of their country. There are many Iranians I spoke with this summer, that said in the event of a military strike, they would come out in defense of their country and that's something that we should consider. These are the people that fought an Iran-Iraq war, not for two years, not for four years, for eight long years. And that same way that you, your sons and your children would come out and defend the United States in the event of a military

strike.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Reuel Gerecht?

**REUEL MARC GERECHT**

Yes, I don't think anyone on this side of the table believes that bombing Iran will produce a moderate revolution inside the country, and in fact I think we'd say that's really not the issue at all. The issue is do you believe that an Islamic republic armed with nuclear weapons is going to help the United States stabilize Iraq. I think that is not at all true, just the opposite. As long as the radical forces inside of Iran gain power and gain will, I think it is impossible to imagine a situation inside of Iraq that is going to be stable and in any way pro-American. I think you will see the forces of radicalism inside the Iraqi Shia community, continue to gain ground, they're becoming a dominant force in that society, and Iran has no intention of deterring them. Certainly an Iran armed with nuclear weaponry, I don't think would be a force of moderation inside Iraqi politics.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Our next questioner? Sir.

**MAN**

I'm very sympathetic obviously to the “con” side. But I think one question has to be answered, which is: at this present time, what are you going to do about Western Europe. What are you going to

do about the Europeans in terms of their support or non-support for this kind of event, and the reality that in another two years we’re going to have another election. Blair is on his way out, clearly the sense or spirit of accommodation is reflected I think in both the Labour Party and in the Conservative Party. So rather than just thinking in terms of next month, what is one’s answer to the question, how can we really threaten this unilaterally if we cannot bring any of the major powers in Europe along with us.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Bill Kristol, what’s the answer to that question.

**WILLIAM KRISTOL**

The only reason the major powers in Europe are as engaged as they are diplomatically and at least talking, some of them, sometimes, about sanctions, on Iran is that in fact they were worried in 2003 that we might use force. As the threat of force has receded, as we’ve been so reassuring in the last year and embraced diplomacy and made clear to the Europeans that we put getting along with Europeans I think unfortunately perhaps at a higher level of priority than actually dealing with the Iranian nuclear program, they of course have cheerfully backed off. They’re not going to be ultimately extremely helpful in this. They will not privately shed any tears for the Iranian nuclear program and I don’t think we’ll have any great rupture in NATO, we’ll still have peacekeeping forces in Afghanistan. But no, they will

probably not be part of the mission, and they will in some ritualistic way, probably denounce it. But if a nuclear Iran is really dangerous and I think it is, we can't be stopped by the lowest common denominators of our allies. The unfortunate truth, I wish Western Europe were different, I wish all of Europe were somewhat different, I wish they spent more on the military, I wish they were more serious about dealing with coming threats from outside their region. They're not, and we have to take the lead.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Our next question, from the gentleman in the center.

**VAN GREENFIELD**

Van Greenfield. I voted against to start, I'm still there now. I think that when we recount again, if Karim and Sanam actually listen to their own words, then the people against will pick up two votes. I'm very serious about that. I think that Sanam said that Ahmadinejad dreams of becoming a war president. I fully agree with that, completely support that, I think that he believes it with his heart and soul. If he does feel that way, and has a nuclear weapon, we're much worse off. Karim's comment was that Iran getting a nuclear weapon would be disastrous. If it's disastrous if they get it, and if he dreams of becoming a war president, I don't see how you don't vote that way. The question I'd like to ask is, as I sit here I was kind of astounded that we heard about virtually

every country on the globe here, but the one country that we didn't hear anything about, or any effect about, the country in a way most affected by the words that have been spoken, is Israel. Robert, you can choose who would answer it, but where do Israel and our obligation to Israel factor into this? I mean, they have to believe the words—

[BRIEF AUDIO DROP-OUT]

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

—in the presentations, but first I should say that Sanam and Karim, you've been called upon to debate your own remarks.

[LAUGHTER] If there's something you'd like to say first, feel free to.

**KARIM SADJADPOUR**

I stand by the statement that it would be a disaster if Iran were acquire a nuclear weapon, but I would just say it would be far more disastrous to bomb them to try to prevent them from acquiring a nuclear weapon. These are the scales we're forced to measure right now. I think Bill and Reuel and Patrick would agree that as long as this government is in power in Tehran, they will never feel comfortable that it's somehow lost its nuclear ambitions. As long as this government is in power I think they'll always feel that will happen. My point is that if we bomb Iran, we're going to prolong the life of this regime I would argue two, three, maybe four decades. That what's going to happen is that

these radicals are going to come to the helm, they're going to clamp down on any type of moderates, and they're going to have the pretext to do so. So if you want to preserve the shelf life of this regime then we bomb it, that's my argument.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Sanam, does President Ahmadinejad need U.S. provocation to become a war president or war leader, or will he become one on his own?

**SANAM VAKIL**

Oh, no, he's begging the U.S. to do it. He's not there just yet. I think you misinterpreted. He's looking for the U.S. to bomb Iran so he can avoid the economic mandate, his populist mandate of why he was elected. He is not going to be able to fill the plates of 74 million Iranians. And so foreign policy issues are a nice method of deflection for this president. Bombing Iran would propel this radical president to a higher post. The presidency of Iran is never, historically and constitutionally, a strong position, and we're making him stronger every day by paying attention to him. If we bomb the country, he will be propelled even more. We will be radicalizing the country in his favor even more, and he will be neglecting his economic mandate, and the fastest way to get him out of power will be to force him to focus on the economic issues that he was elected into office on.



**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Patrick Clawson, to what degree is this about the threat perceived by Israel from Iran.

**PATRICK CLAWSON**

Well, first you'll notice that the other side continually does not debate the proposition. They debate a very different proposition. The proposition they debate is we should not bomb Iran. Now if that were the question we were debating, it would be an interesting debate. But it's not what we're here to do tonight. The question is, do we tolerate Iran's nuclear program. That's like saying, are we going to have the attitude towards an Iranian nuke that we have towards an Indian and a Pakistani nuke. We tolerate that. We say, naughty-naughty, you shouldn't have done that, but we tolerate it. The question is, are we going to have that kind of an attitude, or are we, as Bill said, going to use instead the threat of force in order to back up diplomacy. Bill didn't call for bombs away, neither did I, and neither did Reuel. What we called for is to have—

**WILLIAM KRISTOL**

I wouldn't—let's not go too far here. [LAUGHTER] We have a diversity of views on this side too, you know.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Some of your teammates are on the record on this— [LAUGHTER]

**PATRICK CLAWSON**

There was a wonderful *Commentary* article by Ed Lutfoch in which he said it's not time to bomb Iran, *yet*. It may come to be the time. But it's not yet the time. Because what we're talking about is how we can use force in order to—the threat of force in order to back up that diplomacy.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

But George Perkovich, you're the pessimist about the diplomacy. You're the one who's saying it's going to end up as an attack or not an attack.

**PATRICK CLAWSON**

That's in part because of the Israel question. The answer is because Israel evaluates the threat to it as much worse than the threat to us. Then it's quite possible that Israel will decide that it's got to attack Iran well before we decide to attack Iran. In fact I would say that that's likely that Israel will decide that it has to attack Iran, long before we think we have to attack Iran. That's going to force the issue about what to do about this. Well, it's precisely because we don't want to be in that situation that we have got to accelerate our efforts on the diplomacy, and we can use Israel as that mad dog the threat of which we wave in front of the Europeans in order to get them to be more serious about this matter.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

George Perkovich.

**GEORGE PERKOVICH**

We don't disagree with that, that we have to accelerate and toughen diplomacy, that we don't want Iran to have nukes, all of that we agree with. But what does it mean to not tolerate something?

**PATRICK CLAWSON**

Step up all those efforts.

**GEORGE PERKOVICH**

I agree, and then if those don't fail, what does it mean not to talk. Bill says it means go to war. Reuel has said it means go to war. Patrick hasn't quite said that, so I'm not clear what the resolution is.

**WILLIAM KRISTOL**

We have a healthy diversity of views on our side, we don't insist on orthodoxy unlike some people, you know.

**PATRICK CLAWSON**

George, you're saying, don't tolerate it. You're saying take action against it. Well, this proposition is not, go to war with Iran. That's not the proposition we're debating.

**WILLIAM KRISTOL**

May I make a point, a substantive point—

**GEORGE PERKOVICH**

But what you’re saying is *pretend* not to tolerate it.

**PATRICK CLAWSON**

No, no, no, no. We shouldn’t tolerate it—

**GEORGE PERKOVICH**

And then maybe at some point you tolerate it, and Bill says—

**PATRICK CLAWSON**

No, no, we shouldn’t—

**WILLIAM KRISTOL**

This is a semantic debate—

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

To clarify, Patrick Clawson, you’re saying, worst case, if all the diplomatic measures you’re talking about don’t succeed, then you’ll tolerate it.

**PATRICK CLAWSON**

No. Worst case, if the only way we can make the diplomatic measures succeed, as Bill has said, is if we say at the end of the day if they don’t we’ll use force. Because the only way we can make diplomacy work is if we say at the end of the day, we are prepared to use force. That is what we should be doing. But the other side has not said about—George says, we should press them, press them. How the heck are you going to press them, if you say at the end of the day that what we’re prepared to do, is tolerate it. They’re not going to be interested in being friends.

**WILLIAM KRISTOL**

Can I say a word on this, this is just semantics. Look, the serious argument and most respectable argument I would say on the other side is Karim’s, that bombing would prolong the regime, would strengthen the regime. I take that argument very seriously. Ahmadinejad successfully pursuing and acquiring nuclear weapons in my view would strengthen the regime and strengthen the radical elements in the regime, much more surely than bombing would. Bombing is of course, you don’t know what effects. There’s empirical, historical evidence of the use of force destabilizing and discrediting a radical and aggressive regime, and there are historical examples of nationalist tempers flaring at least for a while, and the radicals being strengthened. I wouldn’t want to stipulate one or the other, but the one thing I think we can stipulate is that letting the most radical elements pursue nuclear weapons successfully would in fact strengthen the regime. So I think if you care about ending the regime which is what one has to care about, one has to be serious about saying we don’t tolerate this regime, *this* Iranian regime acquiring nuclear weapons, and then acting if necessary to prevent it.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Karim Sadjadpour.

**KARIM SADJADPOUR**

I’d argue that at the end of the day what’s going to change this

regime is economic malaise. It's not going to be bombing it, it's not going to be a nuclear issue, but similar to the Soviet Union, at the end of the day you can't eat a nuclear weapon. That's what's going to change this government, but again I think that if we do give it a pretext to clamp down on its domestic population it will very much take it, and we could see the prospect of change moved back many years. I would just argue as well that if we somehow were able to manage a nuclear-armed Soviet Union and a nuclear-armed China, which had far greater appetite than Iran did, it seems to me preposterous that we can't tolerate a nuclear-armed Iran in this context, in the context of deterrence.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Well, thank you both, thank you all very much for commenting on our audience's questions, and for clarifying the semantics of the motion, or muddying the semantics of the motion, I'm not sure which. [LAUGHTER] I'm intrigued by the idea that Bill Kristol came here undecided, and is newly won over to the “con” position. [LAUGHTER] Which would make him a neocon, finally. [LAUGHTER, APPLAUSE] It's now time to vote. You may think you've voted before but you're going to vote again. This is the ticket you were given on the way in, and all of you should have one. If you don't, don't worry, an usher will provide you with one now. There are three possible votes you may cast with this. Someone's going to come by with a ballot box. If you're for the

resolution, take off the green “for,” it’s perforated, and drop that in the box. If you’re against, the red. If you’re still undecided, or if you are now undecided, drop the entire untorn ballot into the ballot box. As you do that, let’s make sure that the ballot boxes are making their way around the auditorium. In a moment, we shall hear brief concluding statements from our six panelists. What sort of progress are the ballot boxes making.

[PAUSE, VOICES]

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Good. Good. We heard earlier from each of our panelists with an opening statement that began with those supporting the motion. We’re now going to hear brief concluding statements, of no more than two minutes each, beginning with those who are against. We start with Patrick Clawson. Patrick?

**PATRICK CLAWSON**

According to the *New York Times* when Kofi Annan was in Iran at the beginning of the month, he was quite astonished in his meeting with President Ahmadinejad when President Ahmadinejad explained that while Britain and the United States won the last world war, Iran was going to win the next one. Now, Kofi Annan didn’t even realize there was going to be a next world war. Much less, than Iran intended to emerge victorious from it. Do not underestimate the ambitions of a group which feels that they represent a quarter of the world, namely the world’s

Muslims. They feel, that they've brought down one superpower, the Soviet Union, thanks to the, the Mujahadeen in Afghanistan, and that indeed, they can bring down another. They have very extensive ambitions. So this issue of whether to allow them to have nuclear weapons, is of extraordinary import to us. That is why we should be prepared to make credible threats of the use of force. Only through making credible threats of the use of force, is the kind of diplomacy that I described is going to be successful. If we begin that diplomatic process by saying at the end of the day, we are prepared to live with you, to tolerate this nuclear Iran, we will get nowhere with that diplomacy. We will get nowhere with forging an international consensus for strong actions of the kind that we have been able to use successfully to slow down Iran's program for the last 18 years. Paradoxically only the credible threat of force is likely to prevent us from facing the danger of force. We have talked a lot about whether or not the United States will bomb Iran. Let us recognize, if Iran gets the bomb, it may bomb us.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Thank you Patrick Clawson. George Perkovich.

**GEORGE PERKOVICH**

Again I'm confused by the terms. Because we agree with almost everything especially that Patrick said. And with much that Reuel and Bill said about its, the nature of the Iranian



government. What we want for the people of Iran. How bad it would be if Iran got nuclear weapons. And I don't understand what it means not to tolerate. Because Patrick has used the verb say. We should say we won't tolerate. He said we should have credible threat by using force but avoids the issue of would it be our policy actually go to war. Which to me means not tolerate. Bill's clear at least, he's saying yeah you know yeah we'll go to war. Um that's what the resolution means on their side. Not tolerate means physically stop. Physically try to act against. And then the question is does that guarantee success? There is no guarantee of success. We found the trouble in Iraq that was totally unanticipated. Reasonable people would expect things to go badly in Iran. So you can't guarantee –

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

One minute.

**GEORGE PERKOVICH**

Success. We have an experience with China. When China was getting nuclear weapons in 1964, the US Government was prepared to launch nuclear war against it, to destroy China, to keep it from getting nuclear weapons. Then we thought no, instead of that we'll give nuclear weapons to India in 1963. To balance China. We were afraid that Mao was such a revolutionary. He had killed more than twenty million of his own people. Something the Iranian regime hasn't dreamed of. We

thought it would be the end of civilization, that revolution would happen everywhere under this nuclear umbrella. Well in fact we decided that we couldn't stop China. China got nuclear weapons. Here we are today. China is a huge economic threat to us today but it isn't like you're gonna go home tonight worrying that China's gonna wake up and nuke the United States. Which it does have the capability to do. And which Iran for the foreseeable future would have no capability to do. Do I think we should publicly say we'll tolerate it and welcome it? Absolutely not. But the exercise here is to try and clarify in your own mind, in your own plan -

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

On that note George we will remain just that clarified and no more. Next concluding statement from Reuel Marc Gerecht.

**REUEL MARC GERECHT**

Well I remember having a conversation with a good friend of mine, Jeffrey Goldberg who now writes for the *New Yorker* and used to write for the *New York Times Magazine* and Jeffrey had just gone over to madrassas in Pakistan and he was interviewing young students. And he kept asking them what do you believe in? And they kept saying to him, I believe in jihad, I believe in killing Americans. And he'd go to the next one – I believe in jihad, I believe in killing Americans. And he kept doing that you know day after day. And so he got some idea what they believed in.

Now the Iranians don't ask that way all right. They're vastly more refined. That's what makes them in many ways the most, and also contradictory, that's what makes them I would argue the most interesting people in the Middle East. But do not make a mistake, this question, this debate is about what is at the center of their spirit. And they are dedicated, they are dedicated to the jihad against the United States. They are the mothership of much of the Islamic radicalism that we have seen and what is striking about the regime in Tehran is that it hasn't become more moderate. It hasn't in fact gone into a period of thermidor.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

One minute.

**REUEL MARC GERECHT**

That the moderates that everybody has hope in and I have hope in them too, have been stuffed. And that you do not see them coming forward. You do not see them gaining power where it matters. It is great and wonderful that the average Iranian on the street is in fact becoming much, much more moderate. It doesn't matter. What matters is the people at the top and they have not and I sincerely suggest that you do not want people like that who believe they represent God on earth and that they represent the vanguard for all Muslims to have nuclear weapons.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Thank you Reuel Marc Gerech. Now to one of the most

interesting people in the Middle East, now to Sanam Vakil.

**SANAM VAKIL**

I appreciate Reuel's comments that the government of Iran is the vanguard of leading this one fourth of, and Patrick's, one fourth of the world into jihad. But that's not the government that I'm aware of and that I have been studying. Perhaps two different countries that we've been working on. And my interviews that I recently conducted in Tehran, many people in the variety of camps of the regime, Ahmadinejad's ministry as well, told me repeatedly that it's the constant threat from abroad, regime change threats from the US administration that have been coming from the past four years. Threats of sanctions, containment, isolation of this regime that are perpetuating these fears within the Iranian regime. So consider that when thinking the Iranian mentality. There are two ways of going forward. We have the military option. But we have an option that has never been actually pursued. Twenty seven years of isolation, there's a wide gulf. Why not actually try direct engagement with these crazy folks? And let's see actually what they might do. If we're actually dealing with them one on one bring them close. Make your enemies our friends. We can monitor their nuclear program and often times there's a lot of talk on the Iranian street that the hope of having America back in Iran will actually stimulate the Iranian people and recharge them and that might be the way to

perhaps lead to a prosperous and maybe even hopeful Iran in the future.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Thank you Sanam Vakil. And now I will hear from Bill Kristol.

**BILL KRISTOL**

Really just three points. Proliferation, terror and jihad. The proliferation threat is unlike that of when the Soviet Union or China acquired nuclear weapons. It's not just a generic Venezuela, Brazil, South Africa, etc threat. Nigeria – that is a real issue too. But it is an absolute I mean it is very likely that Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algeria would decide they would want nuclear weapons if Iran had them. I don't know if we could stop them, we could offer them security guarantees, if people feel comfortable living in a world where we're providing security guarantees against a nuclear Iran for a Wahabi Saudi Arabia. I suppose we can try to manage that world. It would be safer I think to prevent Iran from becoming nuclear in the first place. We are talking about an extremely dangerous arms race in the most volatile region in the world. That was not the case when previous nations went nuclear. India, Pakistan a little bit more like that. And Pakistan was the worst one to have allowed to have gone nuclear but now this is Pakistan squared. So to speak. Cubed or something. Second, terror, providing a nuclear umbrella for terror is not something that's been done. The Soviet

Union played with terror and did some pretty bad, funded some pretty bad things but nothing like the intimate relation to terror that the Islamic Republic of Iran has had. And people need to think seriously about what a nuclear umbrella over terror acts with the possibility of giving nuclear weapons to terror groups but also protecting terror groups by a threat of nuclear retaliation. What that does in the Middle East, here Israel I think becomes a central question and how does that, how does Israel then react to terror groups, protected so to say by Iranian nuclear threat of retaliation. Finally, jihad, Patrick and Reuel have made this point right. This regime, getting nuclear weapons would be the biggest booster shot for jihad and I think both on the Shia and Sunni side is possible. That is the threat. The jihadists need to, those on the wavering need to be convinced that jihadists are losing – letting this regime get nuclear weapons would convince too many people unfortunately that they're winning.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Thank you Bill Kristol. And lastly Karim Sadjadpour.

**KARIM SADJADPOUR**

I think one thing that's been missing tonight is Iran's ambitions. Iran's impetus. We talked a lot about what the US is thinking, what Israel is thinking but we can't look at Iran's ambitions in a vacuum. And if I would make the argument that as a – it's not that they want to pursue nuclear weapons to wipe Israel off the

map. We tried to get inside the head of Iranian leaders they say well this revolution of ours happened twenty seven years ago and to this day the US has never recognized us. And look historically at countries that have pursued nuclear weapons. Not been for offensive purposes. Has been very much driven by senses of insecurity and defensive purposes. I would just invoke the paradigm which many in the right in the US have invoked when it comes to Iran. And that is one of two ticking clocks. So there's the regime change clock and there's the nuclear clock. And the idea is that you have to make the regime change clock in Tehran expire faster than the nuclear talk so when the day comes when Iran actually weaponizes, it will be under more friendly, democratic Iranian regime. Now the fundamental contradiction of this policy is that when you try to expedite the regime change clock in Tehran you send the message to Iranian leaders that in fact the United States is after nuclear, is after regime change approach. And therefore you need to pursue a nuclear deterrent. So we have to get these clocks worked up. Is the option, is the goal to prevent Iran from going nuclear or is it to change the regime? If we continue to try to do both, that's going to be Iran's greatest impetus for pursuing a nuclear weapon.

**ROBERT SIEGEL**

Thank you Karim Sadjadpour. And thank you to all six panelists for your very ardent contributions. It's now time to announce the

results of the audience voting and after our debaters did their best to sway you, you voted eighty two for the motion that we must tolerate a nuclear Iran. One hundred sixteen against. And twenty one remain undecided or don't know how they would answer that. So congratulations to the opponents of the motion for their winning the debate here this evening. And to the proposer, and to the proposer and his team for increasing his tally so much after the debate. I'd just like to invite all of you to return in three weeks for the next Intelligence Squared US debate. Wednesday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, it's here at Asia Society and Museum and the motion to be debated on that day is freedom of expression must include the license to offend. And the panelists will include such folks as Philip Gourevitch and Christopher Hitchens. I'll let you try to figure out which side of the offending question Hitchens is going to be on. An edited version of tonight's Intelligence Squared US debate can be heard locally on WNYC AM 820 on Friday, October 6<sup>th</sup> at 2 PM. Outside of New York City you'll have to check your local NPR member station listings for the date and time of broadcast there. Please be sure to pick up a copy of our media sponsor's Thursday edition of the *Times of London*. And also a copy of the *Times Literary Supplement* on your way out and thanks to all of you for your support of Intelligence Squared US.



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END OF TAPE