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The Islamic Republic of Iran: Multidisciplinary  
Analyses of its Theocracy, Nationalism, and  
Assertion of Power

Department of History

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## Scholars for Peace in the Middle East

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## **Scholars for Peace in the Middle East**

### **Presentation by Ambassador Jackie Wolcott**

**November 9, 2009**

#### **Introduction**

Thank you for your kind introduction. It's a pleasure and honor to be here with experts from SPME who share a common cause with those people and nations that seek a just and secure peace in the Middle East. While there are many sources of unrest and instability in this troubled region, there can be no question that Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability is the principle threat not only to the security of Israel and the region, but the entire world. How the international community addresses (or fails to address) Iran's nuclear programs will have grave implications for the entire nonproliferation regime. Other states considering their own nuclear programs are watching the situation in Iran closely.

At the outset, I should note that while representing United Against Nuclear Iran as a member of its advisory board, my remarks here reflect my own views shaped by my own experiences. As you can imagine, in a large and diverse coalition, opinions can sometimes vary. We welcome these debates, and I look forward to engaging with you this evening, yes, even those who may disagree with me. Being a native Ohioan, I sometimes joke with my friends in Washington that the heartland is the perfect testing ground for ideas. Midwesterners are steeped in a culture of common sense and raised to believe that nothing worth doing is ever easy. Perhaps as a result, they are highly suspicious of any proposed solution that does not involve difficult choices, hard work, and self-sacrifice. Simply put, Midwesterners make for a really tough crowd, which is exactly what we need.

Broadly speaking, I think it is fair to say I fall into the category of what many would consider to be a "hard-liner" on Iran. Trust me, though, this position was not formulated overnight in any type of knee-jerk reaction. It comes from years of being directly involved in negotiations on Iran's nuclear program. I have had the opportunity to represent the U.S. at a number of UN and other multilateral institutions in Geneva, Vienna, and New York. Most recently, I was Special Envoy dealing with nuclear nonproliferation and emerging nuclear energy worldwide. In every one of my roles -- from the Conference on Disarmament, the NPT review process, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN Security Council, and finally in the special envoy role, it became clear that Iran in a very real sense has shaken the traditional multilateral system -- piece by piece -- to its core.

#### **A Long, Established Record of Deception**

Let me elaborate on this point since it will serve as an important backdrop for any discussion on ... 'where do we go from here'?

In addition to violently suppressing peaceful protests and holding the dubious honor of world's largest state sponsor of terrorism, the regime in Tehran has systematically, at every level, demonstrated with near perfect consistency that it has no intention of abiding by its international obligations and dismantling its illicit nuclear programs. This is not a new development and transcends all U.S. administrations tackling this issue, from Reagan to the present day Obama administration. I should add that this intransigence has occurred despite an ever-increasing promise of financial inducements to Iran.

While I cite examples throughout the past 20 years to illustrate this point, I thought the evidence from the past 10 days would suffice. Despite being offered a very generous benefits package, where Iran could ship enriched uranium for further processing which could then be used in Tehran's research reactor, Iran has still refused to accept the deal. As a brief aside, I should add that this very generous deal is itself quite dangerous, even if Iran accepts it in full. It grants Iran tacit acceptance of its illicit program, allowing it to use fuel produced in violation of UN Security Council resolutions to provide enriched fuel for its so-called nuclear medicine research reactor.

Not surprisingly, but true to form, even this deal is in jeopardy. Just this weekend, hardliners in the regime flatly rejected it, saying they will not send any of the 1,200 kilograms of enriched uranium abroad. As a footnote, I should add that they were referring to the 1,200 kg of enriched uranium *that we know about*. Recent developments such as the discovery of the Qom reactor again belie Iran's true intentions and interest in abandoning its nuclear programs. A few other details are worth mentioning briefly as well. It is a fact that:

- Iran is now spinning at least 8,300 centrifuges - enough for nuclear material for two bombs per year.
- Iran is already in possession of enough LEU (5%) to fuel a nuclear weapon with further enrichment;
- Iran continues to get closer and closer to complete mastery of the nuclear fuel cycle –uranium & plutonium at its enrichment facility in Natanz or heavy-water reactor in Arak.
- Iran is testing medium and long range/solid fuel missiles. It is important to note that the only reason to have long and/or medium range missiles is to complement an extremely sophisticated and accurate targeting system. In short, you don't put conventional weapons on a ballistic missile.
- Finally, there are troubling, if still incomplete, news accounts from just the past few days that the IAEA possesses evidence that Iran has been experimenting with a highly advanced nuclear weapon design, one that would enable much smaller missiles to carry a nuclear warhead.

The above empirical data, and frankly common sense, tells us that right now, the current path we are on will not lead to success, no matter how we might choose to define it. Surely this regime has lost even the pretense of credibility in the eyes of responsible nations. So one might ask, why do the world's diplomats persist in attempts to reapply the same well-worn strategies with Iran, all the while expecting different results?

The partial answer here is that even responsible nations have yet to accept the fact that any successful effort is going to involve significant costs, both financial, and perhaps our most treasured commodity of all – human life. Many still cling to the hope that reformers will come into power and abandon the program when the evidence suggests that even the reformers share the hardliners goal of possessing a nuclear weapon.

To the extent that responsible nations have not on an individual basis come to terms with the costs involved in confronting Iran's nuclear program, it should come as little surprise that existing multilateral institutions, made up of individual member states, have failed as well. Indeed, a strong case could be made that in some cases they have undermined the effort. This is true because these institutions, when they fail to act decisively, in effect legitimize illicit programs. While we should not ignore the role these institutions might play, it is naïve--dangerously so--to assume they can resolve the urgent proliferation matters we confront.

By way of example, the IAEA was created, according to its statute, as "an independent intergovernmental, science and technology-based organization, in the United Nations family, that serves as the global focal point for nuclear cooperation." Put differently, it was established as a technical organization to help facilitate the peaceful development of civil nuclear programs. In this regard, it has served the international community reasonably well.

The problem, of course, is in its dealings with countries that are pursuing weapons under the guise of peaceful nuclear programs. In some cases, its technical response has been beneficial, as in the case of the IAEA developing the Additional Protocol in 1997. One can also point to its decision to refer North Korea to the U.N. Security Council in both 1993 and 2003. But its track record as the world's so-called nuclear watchdog illustrates several well-documented instances in which it simply did not detect or adequately judge illicit nuclear programs. Obviously, the hallmark failure of the IAEA has been the case of Iran, most notably in 2003 when it failed its mandate by refusing to formally find Iran in non-compliance with IAEA statutes and refer it to the Security Council. While the Security Council is by no means a panacea, it is quite clear that the international community in the fall of 2003 missed an important opportunity to signal to Iran that its nuclear weapons program was unacceptable. Some board members and IAEA officials alike – for assorted reasons – didn't want to lose jurisdiction over the Iran issue from Vienna. Despite U.S. efforts at home and abroad, the referral did not come until early 2006.

While some IAEA officials certainly enabled this delay, responsibility ultimately falls to states and their often tried, often failed policy of negotiation. Europe's negotiations from 2003 to present day have achieved nothing, but instead delayed the referral process in Vienna for over two years providing Iran with time to further develop and improve its nuclear program. The UN Security Council has fared little better. Largely, this is because the Iranians knew (and know) full well that Western countries love to negotiate with themselves first – watering down tough measures, and offering more and more carrots. I'll never forget at one point the Russian ambassador to the United Nations quipping that he would not receive instructions to conclude negotiations in New York until Washington, Paris, and London stopped sending concessions to Moscow.

The Iranians are masters at this game. Sometimes, perhaps in moments of arrogance, they even admit to it. I recall sitting in a Perm-Five (U.S., UK, France, Russia and China) Security Council negotiating session on Iran in March of 2006, when Ambassador John Bolton read aloud the following from an Elaine Sciolino NYT's article: "But in a remarkable admission, Mr. Rowhani suggested in his speech that Iran had used the negotiations with the Europeans to dupe them ... stating, and I quote: "While we were talking to the Europeans in Tehran, we were installing equipment in parts of the facility in Isfahan, but we still had a long way to go to complete the project. In fact, by creating a calm environment, we were able to complete the work of Isfahan. As a result of the negotiations with Europe, we are in fact much more prepared to go to the U.N. Security Council." They knew that if they delay, the West will eventually negotiate with itself and back down.

If you combine Western dithering with the fact that Russia and China have divergent interests from ours and exercise veto power in the Security Council, it is reasonable to conclude that the solution to Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons will not be found in New York. One should keep in mind that Russia and China have significant commercial interests in Iran. For example, while estimates may vary slightly, most studies indicate that China imports roughly 13 to 15 percent of its oil from Iran. Russia, has obvious interests as well – notably the Bushehr nuclear reactor.

## **Next Steps**

Now that I have painted a relatively grim picture, the obvious question is – what next? Is there any realistic possibility that we can persuade Iran to give up its nuclear weapons program? I can offer no definitive answer to that question, but I firmly believe that if there is any chance of success, however remote, it will be the result of a much more concerted effort to apply meaningful pressure on Iran. This applies to both multilateral and efforts on the part individual nations, even individual citizens.

In some ways that may be more possible now than before because there is a variable or factor we need to consider, one that didn't really present itself until recently. I firmly believe that Israel is very seriously considering attacking Iran's nuclear facilities. There is no doubt this would come at great cost to the people of Israel and the world reaction would be intensely negative. Despite the hue and cry, I would simply ask people to consider what their response would be to a nation developing nuclear weapons whose leaders deny the Holocaust and call for the destruction of their homeland. The world outcry from typical suspects would be enormous as it was when Israel destroyed the Osirak reactor in Iraq in 1981, but few doubt the wisdom of that decision in hindsight. Interestingly, there was very little reaction to Israel taking out Syria's nascent nuclear reactor being built at Al-Kibar with the help of North Koreans.

Let me be clear: I am not calling for Israel to conduct military strikes against Iran. That's certainly not my place and remains the sole decision of the State and people of Israel as a sovereign nation. All nations, though, even Russia and China, have to factor this variable into the equation. On numerous occasions, I have watched Russian and Chinese diplomats wince when confronted with Iran's outrageous statements, knowing this can only increase tensions and strengthen Israel's resolve. This is one area where the Iranians have not been very shrewd, as Tehran's top leaders can't seem to resist the temptation to show their true colors and intentions.

If history repeats itself, which I'm afraid it may, then what we might see in the next few weeks is Iran agreeing to new proposals in part, or to certain parts "in principle". For those of you not familiar with diplomatic speak, agreeing to something "in principle" means there is no agreement on specific terms, usually on critical issues such as timelines and, of course, verification.

Perhaps this administration will see through the smokescreen. Just last week, Secretary of State Clinton proclaimed: "This is a pivotal moment for Iran, and we urge Iran to accept the agreement as proposed. We will not alter it, and we will not wait forever." Sadly, I could pull similar comments from every Secretary of State in recent memory. Still, I hope that countries will recognize the need for crippling sanctions on Iran's economy, including freezing of overseas assets, travel bans, and the suspension of trade in non-humanitarian goods. To be blunt, we need to torque up the pressure, not in increments, but by orders of magnitude.

Let me turn now to what we might consider doing on the individual front. This may seem odd since nuclear negotiations are usually, of course, the province domain of governments. There is, however, work we can do. It's part of the reason I'm proud to be a member of the advisory board of United Against Nuclear Iran, a group working to affect change by promoting efforts to focus economic pressure on Iran. UANI is a bi-partisan advocacy group founded in September 2008 by Ambassadors Jim Woolsey, Richard Holbrooke, Dennis Ross and my former colleague at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, Ambassador Mark Wallace. While we hope to raise awareness of the threat posed by Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapon, UANI works to develop and provide ways to isolate the regime through economic pressure.

Since UANI's launch, it has engaged in a variety of activities to elevate the Iran nuclear issue, including publishing op-eds in national newspapers, sponsoring national print, web and television campaigns, hosting numerous events across the country including at the UN, and founding local chapters with which we have co-hosted regional and local events. UANI has also conducted a variety of successful media campaigns and protests which we believe have been very successful in achieving our objectives. I will give you a quick idea of the kinds of things we have been working on...

- In the lead-up to the arrival of President Ahmadinejad in New York for the UN General Assembly, UANI launched a series of campaigns urging New York area venues to refuse to host

President Ahmadinejad and the Iranian delegation. At the urging of UANI supporters, The New York Helmsley Hotel, Gotham Hall, and the Essex House all refused to host President Ahmadinejad and to provide a platform for his rhetoric. President Ahmadinejad was effectively quarantined to the InterContinental the Barclay, the one hotel in New York that agreed to accommodate the Iranian delegation. UANI's efforts to isolate Ahmadinejad and deny him a platform to speak generated significant media attention including in *Reuters*, *The New York Post*, *Fox News*, *ABC News*, and *Bloomberg News*. This generally negative tone of reception to Ahmadinejad was much different than in previous years.

- General Electric became the first company to sign UANI's Iran Business Declaration, and in doing so affirmed that it does not and will not conduct business in Iran. With GE's example, we are lobbying other businesses to do the same.
- *The Accountability for Business Choices in Iran Act* was introduced in the House of Representatives by Florida Representatives Ron Klein and Jon Mica. The Act will require companies that receive federal taxpayer funding such as stimulus spending, bailout support or contracts, to certify that they do not conduct business with Iran. UANI worked with Congress to develop this legislation.

As private citizens, we are wielding the one weapon we have in our arsenal, the ability to apply concerted and coercive economic pressure. History has shown us that private efforts by activists and policy leaders can have an important impact on various foreign policy challenges – Apartheid, Soviet Jewry and recently, though the jury is still out for the long-term, in Darfur. We are all aware of the special role that private citizens who decided to organize together played in the success of all these efforts.

Moreover, we believe that Iran is particularly susceptible to economic pressure right now. The combined effects of lower oil prices, the financial crisis and continuing US and EU sanctions have hurt Iran's economy. Further economic pressure could push Iran's economy toward collapse and further inflame its restive population. Now more than ever Iran relies on those international corporations that do business in Iran to support its fragile economy. These corporations not only help prop up the Iranian economy, but also facilitate the regime's diversion of funds to its nuclear program while providing the imprimatur of respectability. UANI has therefore created the Iran Business Registry (IBR). The IBR lists over 170 companies that are doing business in Iran. Our goal is not/not to gratuitously hurt any legitimate business, but to provide a clearinghouse of information through the IBR that individuals can use in making business choices and in focusing pressure on companies in Iran.

For example, the German company Siemens operates in the US and Iran. Siemens is also a recipient of California tax funds via the massive California High Speed Rail project and other CA transportation projects. UANI started a campaign in July that was successful in convincing the LA MTA to deny Siemens a \$300 million contract to build new light rail cars in favor of one of its competitors. Unfortunately, just today UANI had to call once again upon the LA MTA to refuse to award this contract to companies that do business with Iran, as the MTA has reversed course and is reopening the bidding process, soliciting proposals from companies like Siemens. This is a perfect illustration of why we need to be vigilant in these matters daily.

A number of firms on the IBR have extensive business in the U.S. and also conduct business in Iran – Erickson, Nokia, Barclay's and Fiat, to name a few. These companies should choose between doing business in the US with the American people, or with Iran. We believe we can send a powerful and united message to these companies. Concentrated economic pressure has worked extraordinarily well in the case of Siemens, Nokia, JP

Morgan, the Intercontinental and other hotel chains. We want these companies to know that from their own self-interest, there is a real risk in doing business with regimes like Iran. Investments in violent, terrorist sponsoring states that are subject to numerous punitive sanctions are at risk of experiencing sudden drops in their value. So there is a fiduciary risk, not to mention the risk of losing one's corporate reputation. When Mitsubishi was considering several years ago supplying North Korea with components for its light-water nuclear reactor, individuals in Japan organized in protest, successfully persuading Mitsubishi to pull out of the deal. In the case of Iran, these companies do not want the world to know that they are doing business with the world's number one state sponsor of terrorism – a regime that has kidnapped and killed Americans and is pursuing a nuclear weapon. If no one calls these companies to account, they have no incentive to stop.

## **Conclusion**

I'm under no illusion that any one approach will by itself will be successful. Rather, we need a concerted, coherent and systematic approach on all fronts, including diplomatic, counter-intelligence, sanctions and other economic pressures if we have any chance of avoiding military action. Even then, unhappily, there is no guarantee that these efforts will work. But the stakes are too high not to try -- not just with respect to Iran, but to other would-be proliferators out there as well. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.