

The Iranian Stalemate

George Perkovich opened the panel by noting the challenges faced by Iran and the international community. Iran's challenge is to integrate itself with the world. The international community's task is to make room for a country of Iran's stature. Most important, the world has to decide how it will deal with states intent on acquiring nuclear weapons capability.

Pierre Goldschmidt argued Iran must conclude a written agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which would allow for unfettered inspection of all of the country's nuclear facilities. Based on Iran's past obfuscation of its nuclear activities, Goldschmidt believes the usual transparency measures are no longer enough.

In addition to allowing inspections, Iran can defuse the situation by suspending all nuclear activities and continuing in good faith with the EU3 process. In exchange, Iran would receive economic and technological incentives such as power resources which would substitute for the suspended nuclear activity. Lastly, United States' involvement is essential. A resolution must be reached, as an Iran with nuclear weapons capacity is a lose-lose situation for all, producing a domino effect in the Middle East.

Therese Delpech asked if the international community has done everything possible to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons capability. Since the 1990's, both the United States and the EU have deferred this issue. As time passed, the Clinton Administration became alarmed by Iran's nuclear ambitions and warned the EU of impending danger. The United States pointed out Russian assistance in Iran's nuclear program which then-president Yeltsin acknowledged. Russia to this day is concerned that the full nature of their relationship with Iran will surface.

Though the IAEA has discovered major violations by the Iranians, the EU is firmly pursuing negotiations with Iran to settle the matter for three reasons: 1) the EU wants to demonstrate the efficacy of negotiations in deterring proliferation; 2) they also want an alternative process in light of the war in Iraq; and 3) Europe felt directly threatened by Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Delpech called for the Security Council to intervene in Iran. It is essential Iran understands the international community will not tolerate their pursuit of nuclear weapons. Delpech acknowledged the potential weakening of the Security Council should intervention fail, but more important what damage will the Council endure should it not deal with Iran at all?

Ariel Levite presented five questions pertinent to the Iranian stalemate. How do we know if Iran is pursuing nuclear arms capability? What are the consequences should Iran succeed? Can Iran be stopped? What can enhance the chances of deterrence? What comes next?

Due to multiple independent sources and Iran's irrational and sustained shadowy behavior, the international community is highly confident Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons capacity. The consequences of a nuclear armed Iran are dire. Some of these consequences include the destabilization of the Middle East as neighboring states may pursue their own nuclear arms program. A nuclear armed Iran could also motivate counter Shia terrorism and posturing. The window of opportunity to stop Iran is about a year due to technological and political realities. To

enhance deterrence, a multi-tiered diplomatic effort must threaten Iran with serious penalties while offering meaningful but conditional carrots. The November IAEA Board of Governors meeting is a critical juncture.

Vladimir Orlov is less alarmed by what is happening in Iran. Russia does not believe Iran has made the political decision to pursue nuclear weapons and is in fact bluffing in order to sweeten the incentives package offered by the EU and United States. Iran will most likely become a nuclear fuel state with the potential to acquire weaponization. Orlov considers an IAEA-led process as the best diplomatic procedure.

Orlov also downplayed the economic gains of Russian assistance of Iran's nuclear program. The numbers are much lower than has been publicized. Rather than gaining from the nuclear agreements, Russia stands to gain more from future telecommunications and energy deals. For now, Russia sees Iran as a natural ally though continued Iranian belligerence may harm the relationship.

During the Q&A session, questions centered on whether or not Iran is truly pursuing nuclear weaponization. Delpech pointed out Iran's use of laser enrichment makes no economic sense and is an indication of a program that is not merely seeking fuel capacity. As one of the largest producers of oil, how effective would sanctions be in threatening Iran? Panelists and an audience member pointed out that Iran is itself highly dependent on the export of its resource and therefore the threats of sanctions can be effective.

Summary by Trinh Dang, Georgetown MSFS 2005