Pierre Goldschmidt
Senior Associate, Nuclear Policy Programme, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Maurizio Martellini
Secretary General, Landau Network

Erzsébet N Rózsa
Executive Director, Hungarian Institute of International Affairs
Questions and Answers

Mark Fitzpatrick
Thank you, Erzsébet. Your very cogent presentation on the effect of EU sanctions reinforces our belief that it was very good to have a regionalist on this panel. We will now turn to one round of commentary and questions from the floor before returning to the speakers.

Riccardo Alcaro, Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome
The biggest risk in 2012 comes not from Iran’s nuclear programme but from the possibility that Israel might strike Iran. Israel’s Defence Minister Barak said yesterday that later might be too late. Leon Panetta, US Defence Secretary, said that he might be expecting an attack by the Israelis by spring. All of these are potential implications of an Israeli attack on Iran. Above all, given the fact that I have yet to read a report, article or statement, either on or off the record, by military sources saying that an attack would be conclusive somehow, what should the US and the EU do in order to prevent this from happening?

Scott Davis, US Department of State
I have a very simple question for Dr Rózsa as an Iran expert: could you give us your reaction to some of the specifics of the proposals made by Pierre Goldschmidt and Dr Martellini, particularly with regard to their acceptability to the Iranian government?

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In terms of sanctions, this reminds me of a study that the IISS produced a year ago called ‘Sanctions as Grand Strategy’. In this study, the Iranian case was not analysed, but all other cases were, and the conclusion was reached that in only 30% of cases were sanctions successful. Very good ideas have been put forward today about Iran, but I still think that a solution could also be found if you were to internationalise or regionalise the enrichment technologies in Iran, bringing in partners and stakeholders to be with Iran, whereby Iran would keep the enrichment technologies, with strict IAEA control and perhaps the imposition of the Additional Protocol, as well as regional control. Certainly, this would entail a lot of negotiations and diplomacy between Iran and its neighbours, which would take a lot of effort. This would also bring the Iranians and its Arab neighbours closer to each other without fearing each other, and enable them to work together on a joint project. This could also be a solution to the problem.

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My second point is that the priority today should be to avoid a military crisis, which could start tomorrow or the day after. It is too late to address the nuclear issue right now. If we make that the preference of our policy, it could fail. First of all, we should try to avoid a military crisis and to address maritime-security-related issues first. This is the most vulnerable sphere. Secondly, we should address the nuclear dimension and, from that point of view, the ‘swap deal’ was a good example that Iran could be interested. It failed in the end and I see no prospects for this deal in the future, but the application of this kind of international effort to one of the Iranian facilities could work
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Yesterday, Dr Blix mentioned that the civil service should play a central role. I very much appreciate this idea. The EU3+3 or the P5+1 are political fora, so they can play a role but not a central one. Finally, we have to turn to a diplomatic solution, so negotiation is the only way out.

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The situation is more dangerous than some of us think. Nobody wants a war – not even Israel – but it is sliding towards one because there are no solutions and time is running out. This is a major problem.

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I will start with Vladimir’s question. Three or four years ago, there was a period when there were different proposals on the table to make joint ventures for uranium enrichment. One was a Russian proposal for a joint Iranian-Russian venture on Russian soil. The Iranians answered, 'Okay, but why on Russian soil?' There was also an Iranian proposal – I do not know how feasible it would be – whereby Ahmadinejad, expressis verbis, invited even the US to participate in a joint, multinational uranium-enrichment facility.

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There was some interest among Iranian colleagues in my proposal because the crucial point is to give the Agency, even if it is not the best channel, a real mandate to negotiate an exit strategy in order to save face. The P5+1 has a key role in defining the benchmarks.

Erzsébet, you can introduce many other third parties. My opinion is that we need to introduce specifically the GCC countries and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is a powerful state that has respectability. It is extremely vital to re-establish a concrete dialogue between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

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Ambassador Shaker, there are a lot of merits in international enrichment facilities, but in the case of Iran and the Middle East, in the next 10 years, as far as I know, there will be only one nuclear-power plant, which is Bushehr. You do not need an enrichment plant for one reactor. As you said, it will take time to achieve, and I do not think that we have that much time to make progress in finding an acceptable solution for both Iran and the international community. I also do not think that Iran doubts that Russia will always deliver the fuel to Bushehr. I have not seen Iran really concerned about fuel supply. They used that as an argument in the past but, in practice, they have really shown no interest in those solutions.

On the comment just made by the analyst here about the fatwa, I asked in 2005 if I could see the exact text of the fatwa. It has not been published. Every word is significant. If they say that the use of nuclear weapons is un-Islamic, that is one thing, but does it say that the production of nuclear weapons is un-Islamic? I do not know. It is clearly not un-Islamic in Pakistan.

I agree with Dr Hosseini that it was clearly wrong for the US to oppose the Bushehr nuclear power plant. I cannot agree more with you. I also agree with you that there is no military solution to the Iranian crisis. You are saying that Iran will not withdraw from the NPT – of course you would say that; what else would you say? If you want to reassure the world that this is the case, I suggest that Iran voluntarily puts all its fuel-cycle facilities under an INFCIRC/66-type safeguards agreement, which would not lapse if Iran withdrew from the NPT. That would be a very important confidence-building measure that I also recommend EU member states adopt for themselves and lead by example.

You say that all the activities in Iran are legal and that you are a member of the NPT like Japan and others. You are a member of the NPT like Japan and others, but Iran has been found to be in non-compliance with its safeguards agreement and Japan has not, so that makes a difference. I would say that almost all the activities found in Iran so far would have been legal if they had been declared to the IAEA in time, which was not the case. Whether all activities today are legal is exactly what the IAEA wants to confirm. For that, you need the help and the cooperation of Iran. The solution is in Iran’s hands, not in the international community.

Sanctions will not solve the problem but sanctions are necessary for the credibility of the regime. If
you breached your agreements with the IAEA and did not comply with IAEA resolutions and Chapter VII UN Security Council resolutions, and if there were no sanctions or consequences, this would completely undermine the credibility of the regime. Sanctions are necessary and they will solve nothing – I think we can agree on that. Let us focus on the positive things that we have suggested: negotiations with no preconditions. They are solutions that should save everyone’s face in good faith.

Mark Fitzpatrick
Thank you very much, Pierre. Thank you all for participating in this most difficult discussion. If one thing is clear, it is that all of the academic community in Europe and elsewhere in the world here is looking for a peaceful solution to this most difficult problem. There is a recognition of the urgency and a need to find an exit strategy, as Maurizio said. We have some differences of view about that strategy, but the more ideas we can put forward the more we can try to find a way forward. Let us hope that, the next time we convene such a session, the urgency of the problem is not that bad.
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Ambassador Shaker, there are a lot of merits in international enrichment facilities, but in the case of Iran and the Middle East, in the next 10 years, as far as I know, there will be only one nuclear-power plant, which is Bushehr. You do not need an enrichment plant for one reactor. As you said, it will take time to achieve, and I do not think that we have that much time to make progress in finding an acceptable solution for both Iran and the international community. I also do not think that Iran doubts that Russia will always deliver the fuel to Bushehr. I have not seen Iran really concerned about fuel supply. They used that as an argument in the past but, in practice, they have really shown no interest in those solutions.

On the comment just made by the analyst here about the fatwa, I asked in 2005 if I could see the exact text of the fatwa. It has not been published. Every word is significant. If they say that the use of nuclear weapons is un-Islamic, that is one thing, but does it say that the production of nuclear weapons is un-Islamic? I do not know. It is clearly not un-Islamic in Pakistan.

I agree with Dr Hosseini that it was clearly wrong for the US to oppose the Bushehr nuclear power plant. I cannot agree more with you. I also agree with you that there is no military solution to the Iranian crisis. You are saying that Iran will not withdraw from the NPT – of course you would say that; what else would you say? If you want to reassure the world that this is the case, I suggest that Iran voluntarily puts all its fuel-cycle facilities under an INFCIRC/66-type safeguards agreement, which would not lapse if Iran withdrew from the NPT. That would be a very important confidence-building measure that I also recommend EU member states adopt for themselves and lead by example.

You say that all the activities in Iran are legal and that you are a member of the NPT like Japan and others. You are a member of the NPT like Japan and others, but Iran has been found to be in non-compliance with its safeguards agreement and Japan has not, so that makes a difference. I would say that almost all the activities found in Iran so far would have been legal if they had been declared to the IAEA in time, which was not the case. Whether all activities today are illegal is exactly what the IAEA wants to confirm. For that, you need the help and the cooperation of Iran. The solution is in Iran’s hands, not in the international community.

Sanctions will not solve the problem but sanctions are necessary for the credibility of the regime. If
you breached your agreements with the IAEA and did not comply with IAEA resolutions and Chapter VII UN Security Council resolutions, and if there were no sanctions or consequences, this would completely undermine the credibility of the regime. Sanctions are necessary and they will solve nothing – I think we can agree on that. Let us focus on the positive things that we have suggested: negotiations with no preconditions. There are solutions that should save everyone’s face in good faith.

Mark Fitzpatrick
Thank you very much, Pierre. Thank you all for participating in this most difficult discussion. If one thing is clear, it is that all of the academic community in Europe and elsewhere in the world here is looking for a peaceful solution to this most difficult problem. There is a recognition of the urgency and a need to find an exit strategy, as Maurizio said. We have some differences of view about that strategy, but the more ideas we can put forward the more we can try to find a way forward. Let us hope that, the next time we convene such a session, the urgency of the problem is not that bad.