



INSIDE THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR CRISIS

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GEORGE PERKOVICH: Good morning. My name's George Perkovich. I'm a vice president for studies here at the Carnegie Endowment, and it's my pleasure to welcome you. It's great to have such a large crowd.

We're here, as you know, basically to release this new volume by Ambassador Hossein Mousavian: "The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: A Memoir." And as you'll see when you read it, it's an unusual combination in the sense that it's a history – the first really detailed historical account of the last 10 years of negotiation and, in a sense, crisis over the Iranian nuclear issue. It's also a memoir, and Ambassador Mousavian will talk a bit about the memoiristic elements, and you may ask about it. But it's fascinating as a memoir because he's had quite an interesting career.

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It's also an analytic book, so there's elements, especially near the end, where he kind of analyzes how we've gotten into this situation, and what are some ways out of it. And of course, it's also a political text within the Iranian context, and we can talk more about that. So it's a rare book that kind of braids these different strands and modes of discourse and thinking, and I think you'll find that it's quite insightful and illuminating.

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So what we're going to do here is Zia Mian from Princeton University is going to introduce Ambassador Mousavian. Then we're going to ask him a couple of questions to draw him out a bit on the book. And then we're going to turn it open for a discussion, and then afterwards Ambassador Mousavian will sign books for those who would like to purchase them outside.

Zia.

[00:01:54]

ZIA MIAN: Thanks, George. Thank you, everyone.

For those of you who have the bios of the speakers, I'm not here in my South Asia hat. I'm actually here because Frank von Hippel couldn't be here, and we've been very fortunate that for the past several years, Ambassador Mousavian has been a visiting scholar with our program at Princeton, the Program on Science and Global Security, which is part of the Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs. And he is the center of our work over the past several years on Iran and Iran's nuclear program, and trying to think through the technical and policy issues having to do with finding a resolution to the crisis. So we've been working with him to try to understand the diplomacy and trying to help clarify the technical solutions that have to be dealt with as part of a solution.

But Ambassador Mousavian came to us after a very distinguished career, not just as a scholar – since he does have a Ph.D. in international relations – but also as a former newspaper editor of The Tehran Times, and as Iran's ambassador to Germany. He was also the head of the foreign relations committee of Iran's National Security Council, so he speaks with an enormous amount of authority and many, many years of trying to understand Iran's

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relationship with the world. And critically, he was the lead spokesperson for Iran's nuclear negotiating team in the early 2000s when the nuclear crisis first broke.

Most recently, Ambassador Mousavian has been generous enough to join another initiative we have at Princeton: the International Panel on Fissile Material, which is a group of experts from 17 countries, now that Ambassador Mousavian has joined, that works to try and reduce and eliminate the key materials that are used to make nuclear weapons. And we look forward to having him in that and to have his expertise and insight contribute to the global debate on what to do about highly enriched uranium and plutonium, and not just the particular question of Iran that we'll be talking about today.

Ambassador Mousavian.

[00:04:19]

SAYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: Thank you, very much, George. Thank you, Zia. Thank to all of you. I really owe a lot to many individuals and institutions, which I have brought the names. This is a long list of the people and institutions which they help me to finish this research, the book. Especially George, not because he is here – he put a lot of time – of his time, I think, reading the book two, three times. Many times we argued the issues together.

Zia and Professor Frank von Hippel from Princeton University. I remember it was early 2010 when Zia sent me an email and told me George is coming to Princeton and he's willing to see you. I replied, I would be more than happy to see George. And we had a coffee – I think it was in Panera, George, if I remember well – and I told George, I'm reading all these literatures, articles, interviews. Everything here I see is from the Western point of view. I do not see anything to present to policymakers, politicians, public opinion Iranian point of view. At the end, if we are looking for a peaceful solution, we need to have mutual understanding. And I think this is a good opportunity for me to sit and write at Princeton University a research. That time, even I could not imagine this would end up to a book. And George supported the idea, and for the first time I saw the published book again this morning in a coffee shop with George after maybe two years. (Chuckles.)

The main objective I had to write this book – to explain the Iranian perspective – how do they see the Iranian nuclear issue in order to help politicians, public opinion, academics to understand the Iranian mindset. Of course, this is a chronology also, but I have tried to explain the different school of thoughts within Iran – how to deal with nuclear issue. I remember when the crisis came up in summer 2003, when I was in National Security Council. We were dealing with about seven, eight political school of thoughts within the country, how to deal with the nuclear issue. I have explained in the book.

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Also, I have tried to have a comparative analysis between President Khatami's nuclear policy – 2003 to 2005 – and Iranian nuclear policy during President Ahmadinejad – 2005 to present. I have tried also to go beyond and to explain the two major mindset in Iran school of thought – moderates, conservatives – and how do they see not only nuclear issue, relation with the U.S., relation with the West – which just nuclear is part of the story. In order to give a broader understanding, the challenge within Iran in relation with the West –

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why moderates they believe they – we should have a better relation with West; why conservatives, they are pessimistic? I have given my – I don't know – I don't remember, maybe, about 15, 16 examples and reasons in the book.

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Also, I try to bring from my point of view and engagement 25 years in relation with the West about 13, 14 major mistakes I believe the West made, maybe a part of the causes today we have the nuclear crisis. But the aim of the book is more to concentrate, at the end, on diplomacy, and how diplomacy can work. Why, in last 10 years, diplomacy has failed? What has been the reasons of failure of diplomacy? And what we should do in order to bring the diplomacy to success?

MR. PERKOVICH: Great. Hossein, one question would be, you talk about mistakes that the West made, and I think the book kind of lays them out in succinct ways, but they're very instructive. When you think also as you've – as you've spent this time going through all this material in the last 10 years – but it goes farther back both in the book and obviously, in your experience – what are a couple of the lessons that you think Iranian decision-makers should learn from this experience as well, not necessarily mistakes –

MR. MOUSAVIAN: Yeah.

MR. PERKOVICH: -- but things that you would wish they would learn from this?

MR. MOUSAVIAN: I think, George, I have mentioned in the book that the present crisis is because of two miscalculations. One refers to Iranian miscalculation and one refers to Western miscalculation. In 2003 to 2005, when we had moderate policy on nuclear issue based on engagement – I mean, the core strategy in 2003 to 2005 was to try to use the nuclear issue as a pilot to bring engagement between Iran and the West in a broader package. That's why Iran tried to show as much as confidence-building measure, cooperation like implementing the additional protocol voluntarily, implementing the subsidiary arrangement voluntarily, even suspension, giving access to the IAEA beyond additional protocol, giving access to the IAEA to military sites in order to bring confidence. But we really had broader vision.

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The West miscalculation in that period was they were thinking that they would be able to bring Iran to full cessation and to deprive Iranians from its legitimate rights under NPT. And we were keeping reiterating to our European interlocutors that all these measures is just to give you all assurances that Iran is not after nuclear bomb. But if you think you would be able to take Iran to cessation, to be deprived, everything would be changed.

The West was thinking in that time that we are very much afraid to be referred to United Nations Security Council to be sanctioned. That's why we are doing all these transparency measures, confidence-building measures because we are afraid of Security Council. Personally, I told them maybe 10 times, this is not the case. They would go to Security Council, they would bear the sanctions. This is not the reason they are cooperating for transparency, even suspension, additional protocol. You should understand that the

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main reason Iranian – they are cooperating with you. This was the mistake, which I have mentioned in my book. They were after prolonging the negotiation to bring Iran to final cessation. That's why after two years of implementing additional protocol, suspension, Iran decided to change the course.

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There was another miscalculation on the Iranian side. We were very much criticized domestically on these transparency measures, confidence-building measures. And we were told by many politicians that you people, you are very much intimidated, that the West would never be able to take Iran's nuclear fight to Security Council. They would never be able to sanction Iran because we don't have nuclear bomb. There is no diversion. We are cooperating with the IAEA. IAEA, they are visiting our sites. There is no reason. This is a bluff. The Westerners, they are bluffing.

I think this was a miscalculation in the Iranian side. And prolonging negotiations, trying to deprive Iran from its legitimate right to reach to a cessation also was a miscalculation of the Western side.

MR. PERKOVICH: Zia, do you want to –

MR. MIAN: Yeah. Hossein, let me follow up from that and ask you whether, given that today, 10 years later, we still see a line of argument in Washington and elsewhere that more sanctions are coming and that this will be what helps push Iran to be more forthcoming in the next round of negotiations and in Iran a determination that we can keep creating more facts on the ground in terms of stockpiling more enriched uranium. Do you see, looking back over the last 10 years and the work that you've done to research and write the book, that there is actually a process where either side is learning from the mistakes that you've just described?

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MR. MOUSAVIAN: I hope they would learn Zia – you remember it was almost six months ago I was reviewing the latest developments with you in the – in your room. And you told me: Hossein, what you are telling me – this is exactly back to beginning. This was your terminology you used. And I was discussing a lot also on the issue with George.

Look, I think they are making exactly again the same mistake. In 2011, again Iran – like 2003, 2004, 2005 – in 2011, again, Iran showed major overtures in order to bring diplomacy to success. The Western side understanding is Iran is making these overtures, flexibilities because the sanctions are working. In 2012, exactly they are making the same mistake they made in 2005. In 2005, they were thinking we are showing overtures, cooperation because we are afraid to go to the Security Council. In 2011, 2012, they are making the same mistake, thinking that Iran's overtures is because the sanctions are working.

Just – I have explained in detail in my book, just to review very quickly the overtures. In February 2011, Iran initiated to invite the U.S. representative in Afghanistan, Marc Grossman, to pay official visit to Tehran to discuss Iran-U.S. cooperation in Afghanistan.

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They were going to open another door, beside the nuclear issue, to bring Iran and the U.S., Iran and the West to some other major cooperations, helping regional stability and international security. The U.S. declined.

In early September – early summer 2011, the Russian proposal, which I have explained again in detail in my book, this proposal, a step-by-step proposal includes all major requirements of the IAEA and United Nations Security Council resolutions – implementation of additional protocol, implementation of subsidiary arrangements, complete transparency, cooperating with the IAEA to address possible military dimensions – everything is there, even measures beyond resolutions like cap – capping the, you know, enrichment at 5 percent, stopping 20 percent, stopping installing of new centrifuges, even there is a short period of suspension. Iran showed positive gesture, but the U.S. and the West, they rejected the proposal.

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In August 2011, Iranian head of foreign – Iranian head of Atomic Energy Organization told deputy of Amano in Tehran that Iran is ready for five years full supervision, complete access with no limitation to the IAEA to remove all ambiguities. And if the ambiguities are removed, then you would be prepared to recognize the rights of Iran, the legitimate rights of Iran under NPT and to gradually lift the sanctions. Again, this proposal was rejected by the U.S. and the Europeans. In September 2011, you remember Iranian president here in New York proposed the P-5 plus one for Iran to stop 20 percent enrichment if the P-5 plus one would be ready to provide the fuel rods. Again, this proposal was rejected.

Such overtures gave maybe a wrong impression to the Western countries that Iranians, they are afraid of sanctions. They declined; they rejected overtures; and they increased the sanctions. They sanctioned Central Bank, oil – everything came after these overtures.

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Therefore, more pressures, more sanctions was a respond to more cooperation, more flexibility, more transparency measures by Iran. This, if it's supposed to continue, would lead to confrontation definitely, because Iranians under no circumstances – I have explained in detail – regardless of who is ruling Iran, is moderate or reformist, this is monarchy or clerics – no one would make concession on the rights of Iran for enrichment. Nobody would be ready to single out the nation to be deprived from its rights.

MR. PERKOVICH: You know what, I think – let's go ahead and open up, and then – and I then may jump back in and ask a question piggybacking on somebody's else. But I – but I want to give people here an opportunity. So I'm going to call on you, and then a microphone – somebody will bring a microphone up here to the front to start. And then I would ask you to say who you are. Right here, please. We only have one or two – OK, then come up here, Amber, because there's a question over here too, so you'll be ready. Thank you.

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Q: Mr. Mousavian, I'm Havi Swangier (ph).

MR. MOUSAVIAN: Salom (ph).

Q: Good seeing you. (Chuckles.) Can you tell us a little bit about the Bushehr plant – why it took 20 years, and also whether it's working now? And how much did it cost at the end of the day? Thank you.

MR. MOUSAVIAN: I wish it could – it could take 20 years. This is about 35 years, maybe more.

Q: (Off mic.)

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MR. MOUSAVIAN: Actually the contract was signed in 1975 between Iran and Germany. And in 1979, almost 90 percent of the first phase was completed, and Iran paid about 7.8 million deutsche mark to Germans. They left the project right after revolution. And for a decade, Iran was negotiating with the U.S. to convince them – with the West to convince them to complete the Bushehr project.

This is one of the other issues which I have discussed in my book. Before revolution, the U.S. laid the foundation of a nuclear Iran and proposed Iran to have 23 power plants. Even Gerald Ford issued a directive for Iran to have full fuel cycle, including enrichment, in 1976. Everything for the Shah was perfect. Right after revolution, exactly the time the revolutionaries decided to shrink, to cancel the ambitious nuclear projects of Shah, they decided not to have 23 power plants. They decided not to have enrichment program. They decided not to have reprocessing program.

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Right in this period, the West sanctioned Iran, withdrew from the contractual commitments and left Iran with millions of dollars of unfinished projects. Iranians, they were just going to finish the projects and stop. This was the policy. When they withdrew, Bushehr was the symbol. And they didn't have much other major project – two, three. Tehran research reactor, built by Americans in 1967, was the other one – which even after revolution in 1980, Iran paid the U.S. for the fuel rod. And the U.S. neither gave Iran the fuel rod nor returned the money back.

Such a situation, coupled with invasion of Iran by Iraq, use of weapons of mass destruction against Iran, use of missiles – long-range missiles, changed Iranian mindset and left Iran with no other option other than go – to go for self-sufficiency, because the West was not ready. During seven years in Germany in about 300 meetings, I told German finish this project, because we have paid you. And you can – if you want, you can be shareholder, 50 percent. If you want, you can have a permanent representative over there. And we are not going to have further enrichment program, nothing. But they were telling me, we cannot do it because of the U.S. objection.

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Such atmosphere pushed Iran to go to Russia in order to sign a new contract with Russia in order to finish the project, and at the same time to go for self-sufficiency for fuel providing Bushehr – fuel for Bushehr. This was the reason they went after enrichment, because France declined to continue enrichment agreement Iran and French they had. It was supposed to – Iran was supposed to have a share. We paid for – \$1.2 billion to France to have a share enrichment plan – inside France, not Iran. But even they kicked out Iran from the share we had in – (inaudible) – in France.

This was the reason. First of all, it took long because we went to Russia. They promised to complete it within two, three, four years. Partly because of miscalculation of technical issues, because they were going to change German technology to Russian technology, and partly because of U.S. pressure, they were postponing the completion. And this was also the reason Iran went after enrichment.

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MR. PERKOVICH (?): The – let's go to this lady here, and then in the back row.

Q: Dahia Klonvek (sp) from the European Parliament. I would like to ask you – I think you explained very well this mismatch between – Iran shows flexibility and the West reacts with sanctions because feel that Iran is afraid or weak or whatnot. There are also examples on the other side, of West showing flexibility. Obama showed some flexibility when he became president. What is your explanation on those reactions from Iran?

And secondly, now we are in a situation where there are negotiations in Moscow. What needs to be done in order to save the negotiation process?

MR. MOUSAVIAN: When Obama came to office, Obama brought also a lot of hope in Iran for changing the course of relations. I think Obama was the only U.S. president that Iranians, they did not have – they were not suspicious about its intention. Even in 2009 Iranians, they were suspicious whether Obama would be able to deliver engagement policy or not. But they were almost confident that he has a good intention.

In practice, I believe the only practical step Obama administration took was the swap deal negotiated between Iran and the P-5 plus one, and the meeting between Bill Burns and Jalili in Geneva, October 2009. Practically, this was the only issue – in practice, not talks. And I have explained in detail in my book that Iran – although Iran agreed in Geneva about the principles, when Jalili went back, he didn't have anything to present to Iranian officials that even if Iran made the deal, there would be any changes toward the resolutions, IAEA resolutions, sanctions, pressures.

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And – but nevertheless, Iran proposed the P-5 plus one to do simultaneous exchange: to receive the fuel rod and to give up the stockpile. This was rejected. But right after this, Iran through ElBaradei informed President Obama that Iran is ready to make the deal directly with the U.S. It was in November 2009. And the U.S. declined.

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Q: Why directly with the U.S.?

MR. MOUSAVIAN: Because already Iran paid the U.S. for the fuel rod. And after 30 years, at least they wanted U.S. to pay them back. And of course they had a broader vision to engage with the U.S. through swap deal. If the U.S. is ready, let's – to open the door through swap deal for broader engagement.

And then Iranian official, I think it was in January 2010 even, after the U.S. rejected the Iranian offer for direct deal, the Iranian official in New York informed the U.S. counterpart that Iran is ready to make the deal, as agreed in Geneva. But the U.S. official told the Iranian, it is good, but you have to suspend the enrichment, while suspension was not a part of the deal. And then President Obama encouraged Turkey and Brazil to go to Tehran to convince Iran on the deal. They came to Tehran. The agreement was signed. Just a day or a week after the agreement between Iran and Brazil and Turkey was signed, U.S. initiated resolution 1929 as a reward. I think if you look at the procedure, then you would understand why Iranian cannot trust the engagement policy.

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MR. PERKOVICH: But Hossein, go back though, because in October 2009, before Iran came back and said, oh, we can do it directly with U.S. in Geneva, everybody thought there was a deal and the Iranians thought there was a deal. And the leadership went back to Tehran and something happened. In addition to all the things that you said, there – so from the standpoint of Iran's counterpart, they thought they had a deal and then – and so did the Iranian side in the negotiations. And then something happened back in Tehran that – that made people say wait a minute, the Iranians can't take yes for an answer, which then added to the suspicion that whatever was going to come next would be more games.

MR. MOUSAVIAN: Yup. You are right, George. I think I have even explained this issue in my book.

MR. PERKOVICH: Right.

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MR. MOUSAVIAN: One of the reasons of failure was, in my understanding, is that the Iranian negotiation team did not coordinate the issue with the leader in advance. Normally, this is a procedure. Every major initiative to final a deal on the nuclear should go to Supreme National Security Council to be discussed. The discussion should go to the leader to decide. I think that the Geneva initiative was not – didn't have such a backup. This was one of the reasons. And then also there was domestic challenge between Jalili and competitors on the issue which you read a lot in public.

MR. PERKOVICH: And I think this is really important, because, I mean, this is also a challenge here, which is that the leaders and strategists can identify positions where you could imagine a deal, but then the domestic politics in both places where oppositions will seek whatever opportunity, because it's a very difficult sport, to bring down the – those who would make the deal. And so we have that here. And this was also an example of –

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MR. MOUSAVIAN: No. You are right, George. But frankly speaking, I believe still Iranians, they are in better position compared to Americans. I mean, Iranian supreme leader has enough strength and power to decide on a deal.

I mean, for Iranians, as we have discussed in the book, three issues are key issues at the end: one, recognition of the rights; second, normalization of the (file ?) at the United Nations Security Council and the – at the IAEA; and third is removal of sanctions, even gradually. If there is a step-by-step plan, a broad package to be implemented step by step which includes these three elements, then Iran would 100 percent open to the maximum level of cooperation, transparency up to the end. This is the deal.

I think Iranian leader is in position to decide on such a deal, but I doubt whether Obama would be able to decide in order to finish, to bring diplomacy to success. If Obama fails, I cannot imagine P-5 plus one would be able to decide.

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MR. PERKOVICH: I think that's one of the asymmetries, because the leader also can decide who wins the elections before the elections, whereas Obama has a difficult time – (laughter) – predicting how he'll be able to do in the – in the elections.

Robin.

Q: Robin Wright, Woodrow Wilson Center. I want to follow up on both aspects you've just mentioned. One, how much influence or how much impact have sanctions had on Iran, and how much pressure have they exerted in terms of forcing their hand? And secondly, Iran is already an issue in the American election. To what degree is Iran gaming, as we call it, the election in terms of the diplomacy? There's a sense that there's a deadline on the American side. Does that play into the thinking or the calculations of the Iranians?

MR. MOUSAVIAN: Sanctions definitely is harming the ordinary people, the civilians. But if the Western politicians believe the sanctions would compel Iran to comply with their demands, definitely not. On the nuclear issue, I'm 100 percent sure if even they go for further crippling sanctions, Iranians – they would not change their nuclear policy. When I say nuclear policy, the core issue is the rights under NPT. This is the core issue. They would not give it up.

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But I think, Robin, the sanctions, although the Western politicians, they believe sanctions are working, I believe this has been counterproductive, pushing Iran to more enrichment, more radical position. Just look what happened after the U.S. and Europeans, they decided to sanction Iranian oil and central bank. Immediately, Iran decided to produce 20 – the fuel rod, just after this decision. They installed immediately 3,000 centrifuges. And they said swap deal is finished. We are not going to make deal on 20 percent anymore – finish.

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This is radicalizing Iranian position, because they are not – they cannot give concession under pressure. This is Iranian mentality and culture. If there is no pressure, they would be able to much more flexible. We were not under sanctions and pressures during 2003, 2004. I mean, we didn't have four, five sanction resolutions. But we were able to make concessions on implantation of additional protocol, subsidiary arrangement, cooperation with the IAEA. But these days, they're in very, very difficult position to implement the additional protocol, just because they think they are threatened under sanctions and pressures.

Q: And the election?

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MR. MOUSAVIAN: Election here is very important, but it is not in Iran. I mean, they really don't care too much about the U.S. election. And their experience also is that they have made the concession in 2009, 2010, 2011 before talks about election. What we discussed into mid-2011, it was not election year. But here I understand election is very important.

MR. MIAN: So Hossein, let me ask about that. After the American election cycle is over, the Iranian election cycle is about to begin. And one of the questions that I think is of interest is how will this book be read and understood in Iran? What light does this shed on the internal politics of Iranian policymaking that the people of Iran will – should be paying attention to?

MR. MOUSAVIAN: I think one of the major contribution of this book to Iranian public opinion and many politicians would be advantages of nuclear policy during President Khatami. I have discussed the advantages and disadvantages of both policies. Even I have mentioned what these advantages of nuclear policy we had during our time – I mean, even our policy had negative aspects, like suspension. Even I have discussed the advantage of Ahmadinejad's nuclear policy, because this policy brought Iran to a no-return point, convincing the West that Iran would not give up the rights for enrichment at any price. This is an advantage, despite of all pressures and sanctions. I have tried to be neutral to bringing – to bring the advantages and disadvantages.

But, the fact there is, during our time, we were under extreme pressure from public opinion, politicians, and everybody was – a majority – they were convinced the nuclear policy during President Khatami is against the national interest of Iran. That's why even some nuclear negotiators, they were accused on espionage, betraying the country and so and so. Because it was not an opportunity – there was no opportunity for Iranian politicians to understand the positive aspects of cooperation and engagement with the West on the nuclear issue because we believed from the beginning that Iranian enrichment should – at the end, should come through engagement and understanding and confidence with the West. This would not be possible otherwise. This was our understanding.

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And here I had the time to explain exactly the advantages. I think this would be a contribution to Iranian politicians also, to encourage them for more engagement.

MR. PERKOVICH: Can you – and I’m going to take the question, but I – but one of the things that you talk about in the book that’s very interesting, Hossein, is the red line that the leader had established on negotiations with the U.S. in the – in that period before 2003, but including after 2003. And then you describe that he changed that when Ahmadinejad came in. So can you describe that a bit? How that worked, and why the change?

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MR. MOUSAVIAN: I think the red line he had during President Rafsanjani and President Khatami for negotiating with the U.S. was more because he didn’t have enough trust to the foreign policy of Rafsanjani and Khatami. And this is not secret. He even made public in Friday prayer ceremony after 2009, he publicly said the mindset of Ahmadinejad for foreign policy, economic policy, is much more close to his mindset, and he has major differences with Rafsanjani. This is not secret. I think this was the core issue. He could trust Ahmadinejad’s foreign policy more than Khatami and Rafsanjani.

MR. PERKOVICH: This gentleman right in front – yeah, yeah. There. No, no, sorry. There you go.

Q: Thank you. I am Japanese media so my question about North Korea. So some people under some media say so, deep and long engagement with North Korea’s long range missile – in terms of long-range missile and the nuclear program. So is that true, or not?

MR. MOUSAVIAN: Well, again, to be realistic, the nuclear – the missile issue came to Iranian program just after Iran was attacked. I mean, Iran was invaded and the aggressor started to use long-range missiles against Iran – unfortunately, with international support. And thousands of civilians during the night, they were targeted by missiles, killed – 1,800 missiles in a short period they launched against Iran. Iran had to go to gain the same capability to reciprocate. There was no other option. North Korea, Libya, Syria, it doesn’t matter – Soviet Union, Russia, they went and they got it.

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MR. PERKOVICH: We have several questions from people outside, and then – and so let me read a couple of them, and then when we come back in here we’ll take a couple at a time, because I realize there are so many questions.

Barbara Slavin asks, “The U.S. had just overturned two governments in 2003.” She means Iraq and Afghanistan, I presume. “Wasn’t that a reason – ” which happen to be on Iran’s border – “Wasn’t that a reason for Iranian compromise or willingness to negotiate arrangements in 2003 and 2004?”

MR. MOUSAVIAN: This is also a big misperception, George. Here, I think, is one of the root causes of Washington policy to bring more pressure because they feel under threat, Iran would make concessions. In 2001, the U.S. could win Afghanistan. One of the major reasons was Iran’s cooperation. I mean, Iran was not feeling threatened by U.S.

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attacking Afghanistan, because Iranian generals, they were cooperating with U.S. generals in Afghanistan to win – (inaudible). This was a joint cooperation between Iran and the U.S. Unfortunately, when Iran was rewarded by Axis of Evil, this had huge negative consequences.

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Even about Iraq, in 2003, what was on the ground – what was the asset of the U.S.? Their groups, parties, the forces on the ground, they were cooperating with the U.S. fighting Saddam. They were Iranian allies. Therefore, at the beginning of invasion of Iraq for removal of Saddam, they had joint interest and joint policy and they were cooperating, practically, like the joint policy to remove Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan. Iranian mindset was completely different, although in National Security Council we always were counting on calculated measures by hawks in Washington – but this was not the major issue because our feeling was that we are cooperating with the U.S. on Afghanistan and Iraq, and perhaps at least in our understanding, Iran could not win Afghanistan without – the U.S. could not win Afghanistan without the cooperation of Iran. Therefore, this is very, very different understanding of the case.

MR. PERKOVICH: I mean, I think one of the things that the book talks about a lot more than we're doing here, I mean, is this issue that's come up in several questions about pressure. And you're saying Iran doesn't respond to pressure and it can't – you know, can't respond to coercion and stuff. And yet, it – I mean, it does. Everyone does, to some extent. And what Iran's strategy has been in recent years is similar: to put more pressure on the other side. So Iran has increased – each time sanctions come on, Iran increases its nuclear activity.

MR. MOUSAVIAN: Yeah.

MR. PERKOVICH: So I mean, I think – and the book talks about it. There's somewhere in between – I mean, pressure's necessary for both sides. Both sides are trying to find leverage to press the other to find some little space that's in equilibrium. But I don't think you would argue that Iran, by being fully compliant, would then get what it wants, just as if there's not pressure, Iran's not going to satisfy the IAEA or build confidence that the program is entirely peaceful right now.

MR. MOUSAVIAN: You're right, George. I think pressures by the U.S. or the West makes Iran also to reciprocate. But what we are looking at the end – are we looking to escalate pressures, reciprocations, more hostilities, to go to confrontation or leave this trend and to go for a genuine negotiation not only on the nuclear – on the other issues like Afghanistan, Iraq, drugs and energy security in Persian Gulf and to bring a major compromise on Iran-U.S. Iran-West relations. This is one of the arguments we have in the book – that in parallel with the nuclear negotiations between Iran and the P-5 plus one, we need a parallel negotiation between Tehran and Washington on broader package, broader issues.

[00:50:00]

MR. PERKOVICH: Do you – and I'm going to come back to these questions here – but this is another question from outside, but it goes to what you were just saying about,

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you know, is the end leading to some big confrontation, or will people seek a modus vivendi diplomatically.

This question is, “Does Iran anticipate an Israeli military attack? And if so, how would Iran react?”

MR. MOUSAVIAN: The Iranian understanding is wrong or right, but their understanding is that the Israelis, they would never be able to attack Iran without U.S. green light or permission. They really do not count on Israel as a threat – Israel alone – because they believe Israel compared to Iran is too small to challenge Iran. But they believe the major threat is the U.S. as major international power. That’s why they do not count – they do not believe Israelis, they would go unilaterally to attack Iran. I myself also believe the Israeli threats for military strike is more to bring a credible threat to U.S. and Europeans in order to convince them for more sanctions, but they really don’t mean it. And the Israelis, they are not in position unilaterally without U.S. to attack Iran. This is my personal understanding also. But Iranians, they do not look to Israel as Israel. They see Israel as a baby of the U.S. That’s it.

[00:51:54]

MR. PERKOVICH: What do you think the political effect in Iran would be if there was a strike, whether it’s joint Israel-U.S. strike or Israel alone? What would be the political reaction in Iran to that?

MR. MOUSAVIAN: First of all, we would not be able to imagine any engagement, rapprochement between Iran and the U.S. at least for a decade. At least. Forget the engagement policy at least for a decade. But we have discussed in detail – I think, if I remember, I have brought about 15, 16 different negative consequences in the book of military strike, explaining, concluding that would be disaster for Iran, Israel, the U.S., region and beyond – this would be really catastrophic, even as the consequences. But if you are thinking about Iran-U.S. relation, if the U.S. engages in a military strike, then we would never be able to imagine any rapprochement between two countries at least for a decade to come. A decade to come.

MR. PERKOVICH: The gentleman with the beard there, and then there was a lady who was there. I don’t know where she – yes, you. Thank you. So I should do it the other way around, ladies first, but I saw him – no, go ahead. You’ve got the microphone but we’ll go right back. We’ll take both of them. Don’t answer one at a time. Yeah, go ahead.

Q: My name is Amir Abbas Fakhavar. I’m research fellow and lecturer at the Institute of World Politics. And I’m glad I can talk to you directly. I spent more than five years in jail under torture when you were part of the Islamic Republic’s negotiation by your government – your lovely government that you are using the logo on your cover page of the book. I have two questions – and I need direct answer. Please don’t go around – (in Farsi).

[00:53:49]

September 2006: Hashemi Rafsanjani, which has a – you have really close tie to him, and he wrote the introduction for your book about Iran-German, I don’t know, relation. And Hashemi Rafsanjani released in a statement the handwriting of the Khomeini, the

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Iranian – the Islamic Republic’s founding father – that Khomeini mentioned we need a lot of atomic bomb and laser (ph) bomb in that statement by his handwriting. And you are going around in all of your speeches and your book and mentioning, no, we don’t want atomic bomb, we don’t want – I guess the Khomeini, Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, his word is the last word. No one can go over his word. And when he is saying we need a lot of atomic bomb, that means it’s a plan. And he wrote that letter that was confidential for 19 years, and 2006 Hashemi Rafsanjani released because there was a fight inside the government.

And the second question is about the sanction. You said sanction is – will affect the Iranian people. In 1998 with – when Khatami was in power, the oil price came down to \$9, and 2008, 10 years after, went up to \$159. Can you tell me what happened to the Iranian people? Was it a better life for them or it was worse? I guess it was worse. And the – but what happened? All the petrol dollars came – because of the high price of the oil went to the Hezbollah, Hamas, all of the terrorist group all around the world; and went to the salary to the Revolutionary Guard and – (inaudible) – three times more than the average salary of the government employee in Iran, to attack the people and protesters.

And that’s funny and interesting. You are not mentioning at all anything about the human rights in Iran. You helped Kazem Darabi (sp) to be released from jail in Germany, and you don’t care about human rights in Iran, about a lot of political prisoners in Iran? Please give the direct answer. Thank you.

[00:56:08]

MR. MOUSAVIAN: All you said is wrong. (Audience murmurs.) Darabi (sp) was released 15 years after I left Germany. I left Germany in 1997; Darabi was released about two years ago.

Q: And you were not part of the – (inaudible) – designed to help him to push the general government –

MR. MOUSAVIAN: No. I was not involved at all – although I believed he should be released. But when you say Darabi – Darabi was released at the end of his prison sentence. It was ended. You can ask German government, first.

Second, there has never been any (written ?) by Imam Khomeini for a nuclear bomb. It is not true. There’s reality – if you want to mislead the public opinion, this is good statements. But the fact – everyone knows, during invasion of Iran by Iraq, Iraq used chemical weapons. This is not secret.

[00:57:17]

Iran did not reciprocate it by chemical weapon just because of fatwa of Imam Khomeini – just. He did not let Iranian army to reciprocate by chemical weapon, because that time his fatwa was, weapons of mass destruction is wrong. This is not only Imam Khomeini. This is all Shi’a religious leaders in Najaf, in Qom. All of them – they have

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consensus against the forbidden “haram” of weapons of mass destruction. They all believe this is “haram,” is forbidden. There is no dispute between religious leaders.

What can you have more credible than this – if a nation during foreign invasion, during war, is attacked by weapons of mass destructions, and the religious leaders they prevent the army to reciprocate – (what it does?) And what you said – Rafsanjani revealed a written letter by Imam Khomeini – is completely false. There is no such written statement by Khomeini. If he was going to do that, he didn’t need to write. He would have permitted the army to reciprocate.

[00:58:45]

You say you have been arrested. I was arrested also. I was in jail also. It doesn’t matter that we have to betray the national interest of the nation because we have been in jail.

MR. PERKOVICH: Question in the back.

Q: Shala Sardiri (ph), Voice of America Persian News Network. Mr. Mousavian, you said yourself that the Ayatollah Khamenei hadn’t agreed with the team schedule and what they have to say before they left. They should have done it with his agreement. In the other hand, the basis of the Islamic Revolution is based on animosity toward West, especially U.S. Do you think if – the way the discussion is going, the supreme leader has to agree to everything on – based on agreement? Do you think if Iran is supposed to agree to anything, it must be beyond Ayatollah Khamenei – he has to drink the poison like Ayatollah Khomeini did?

[00:59:49]

MR. MOUSAVIAN: First of all, by constitution it is not secret. Religious leader is ultimate decision maker on foreign policy issues. I mean, the foreign policy issues related to national security should go to National Security Council. After the decision, this should be referred to the leader to decide. But don’t forget, during President Khatami, whatever we did on transparency measures, implementing additional protocol, subsidy arrangement, giving access to military sites – everything we did – it was only by approving through the leader. I mean, we could not do any of these measures without his consent.

Therefore, during even President Khatami, he told the nuclear negotiation team that he has no problem with transparency. And he doesn’t care if transparency – Iran would go far beyond the IAEA requirements. Could – even during President Ahmadinejad, although they have rejected implementation of additional protocol, on case by case, practically they have implemented additional protocol in practice. And they have given access beyond additional protocol in practice. And you can see it in official reports of the IAEA.

But on Iran-U.S., I have examples mentioned in my book that during Rouhani, during Larijani and during Jalili you see messages from Tehran to Washington that Iran is ready for broader negotiation, grand – (inaudible) – broader cooperation with the U.S., including nuclear issue. Therefore, this is not something – and these messages could not

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have come here without the leader's consent. Therefore, the problem is the leader believes the U.S. is after regime change. The U.S. is not genuine for a real, healthy relation with Iran.

This is the issue. Otherwise they have no objection – there is no objection in country between the different political stripes – even radicals, conservatives, moderates – they all – they have one consensus. A healthy relation with the U.S. is a matter of consensus. But the majority, including the leader, they doubt the real intention of the U.S. Specifically, the leader maintains that the real, the core policy of the U.S. is regime change.

[01:03:02]

MR. MIAN: So George, we don't want to leave people with a very kind of dark and gloomy view of the world. (Laughter.)

MR. PERKOVICH: Good, because this is the last comment or question, because we've got to – we've got to wrap up. So please –

MR. MIAN: So at the end of your book, Hossein, you lay out a very detailed but ambitious agenda for a path forward. Given what you've just said, do you actually see signs of hope that there can be the kind of breakthrough in the relationship between Iran and the West that you would and others would like to see?

MR. MOUSAVIAN: There is two issues, Zia. If the West policy continues to take hostage every other aspect of cooperation to nuclear issue, I think this would be a problem. There are a lot of other issues Iran and the West, Iran and the U.S., they can start cooperation to bring confidence, like joint cooperation against drugs trafficking; like Afghanistan's stability; like Iraq – a lot of issues.

The second issue is whether the West would continue to challenge the rights of Iran for enrichment or not. If the red line for the West is enrichment, I'm not optimistic for any kind of solution. If they are going to concentrate – as I have explained in the book – on transparency measures, Iran would be hundred percent open to every measure for transparency and confidence-building. It depends to these two elements.

MR. PERKOVICH: Great. On that – and I apologize; I know there are other questions. But we do have time – a time limit. I'm sure Hossein will be back at other times. But also I think there'll be answers to many of your questions in the book itself. The book is available in the back. Hossein will be back there for a while signing books after this. But let me thank all of you for coming and thank Hossein and Zia also for this event. (Applause.)

[01:05:28]

(END)