

**HEARING OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE;
SUBJECT: U.S. STRATEGY REGARDING IRAN;
CHAired BY: SENATOR JOHN F. KERRY (D-MA);**

**WITNESSES: DR. ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI, CSIS COUNSELOR AND
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MR. BRZEZINSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senators. Thank you for having us here.

I had the opportunity to read the testimony given to you on Tuesday by Richard Haass, and I agree with it. It's a generalized approach, and therefore I am going to focus much more narrowly in my own comments on the negotiating process with Iran that the president intends to undertake.

It seems to me that the negotiating process can be seen as guided by centrally alternative strategic objectives. At one extreme, the negotiating process can be designed deliberately to fail but to do so in a manner that places the onus for the failure directly on the other party. That can be an objective of negotiations. At the other extreme, the negotiating process can be deliberately designed to seek a formula for an acceptable compromise that satisfies the basic interests of both parties.

To be specific, if the goal is to encourage, for example, the Iranians to be intransigent and in effect deliberately to strengthen the role of the extremists thereby justifying alternative courses of action than negotiations, because the negotiations have failed, the United States should publicly, first of all, insist that Iran meet certain basic preconditions even prior to the negotiating process, in effect seeking Iran to make fundamental concessions prior to the negotiations.

Secondly, we should publicly threaten Iran with more sanctions if Iran is not compliant in the negotiating process.

Thirdly, we should keep asserting publicly that force and the use of force remains an option that may be exercised against Iran.

We can also, fourthly, keep saying publicly that is one of our political objectives to achieve regime change in Iran.

Last but not least, we should continue publicly to label the Iranian government as a terrorist entity, thereby inflaming the public mood in Iran, and impose time limits on the duration of negotiations. Such an approach would certainly achieve its obvious objective:

to make certain that the negotiations are not productive and that Iran's intransigence is the cause of the failure.

The alternative approach, of course, should be rather different. It should seek to engage the Iran in a process in which there emerges the possibility of some consensual arrangement. That, of course, means that we can and should consult privately with our allies regarding the consequences of the lack of progress, including the possibility subsequently of imposing more stringent sanctions. We can evaluate to the extent that it is feasible other options perhaps of more coercive character.

But we also have to be very careful not to set limits on ourselves which dramatically limit our choice of action and impose on us a pattern of conduct which could lead us in the direction of an eventual collision.

Obviously, the achievement of a nuclear capability by Iran would be a disaster. And I'm quoting President Sarkozy, who said exactly that. But President Sarkozy also said that the military collision with Iran, the bombing of Iran, would be a disaster. And hence, obviously our strategy has to be guided by (discern for ?) a strategic objective of avoiding both disasters.

That means that we have to approach the negotiating process with some degree of patience, prudence and with a deliberate effort to shake the atmospherics of the engagement, because atmospherics of the engagement are not only important to the negotiating process itself, but they affect Iranian public opinion. And we do know that there is a latent Iranian public opinion. And we do know that a great many people in Iran are not in sympathy with the attitudes so perversely expressed by Ahmadinejad, more recently even by the supreme leader either regarding us or, for example, specifically the Holocaust or Israel.

In that context, I think we should be prepared to exploit an opening which probably unintentionally the Iranians are giving us. And I have in mind a striking contrast between the North Korean approach to negotiations and the Iranian approach to this issue. The North Koreans have said publicly we want nuclear weapons; we are seeking nuclear weapons; indeed, at one point or another, we have achieved nuclear weapons. The Iranians are saying to us we do not want nuclear weapons; we do not seek nuclear weapons; our religion forbids us to have nuclear weapons.

I don't say that this is necessarily a credible statement, but it is a statement which can be picked up in the sense that our response to the Iranians can indicate we are prepared to explore the veracity of these assertions. We have grounds for being suspicious. We need to be reassured. But if you're serious about these statements then by all means let us examine means that will make us certain, and the international community certain, that you are not seeking nuclear weapons and in fact you don't want them and that, as you claim, your religion forbids them.

That seems to me to be a goal that the negotiations should be designed to pursue, and therefore, we should be very careful to avoid any approach which in advance impedes the process of negotiations, inflames the context in which they'll be pursued, and makes it easier for people like Ahmadinejad to goad the United States and to undercut public support for the negotiating process in the United States and in the international community.

What I have now said does collide with some of the advice or some of the considerations that are being discussed in the United States currently. It seems to me that we run the risk of having to have -- of wanting to have our cake and eating it too at the same time, of engaging in polemics and diatribes with the Iranians while at the same time engaging seemingly in a negotiating process.

The first is not conducive to the second. I am not naive enough to think that the negotiating process would be productive quickly. I am not certain that it will be productive in the long run. But I know that if we prejudice its chances in the short run we will not have the opportunity to push the process over the longer run. And that means that we should avoid time limits on the negotiations because they create a sense of urgency and pressure, which is inimical to a serious exploration of the issues. We should consult very quietly with our allies about what alternative means of pressure we may choose at some point to apply. But we should start the negotiating process on the basis of a serious determination to explore the degree to which there are openings for accommodation.

There are ambiguities in the Iranian posture. There are some indications, according to various reports, that the Iranians are not moving at full speed to acquire nuclear weapons. They may be seeking the capability to be a proto nuclear country but not to cross the threshold of actual weaponization or, for that matter, enrichment to a level that would make weaponization possible in the near future.

We should be very careful also not to become susceptible to advice from interested parties regarding how we ought to proceed. There is a fascinating article in yesterday's Haaretz on the advice that Secretary of State Clinton has been given in Jerusalem yesterday on how we ought to proceed with the negotiating process. And I would suggest that members of the committee become acquainted with that advice. I have some reservations regarding parts of it because it seems to me that if we follow it closely we will be sucked into a process in which escalation of tensions, mutual accusations, will poison the effort of negotiations even at the very start.

Thank you.

SEN. KERRY: Thank you, Dr. Brzezinski, for a very, very interesting and helpful approach, and I look forward to following up with questions.

General Scowcroft.