

**Seminar by Prof. Efraim Inbar on the eve of 7th IDSA-BESA Bilateral Dialogue
January 14, 2008**

Opening Remarks by Mr NS Sisodia, Director, IDSA

I have great pleasure in welcoming Professor Efraim Inbar to IDSA today. He is here in connection with the Seventh IDSA-BESA bilateral dialogue, which is beginning from tomorrow. It will be held on 15th and 16th. Professor Inbar who is very well known in IDSA is leading a small delegation of three scholars. We know from our past experience that while the numbers may be small it is packed with lots of intellectual power so we have to be ready for a lot of activity in the next two days. Some of you know Prof. Efraim Inbar very well. For those of you who have joined the IDSA more recently, Prof. Inbar was educated in Hebrew University and subsequently he went on to University of Chicago where he did his doctorate and then he served as visiting professor at John Hopkins University, also in Georgetown University, he was a visiting scholar at Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars and he was also a visiting fellow at IISS in London and the recipient of the Onassis Fellowship in 2003, he has lectured in several reputed think tanks and universities, including Rand, Harvard University, MIT, Columbia, Oxford and Yale University. He specializes in Middle Eastern strategic issues and his special area of interest is politics and strategy of Israeli national security policy. He has written over 60 articles in professional journals and he has five books to his credit, *Outcast Countries in the World Community*, *War and Peace in Israeli Politics*, *Labor Party Positions on National Security*, *Rabin and Israel's National Security*, *The Israeli Turkish Entente*, *Israel's National Security Issues and Challenges Since the Yom Kippur War*. He has also edited certain collections of articles. He has served in the Israeli Defence Force and he has been on the Political Strategic Committee of the National Planning Council and the Chair of the Committee for National Security Curriculum at the Ministry of Education. He is widely quoted in various journals, books, international press and he is also a columnist for Jerusalem Post. Ladies and gentlemen please join me in welcoming Professor Inbar to IDSA. He will today be speaking to us on a topic of great topicality and interest that is Iran's nuclear crisis and his perspectives about West Asia and of course Iran. Welcome to you Prof. Inbar and may I request you to kindly share your thoughts on the subject. Thank you.

Talk by Professor Efraim Inbar

I will speak about Iranian nuclear challenge and on this issue I think that I am more or less representing mainstream thinking in Israel. On this issue there is no big difference between Left and Right, although there may be some nuances between various people and I will try to pose several questions and to answer them. First of all, current Iran has several layers, identity is a complex issue and of course Iran of today has an imperial past, the Persian empire, which people in the Middle East and elsewhere understand that it is an important country, it is a regional power, it is one of the largest countries in the Middle East with a population over 70 million like Egypt and Turkey and it aspires to be a regional power and to play a major role in regional politics. On top of those two layers of course there is another identity layer since 1979 which is more radical Islamic layer and I think that as a result of this type of Islamic identity basically we see a country with a jihadist agenda which is intent in spreading Islam to the World and particularly their own version, the Shiite version in particular. If I want to sum up all those elements, I think it would be correct to categorize Iran as what Professor Dole used to call "Crazy States" in international relations, a state that has far reaching goals, revolutionary goals, it is not a status quo power, it is a revisionist power, it has great commitment to achieve those goals, it is willing to pay a heavy price in order to achieve those goals, and it has a rather unconventional style in its exchanges with the rest of the world and of course Ahmadinejad is just one example of this rather eccentric statements and interaction with the rest of the world. Why do they want nuclear weapons? First of all I think they want nuclear weapons because it is an issue of policy for the regime. You have a nice neighbour like Pakistan today and we know the crisis in Pakistan. Nobody in America in this particular administration speaks about democracy in Pakistan now. They are very much afraid to rock the boat because they don't know who will get in charge of the nuclear bombs. So, a country that has nuclear arsenal is less amenable to regime change or to undermining the current administration. This is what happened also with

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North Korea. So, I think in their thinking having a nuclear bomb is something that will deter the Americans in particular to try to undermine their regime because everybody knows that may be [inaudible] takes in Tehran but we may get even greater lunatics in Tehran and there is no clear limit, this is a devil's the world knows, so I think this is part of their thinking. In addition of course it is conventional strategic thinking to deter invasion by Americans. They think the Americans invade countries on right and left. In east and west of Iran the Americans are in Afghanistan, in Iraq which has been actually conducive to Iranian interests but basically they are still afraid of the Americans. So to some extent this is a deterring factor. After all, North Korea was not invaded, it was Iraq that was invaded because Iraq did not yet have nuclear weapons. I think also for example like others it is a sign of regional hegemony, it is like the French bobbinet as some people called it, it is part of national and international status. I think that they understand also that a bomb must not necessarily be used but a threat of a nuclear bomb can create a lot of good will among their neighbours. Finally, I think that the Iranians also have a cultural goal basically to stop spreading the western culture. There is a very paradoxical view of the west; on the one hand they regard the West as decadent, as weak, as a dying civilization vis-à-vis the Islamic civilization, they see the destruction of the family institution in the west. This is how they talk. On the other hand they are very much afraid of the western culture, of western movies and everything that may create bad habits amongst their own people. So this is part of their way to defend themselves and to stop the western influence. What is the strategy? Simple, they think they emulate the North Koreans. Of course they are ready to talk with the West, with the Europeans, with the International Atomic Energy Agency as long as they are ready to talk and they are very good in bargaining. In the bazaars of Tehran you learn how to bargain hard and they were successfully bargaining for years with the west when the main goal is basically to try to gain time, to be able to present the world with a fait accompli and I think they were very successful in that respect. Basically it took time until the international community realize that they are really after the bomb and afterwards the international community realized that they were after the bombs they are still playing games, they are ready to dialogue, it is a very nice liberal argument I am ready to talk but we all know that nothing will happen.

Why should we be so worried about a nuclear Iran? I think there are some problems with nuclear Iran. First of all, I mention the problems at the systemic level and afterwards at the regional level. First of all, at the systemic level obviously it is a challenge to the United States hegemony and dominance in world affairs. Take a look who are their friends, it is Chavez of Venezuela who visits Iran, it is the Syrians who is basically another Cuban Castro type regime, those are their friends. They clearly tried to undermine the attempt of the Americans to build a Pax Americana in the Middle East. In my book, I don't hide, I am pro-America, that is a country that we can't afford losing, so it is bad news. Another important element at the system level is the NPT regime. Basically the non proliferation treaty is in danger. We see the North Koreans doing what they are doing, the Iranians are getting close basically the NPT regime is important despite the reservations the Indians and Israelis have about this type of regime but basically it is a regime that has stabilized large part of the world and has reduced incentives for some countries to try to acquire nuclear bombs and I admit I don't have the [inaudible] views, the more the better I am from a different school of thinking about nuclear bombs I think the less the better and particularly the more are the bad guys. So it will be a challenge to the NPT regime, it will further weaken it, which does not serve the interests of the West at least. Another threat is they have long range missiles about 2000km, they are trying to improve their range, to extend their range. So we just draw a circle around Iran 2000km and you will see who is in the range, the Indians are also in the range, the Eastern Europeans are in range, of course, Israel and all the Middle East in the range of the Iranians. In fact it is different between being in the range of a missile armed with conventional warheads, as an Israeli I have lived through it in 1991 we were attacked by Iraqi missiles carrying commercial warheads 500kg and [unclear] out of the institutions who are paralyzed, I had time to write, I don't have to teach at the

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University, but we managed such a big damage and basically you could live with it. Of course there is a big difference if those missiles carry nuclear bombs. Another problem is in the important energy sector. If we take a look at the map, Iran is of course located along the shores of the Gulf where much of the oil is but we usually forget that it is also located along the Caspian basin, another important area with a lot of energy resources and this can cause energy eclipse, basically it is difficult to us. Between 70-80% of the world reserves in energy and this will give Iran a handle on this important strategic commodity, again, which is I think a very bad influence. I think also that a nuclear Iran will definitely embolden all radicals, Islamists as well as others, may be an influence frequency of term and it will allow terrorists or radicals to believe at least that they have a nuclear umbrella. I am not sure this nuclear umbrella is really effective but we feel so. It will allow them to feel so.

At the regional level, of course, it will strengthen the regime. For the reason I mentioned before nobody wants to rock a boat with nuclear weapons in it. This regime is not a very nice regime. From the Israeli point in particular, it is a regime that speaks about the destruction of the Jewish state but also it speaks about bringing Islam if necessary by sword to the rest of the world which is not convinced about the great virtues of the Muslim religion. So, it is a revisionist regime which is very problematic in terms of its goals. It will allow Iran to require regional hegemony. If I take a look to what is happening in the Middle East I think we see already what we call in international relations bandwagoning instead of countries aligning themselves against the revisionist threat, actually they get close to it. Saudi Arabia allow Ahmadinejad to come to Haj to Mecca, we see the gulf states now getting closer particularly with declining America, some people think that we see a declining America and America is in trouble in Iraq so I think that we see countries getting closer in the Middle East, the Arab countries getting closer to Iran or to what they call Persia. I think the Iranians will definitely export the Shiite revolution to Shiite political entities in the gulf or countries that have Shiite minorities like, Bahrain actually has a majority, but in Saudi Arabia actually the North Eastern part where the oil is Shiite, of course in Iraq we have a Shiite majority which is already partly at least is under Iranian influence and this will even grow. It will definitely strengthen the radical allies of Iran in the region which is Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, which we will talk about it during our dialogue. Another very important consequence is the future of Turkey. Turkey is in front of our eyes undergoing some kind of identity crisis. We see in recent years a growth of political Islam of their version which is quite moderate, they are successfully in power for the last years and it has been a policy on the part of the Iranian Islamic Republic to destabilize Turkey because Turkey even with this type of government is seen as a secular state and it is actually an anathema to what the Iranians believe should be the model for the Muslim states. They have tried to operate in Turkey in the past in the 1990s and they may do so again and it is not clear to what extent they will be able to undermine the current political structure in Turkey and turn Turkey into a more Islamic state than it is today. Turkey is a very important actor in the Middle East with over 70 million people, one of the major powers in the Middle East, may be a model for the Muslim world. Another area of great concern is Central Asia. Central Asian countries basically received independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Empire. In those countries most of them adopted some kind of pro-western orientation. They allied themselves partly with Turkey, partly with Americans and in any case if Iran becomes nuclear those countries will stop being within the orbit of the West. They will try to look for some kind of nuclear umbrella so may be they will align with Russia, which is closer, or with China or alternatively they will bandwagon towards Iranians the Persians and this is again I think the west will lose an important area. It may also have a domino effect on the Indian sub-continent. Iran [inaudible] with Pakistan, Pakistan is a nuclear country and they will have to conduit their nuclear posture to another nuclear neighbour, which means that we will definitely have to increase the nuclear arsenal. This will influence you here. You will have to do something about it. I think it may influence even the Chinese who will react to what you are doing, to what is happening, in any case there will be undesirable effects which have

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to be studied more than what I am alluding here. But this is something that should be of concern not only to Middle East or Iran and I try hopelessly sometimes tell my students that Iran is closer to India than to Israel. Take a look at the map, it is 300km from the border, we are 1000km and may be we are in better shape than the Indians vis-à-vis Iran. I think also that we may see, may be not very likely, a formal [unclear] operation in Iran to help with nuclear technology to radical states or to terrorists. We have seen the Pakistanis doing exactly the same. So why should the Iranians be so different from Pakistanis. Finally, if I am talking about the results in the worst case scenario would be some kind of Pakistanisation of Iran. They have a history of revolutions here, we don't know if this regime is stable, I don't think it is a very popular regime and if there will be a regime which has nuclear weapons and it has been destabilized for various reasons, domestic or external, we will face probably the same question we are facing now when we look at Pakistan and this is not a very pleasant question to address. Basically in terms of the Middle East we see heightened threat perceptions. Again, my students believe that only Israel has security problems but if I take a look at the Middle East everybody has a very high threat perception. The Jordanians are afraid of the Syrians, they were afraid of course of Iraq under Saddam, the Syrians were afraid of Turkey, they are afraid of Israel of course, they were afraid of Iraq who was also a Baath regime but it was a different version of Baath and Saddam was not very friendly to Assad. The Saudi's are afraid of everybody. So the Gulf is very much afraid, they face acute security problems. If we have this type of threat perception which will be heightened we will probably move almost inevitably towards nuclear proliferation. We see already the signs of it. We see greater interest in what is called nuclear civilian technology and basically there is no such a big difference between civilian and military technology and we know that. I think that in the Middle East nuclear proliferation will be terrible for several reasons and I will not elaborate too much on it but one I don't think the Middle Eastern countries will go for extended deterrence, extended deterrence basically they will not accept easily an American umbrella like the Europeans during the Cold War accepted an American umbrella believing that the Americans will help them in case of need, in case of a Soviet invasion. To some extent the French rationale will come in the Middle East. The French made a good argument saying that they don't believe that the Americans will risk Washington for Paris, which is reasonable. So this type of lack of trust, in international relations people like to speak about trust and in the Middle East there is no trust. Forget about trust in the Middle East. They don't trust the Americans, they don't trust anybody, they see foreign powers come and go so why the Americans would be any different so there would be no extended deterrence. I think also there is no real defence. The only country that has some kind of defensive system is Israel with the Arrow system in place which according to their engineers is may be 90% interception rate which is very good in case of missiles carrying conventional warheads. It is more problematic when it is just 90% when you have a nuclear warhead, the Hiroshima type nuclear warhead and we know what exactly is the damage. The damage is 10km of destruction radius and 100,000 people. Israel is a very small country, Israel is a concentrated country which is true of other countries in the Middle East. Egypt is not that different in terms of concentration of population, Syria is not different. So there is no real defence against a nuclear attack and I would submit that there is very little likelihood of being able to establish a nuclear balance in the Middle East, it will be very difficult to emulate the type of relationship that existed between the Soviet Union and the United States, which created some stability, we don't know really exactly why, may be we had a test in the Cuban missile crisis but in the Middle East for various reasons, particularly small distance, lack of trust, communication problems, it is much more difficult to establish this type of balance. Also the Russians and Americans basically was a [unclear] countries, in the Middle East you need a warning system which makes it very difficult. Indeed regional consensus in the Middle East...and I talk to Egyptians, to Jordanians, to Turks of course, and the regional consensus is that Iran must be stopped. There is no question in Middle Eastern strategic thinking that Iran must be stopped.

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Finally we should ask what can be done and what should be done. Of course diplomacy in my view ran its course. We are dealing more or less with some kind of diplomatic and it is now at a stage nobody really thinks that talking or discussing the issue with Iranians will make a change. Basically in my view it is plain appeasement. So the next stage is economic sanctions and we are at this stage now. The international community did not endorse blunt words but realized that diplomacy is not working and it is at a stage that we have to decide on a threat of economic that may be will move this Iranians from their decision to go after the bomb. So far we see a vegetarian sanctions but in terms of economic sanctions I don't think this type of sanctions really make an impact on the Iranians. Moreover I think that even if more stringent type of sanctions will be adopted it will not be helpful primarily because this regime is willing to pay a heavy price for continuing with its policies. This is true of other countries. Castro is still under sanctions that if you don't remember, it did not remove from his policies, Saddam Hussein was under sanctions and he could not care less if his children did not have medicine or if there will not be enough refined oil in Iran which is one of the strongest sanctions which I mentioned, so I think that first of all the leadership will definitely make sure that they have enough gasoline and the rest will drive not cars, they will go by donkeys, that is a price to pay for imperial Iran to get the bomb and I think they will go through it. Regime change, of course not much to be done in this area and it is not so easy. It is very easy to speak about regime change by Amy Grace in Los Angeles or elsewhere but I don't see those guys really going and endangering their own lives, and this is what is all about in Iran because it is a police state and police states are good at [unclear] may be they don't think they are good at but they stay in power because they have good security services and so I don't see any revolution. It may help....and of course the revolution change forget about it, it is very naïve to believe that the Mullahs will accept to move to a democratic system in which vox populi will be able to express itself freely. So what we are left with is military action or a credible threat. Military action we need in order to destroy partly their nuclear programme. I think their key installations can be destroyed and slows severely the Iranian nuclear programme or alternatively to issue a credible military threat that will frighten the current leaders and then stop and wait for better times to come to complete the programme. Until recently I believe that a credible threat can be issued by President Bush, he looked like a cowboy and he had the credibility, now after the NIE he looks very much damaged and I am not sure he still holds the credibility in the eyes of the Iranians that he will do it but he is no longer a credible threat which means that without a credible threat the chances for a military action are greater now on the part of America or on the part of other interested parties. I will end on this happy note. I spoke more than I planned actually.

Mr NS Sisodia: Thank you Prof. Inbar, this was a very fascinating view on the motivations of the Iraqi regime to develop a nuclear bomb, its implications on the region and elsewhere on the world and the available options. I am sure there are many views and many questions and they would be welcome so that Prof. Inbar can respond to some of them.

Q&A Session

Next Speaker: Thank you professor for that engrossing talk of yours. My question is the NIE last year came out with a report stating that Iran has no nuclear weapons, of course that can be debated but from your talk it appears that Israel still believes, which is also a fact that Iran is continuing with its nuclear weapons. But given the report and the inputs that were made in it, what is your take on the entire issue. Thank you.

Next Questioner: Thank you so much for your candid views. Though I agree with you that nuclear Iran is obviously not an interest, however, on your views on Central Asia, you said that if Iran goes nuclear, then probably Central Asia would be an area which would go out of the hands of the West. I don't think that. If you look at the political situation in Central Asian republics, initial years, yes Iranians tried to export lot of

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literature but if you look at the regimes in Central Asia they have been very secular and they are very careful as far as Iran is concerned. So I don't think your analysis on Central Asia would have some problems on that but if you want to share some other views on that that would be welcome. Thank you.

Next Questioner: As regards the nuclear Iran is concerned, I think I share your assessment that it is not good for the region. However, amongst your options you suggested military option. I think considering the situation an Iraq sort of a strike on Iran is not feasible. I think Ahmadinejad has gone on record to say that US is following a policy of creating turmoil in its periphery and that seems to be the strategy on which I think the west is working because simultaneously for the last one year Ahwazi Arabs, Kurds, Azeris and Baluchs all have been simultaneously in tumult so I think the western agencies are trying to create disturbances all along the periphery of Iran and that seems to be the policy I think to derail the programme.

Next Questioner: Thank you, Sir, for your presentation. Throughout history we have had many cases where political regimes have been evil but not necessarily the foreign policies or foreign policy goals they have pursued. Would not you argue that is the same case with post-1979 Iran also because just to give one example the Shahs of Iran used to support Pakistan on numerous occasions but the post-1979 'crazy regime' decided not to support Taliban or Pakistan.

Prof. Efraim Inbar: About the significance of NIE, I think if you read carefully the report we don't see such a big difference between the Israeli version and the American version. It is a question of time may be in 2009 or 2010 I think the Israelis think that the weaponization programme was renewed afterwards which is a significant event but basically the NIE's main impact was political, harming the credibility of President Bush in making Iran an urgent problem. I think the urgency is no longer there in America. The basic view that Iran has to be stopped, that Iran is bad news as it was, the urgency is no longer there as a result of this report and Bush does not subscribe to the report by the way. He was in Jerusalem recently and it is quite clear that he wants to belittle the importance of this report and I would not be surprised if we will have a smoking gun, some Amy Grave will come with something new which is true or fabricated, it does not matter, which will change the atmosphere. I think there are certain tactics that are working practical on this specific agent, events that may change the mood because there is no big difference between the Israeli assessment and the American assessment except the time frame.

About Central Asia, definitely the rulers in Central Asia are all communists. Not ideological communists but good party members that want to be in power and of course for them Iran is not their cup of tea and this is precisely why they went to the West. But if Iran becomes much stronger and as a result of that take a country like Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan basically wants to go on a Turkish course. The Turkish model is appealing to it. It is the closest country to Turkey in Central Asia but it has a border with Iran and there is even today, I don't know if it is less or more, there is an Iranian activity which is to try to bring more religion to the people. If Iran will become much stronger, what kind of choice will Azerbaijan have. I think they may invite the Russians or alternatively they will get closer to Iran rather than calling the Americans who think about exit strategy from Iraq. So you don't have to a great strategist to understand that if the Americans are getting out, if America is on its way out we have to take care of ourselves, so I don't think they will choose Sarkozy or Gordon or whoever is in England.

The feasibility about military attack, I think a military attack is feasible. I am a former paratrooper so it is not such a thing as impregnable target. You just have to think about it carefully and to be ready to pay the price. So, it depends how much the West is ready to pay in order to destroy this installation. For example, I am talking about [inaudible] which is Uranium enrichment, this is a critical element, if this installation can be

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destroyed you can live for few more years in peace and this means that air strikes plus insertion of commando troops to make sure that this is destroyed and Americans definitely can do it. There is no question about it. Nobody really questions the ability of the American military to take care of this installation. So we can do it. Israel is of course in a more difficult situation. I am surprised I was not asked. So I think that if the Americans don't do it, Israel will have a difficult choice, which is not an easy solution. I think Israel has much more difficult task because it is much more limited in its capabilities, it is also at a distance and I would not be surprised that we will get tacit cooperation, we attacked a Syrian installation and the Turks were looking on us, they did not say much before. So, I would not be surprised, the Americans will, the Saudis will, who wants a nuclear Iran so people will turn a blind eye to what is happening. Of course the Israeli case is much more difficult to make although there is a recent article in International Security I think two issues ago, a very good analysis of two young guys in the United States, I met them at MIT who wrote that Israel can do it and analyzing the type of sorties, the type of ammunition and it was an interesting article which I am sure in Israel they read carefully.

About destabilizing Iran because of its anti-ethnic composition, somebody mentioned it. So far it was not successful. Some of my Turkish friends speak about playing Azeri card in Iran for some years already and they broadcast in Azeri and in Turkish to about 25% more or less Azeri in Iran, but I am told that Azeri does not work so, so far this was not successful. I am not sure it was seriously attempted also because the Iranians hold the Kurdish card, they can play the same thing vis-à-vis the Turks, or vis-à-vis the others. I wish we could split Iran into various areas like the Baluch area, the Azeri area, I am not sure this is short term project. Can a revisionist regime be cautious? To some extent yes. Soviet Union played it cautiously. But the question is whether we are willing to take a chance. They may be dominated by realpolitik considerations but at the same time ideology that comes from, the statements that come from Iran look very revisionist and may be if they have a bomb they will act upon it. So the question is, are we ready to take this chance counting that may be they behave rationally. So I think that this is the main question. Can we wait? May be they will be nice boys afterwards. This is a N+1 problem. Everybody says the next one country will be irresponsible, not we the next one. Of course in Israel I can see the N+1 problem very easily. But with this type of Iranian regime, I would not advice my government to sit and wait and hoping for the best. I am in the tradition to take care of worst case scenario. In this case the worst case scenario is very dangerous.

Dr Mathew: Thank you for an absolutely fascinating talk of yours. You have ascribed several reasons as to why Iran is pursuing a nuclear ambition. I would agree with you on almost on all counts. But I thought the major why Iran is probably pursuing such a policy is because of the deep insecurity it has because of the nuclear weapons Israel does not have. That has been according to me the major reason for the insecurity among the Arab nations. Right from the beginning the Arab nations and leaders have been saying that in case Israel is threatened or if it believes that it is threatened, it could use this or this to ensure that they can bring the Arab countries to the knees. I think this is the reason which you will have to admit besides the others. The second is your option of using the military to disarm Iran. (**Prof. Inbar:** May I have just a clarification, are you talking about the Israeli nuclear potential or the Israeli...) Sorry, not the potential. That is why I said the Israeli nuclear weapons which Israel does not have because you just don't admit that you have nuclear weapons. That is exactly what I said, I said the Israeli nuclear weapons which Israel does not have. So from that angle, point No.2 is you seem to be almost hinting that if the United States is not going to take on Iran and destroy the nuclear facilities, Israel would. In fact, they used a combination of F-16 and F-15s to destroy the Osarec and I am told that recently Israel has imported from the United States core penetrating bombs. Has it been done with this intention or are you preparing us for another attack? I shall be grateful for a clarification.

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Ms Shebonti Ray Dadwal: I tend to agree with Dr Mathew about the threat perception. It is one of the reasons why I think Iran is pursuing these nuclear weapons, of course if they are pursuing nuclear weapons there still seems to be some doubt about that, the kind of threat perceptions that they have from Israel especially and also talk about a possible attack against their nuclear reactors, I think is just going to make them more threatening. So the question I really wanted to ask is could you clarify what you said about the energy sector, about why Iran should not have, why the nuclear challenge is much more with regard to the energy sector and if this kind of this whole nuclear problem with Iran has also been one of the contributing factors to the rise in the price of oil to the current levels, and if an attack does take place, God forbid, against Iran's nuclear installations, then what is it going to do to the world economy in terms of the price of oil?

Prof Efraim Inbar: About the Israeli nuclear arsenal or whatever you call it, some people counted 100 bombs, I have not seen it. That is what they say. I think that first of all the Israeli nuclear arsenal was developed in order to compensate Israel in a worst case scenario when we lose our conventional superiority. People did not think at that time about having a nuclear proliferation in the Middle East because they are particularly still they have a long way to go. I think the effect of the Israeli nuclear potential or arsenal is first of all a destabilizing effect on the region, because it forced the Arabs to make peace with Israel. The peace process is basically a balance of power. You cannot destroy...so it moves them away from a revisionist goals of destroying the state of Israel. And this is I think good in terms of Middle Eastern politics. Second, I think that we have a clear example of an important Arab country who decided not to go nuclear because it did not fear the Israeli nuclear weapons and this is Egypt of course. Egypt signed in December 1981 the NPT, which it refrained from doing so, after it had peace treaty with Israel. There is the nuclear issue several times in the talks with Israeli and it was after the Madrid conference in the multilateral forum but basically the Egyptians made a clear decision, they made peace with Israel, they had a stable conventional relationship with Israel as a result of demilitarization and then they decided to sign the NPT. Concerning Iran, Iran actually showed interest in the nuclear sphere from the times of the Shah when we were friends with Iran. So the beginning, the origins of the Iranian nuclear programme had nothing to do with an Israeli threat. Similarly it is quite clear that Iraqi nuclear programme nothing to do with the Israeli nuclear programme but rather were the hegemonial ambition of Saddam Hussein. So I really would like to issue with is the attempt to portray the Israeli nuclear arsenal as being an incentive for nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. Actually it is remarkable how little the Israeli nuclear programme had an influence on the nuclear ambitions of the region. For example, Turkey reacts only now to the Iranian programme, not to the Israeli programme. Before the end of the Cold War they believed that they are part of the NATO and they are covered from any nuclear threats, after the 90s of course they became friendly with Israel and the nuclear element had very little influence on their strategic considerations. So I really don't think that the Israeli nuclear had this type of threat effect on the Iranians or on the rest of the region. Moreover I would say that the Israelis played very carefully with the nuclear options. They never issued a nuclear threat even at times when we are in deep conventional trouble like the Yon Kippur, the 1973 war when we were almost overcome conventionally particularly in the Golan Heights, Israelis refrained from making any public nuclear threat. I don't know what was done behind, I don't know of any literature. So Israel was very cautious in handling its nuclear potential and never issued threats to any Arab country and even in recent years when we have seen, again mainstream threat perception in Israeli terms, Iran is called an existential threat, nobody in the Israeli elite has ever mentioned a nuclear response even to some kind of a nuclear attack on the part of Iran which we are basically afraid of. So, again, I think Israel behaved rather responsibly and was not from what I see as the behaviour of the states in the region, an incentive for nuclear proliferation and it is therefore it is much exaggerated. The only positive effect is that I mentioned it made the Arab elite

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realized that it is impossible or it is very difficult to destroy the Jewish state and the result of that they have to go and to make peace with the Jewish state.

About oil consequences, the consequences of a military attack, I think the Iranians have several options. One is to shoot missiles at the American allies in the region, including Israel. As an Israeli I am saying it openly I am ready to pay the price. If I have to calculate cost effectiveness of what is more dangerous, an Iranian nuclear bomb is more dangerous than being hit again by missiles carrying conventional warheads. I would say that this would be true of other countries in the Middle East like Saudi Arabia or Turkey or whoever is in the region that might be hit by such an attack. I think also there is another option the Iranians may have and this to try to increase the level drastically may be of terror against the American allies or America itself. Again from my perspective terrorism is may be it is exaggerated strategic nuisance. The damage terrorism can do is limited. Even if we take the 9/11 attacks which some people count at \$80 billion but the effect of 9/11 was of short duration on America and on the world. So I think the West can absorb rather easily a lot of terrorist attacks and contain them also. Basically this is what we have done with the Palestinians. They are very ineffective basically. Now about oil which you spoke specifically. Indeed, of course any military attack may increase the price of oil even further and I despite being an orthodox I have an unorthodox view of oil prices because in recent years five or six years, we have seen the price of oil tripling more or less. My question is what happened? Did India grow any less and India is a country with extreme dependency upon oil imports. This is true of china as well. Did it affect the American economy, the American economy is now in temporary trouble but not because of oil prices, it is because of other things. If the European Union is stagnant it is because it has a big bureaucracy, it is not because of too many benefits to workers, Sarkozy is fighting now with the unions. So the question is now people spoke \$100 it would be terrible. We got to \$100 and not much happened. Will it get \$120 may be it will be terrible, I don't know. So I am not sure that oil is such an important variable, which weakens my argument of course about the importance, I understand it, I am not...I am honest. But I think that there is another option that the Iranians may do nothing. Basically it is like a child get slapped in his face, you finally realized you overstepped boundaries and may be behaved not according to the rules and you are being disciplined and you say okay. I don't like it but the price of continuing with this nuclear ambition may be is too high. So I don't know what they are going to do. But if I take a look at the prices I don't minimize the prices. I think that the price is right. The dangers are too big to take a chance with and this is why I think the west should pay the price, including Israel, we would be the first to pay the price.

Wg Cdr Krishnappa: I have one comment that flows from comments by my colleagues earlier. I agree with you partly that the fear that clips Iranian attitudes is to do not so much with Israel as I understand, may be my understanding is limited, but the broader security context around it plus the threat of America which has been there ever since the revolution. Second I think it is also about its regional aspirations stunted by American policy for too long collaborated with the Israelis as they understand it, military option is one option but we know the history of Middle East towards Iraq and now we hear that after Syrian facilities have been attacked in the recent times they are rebuilding them. This would only be a temporary solution which might get time but I think the final solution has to be how to incorporate Iran in the larger cooperative framework, how do we scale down the western attitudes which are hostile to Iranian regime and how should the west ultimately give up its broader ambitions of transforming the Middle East through democracy and a variation of Bush doctrine, the neocon ideology. Without having done that I don't think there is really a solution. It is a very dangerous world as you understand and I don't think military solution of any kind will be of use in that direction. That is my difference with you. But I also would want to know from you given the context the debate that is shaping up in Washington as we approach closer to the elections, the lame duck presidency, what do you see happening in the next few months. Do you have a notion of what might happen and most importantly you seem to conclude,

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you are willing to pay the price but about countries like us who will remain spectators, are our concerns going to be ignored by America and Israel and so what is the trace going to be, how you think the Iranians might in the worst case scenario what could be their response and what could countries like us should do.

Mr NS Sisodia: I have a similar comment broadly agreeing with what Krishnappa has said. There is also a need to look at the implications, the long term implications, there may be a possibility of delaying it but we cannot completely ignore the long term consequences. I am not saying that this is definitely going to be more disadvantageous than any other option but if the international community goes in for the military option, what would be the objective. Would it be just liquidating their nuclear assets, or would it be something else, what would be the objective? Is it likely to result in any occupation of Iran, or will it just be a surgical strike. Will that objective be achieved if you only did the surgical strike and if so how much of a time are you likely to gain because in any case this is not something that is going to happen in a year or two, this might take perhaps somewhat longer. The other consequences have been discussed quite extensively i.e. the alienation of the Muslim world as it is there is the perception that the Muslim world is not being treated fairly by the west and therefore there is an increasing alienation, there is a consolidation of the extremist opinion, there is hardening of attitudes and it is also leading to growth of various armed groups and terrorism and this is only likely to intensify. The consequences of such a strike on the war on terror are not going to be positive at all. In fact they are going to be negative. Of course there is also the consequence of its impact on oil prices. The third point is how do you think you will go about it. Is it through a UN resolution or some other multilateral kind of consensus building or will it be done unilaterally. The consequences of the two options might be quite different. So, these are factors which need to be kept in view if you wish to come to a proper cost benefit of the military option and I thought you might wish to react to some of these observations.

Prof Efraim Inbar: First of all about the situation of the Muslim world. I think we should differentiate quite clearly between the Arab world and the rest of the Muslims. [inaudible] If we have radicals there and most of the radicals come from the Arab world, I think it is basically the result of failure of the Arab elites to modernize and it is a failure of the state. If we have failed states where are they, they are primarily in the Arab world. We have Lebanon, we have Sudan, Somalia, Palestine, Iraq now after the Americans destroyed the political centre so I think there is a terrible malaise in the Arab world which, I am not sure we can do much about it. In this I come to strategy. Basically there are two types of strategies. One is try to fix them. Political engineering to build nice states. This is neocons with democracy to the Middle East and elsewhere, I never believed it and I had big arguments with my neocon friends, who studied together with me at a conservative place like the University of Chicago but also with [inaudible] those are the guys that I have good relations with and I told them forget about democracy. But this is one way of thinking. Try to fix the problem from the root and my answer is outsiders cant do it. Colonialism has its limits. Basically neocons propose some kind of trusteeship in Palestine for the Palestinians basically it is some kind of neocolonialism somebody will fix this political entity and they would be nice neighbours of Israel. I don't think it can work. The change must come from within. They need the type of leadership that will bring them...I am an elitist, that is how politics are in my view. So without this type of leadership then Bernard Lewis may be right speaking about a dying civilization, I don't know. The rest of the Muslim world is in better shape. Turkey is doing not bad, Indonesia is grappling with some, so I think there is a clear difference between the Arabs and the rest of the Muslims. Again, Pakistan is in big trouble, I don't know much about it but I understand you have a real problem, not only you, us also but this is primarily a problem of failure of the leadership to move the people into modernity. Therefore what I suggest other than to try to engineer the world is to deal primarily with the capabilities to harm you and this is what I am telling also to my government. Forget about building, strengthening Abu Mazen and forget about

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trying to help him to takeover Gaza, you basically have to deal with the capabilities of the bad guys to harm you. That is all and it is temporary. Yes, I am in favour of temporary solutions. It is not a solution, I don't speak about solutions. Temporary measures that will alleviate your security situation. I am rather very modest in my view of what we can achieve. Can you change Pakistan, you cant. Can you change Bangladesh, I don't know, I doubt if somebody will hold over Bangladesh and suddenly it will be something else. So in absence of this type of chances of being successful. I would love the whole world to be democratic. What can we do, it ain't so. So basically we have to take care of our enemies that can harm us. That is it. So in Iran, I don't know exactly how it is going to be done. For example I had talks with the French and basically they are in favour of going to the UN primarily to prove to their own domestic audience that they have gone through the motions. May be. I am not a great believer in the UN. UN is a bankrupt institution in my book but I am sure the Indians will agree with me but unilateralism is ok, it is not a bad word. I know that some people believe it is a bad world I don't think so, if you can solve the problem don't go to your neighbours, finish it if you can do it. America of course they can do it. Why not? Everybody will clap. When we destroyed the Oserac reactor was anybody that was really displeased with the exception of Saddam Hussein. Everybody was happy. That is a fact. Of course we live in a hypocritic world and they blamed us, how can you do it, how can you use American airplanes, I think a similar thing will happen, everybody will God Bless America, we say in private of course not in public and about Muslim world, where do they send their children to studies, they send them to American universities, where do they put the money, they put it in American banks. So there a limit to this anti-Americanism which is true, the message of anti-American in Turkey for example, which is a country that I know better. But the methods are not necessarily right. So I would go for the capabilities basically in terms of strategy in this type of world where you cannot or you are very limited in your ability to influence what is within and then you have to take care of the capabilities that are there to harm you. Pre-emption, this is what we are talking about.

Mr NS Sisodia: Well, I think that is a very interesting perspective and certainly will give us lot of food for thought. Perhaps we have to now conclude.

Next Speaker: Professor Inbar it has been absolutely fascinating listening to you. I knew from the very beginning that you are a person you will always use the unilateral arrow and the great thing about it is that you are not apologetic about it. I think that makes your presentation very fascinating. I think tomorrow and day after we are going to have many more of your new theses. (Prof Inbar: It is an old one) But in a new bottle sir. Earlier you were talking about Iraq, now you are talking about Iran. The situation is different professor. Okay let me thank you very much for the presentation. Although I personally don't agree with you on many counts, I certainly don't and I think we will have opportunities to debate. I don't agree with my military friends, I think you will be successful when you exercise that military option but what would come thereafter probably as you said ten years of peace, of tranquility you will get, but then there are several things. I don't think I should take more of your time but like Wg Cdr Krishnappa said there is always another option. You need to try to go through it, the motions of it at least before being gung ho right in the beginning and as I told, I think you evaded my question, you had imported last six months some of those core penetrating bombs...(Prof Inbar: They are intended for this purpose.) That is what I wanted you to answer. I knew, the indications are coming. Okay, fair enough. I do not know if India would appreciate or not but...I know that you are digging for oil in any case. Thanks Prof. Inbar I think we will see more of you tomorrow and today evening of course when we have dinner I think you will give us more insight into what is to come. Thank you very much.

End of Seminar