



Beyond the Headlines
May 14, 2012
Washington, DC

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Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

US Policy Towards Syria and Iran

Maxine Isaacs: Good evening everyone and welcome. Thank you so much for joining us tonight for what is going to be a very special evening with Congresswoman Jane Harman and David Sanger of *The New York Times*. Congresswoman Harman will speak about “US Policy Towards Syria and Iran” and then she and David will have a conversation and then we’ll open it up to the floor for questions. As I told you, I am Maxine Isaacs. I am the Chair of the Board of the Women’s Foreign Policy Group, which promotes women’s leadership and women’s voices on pressing international issues of the day. On behalf of the WFPG and its board members who are here today—Donna Constantinople, Diana Negroponte, Theresa Loar—and our great president, Patricia Ellis, thank you all for joining us today. The event tonight is part of our Beyond the Headlines series. It’s one of our most popular types of events. The WFPG works very closely with the diplomatic community, in conjunction with our Embassy Series, and we’re glad to see so many ambassadors here tonight. Our most recent Embassy event was at the Embassy of Finland, and before that we were at the Embassies of Turkey, Brazil, and France. I also want to recognize members of our Corporate Advisory Council from DLA Piper, Ernst & Young, and CH2M Hill. In addition to our Embassy Series, every year we hold a wonderful event celebrating women ambassadors which will be on June 7th this year, hosted by the Ambassador of Liechtenstein. And I want to announce tonight—you’re the first to hear—Lael Brainard, the Under Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs, will address the WFPG on June 25th at a luncheon on “International Financial Diplomacy.” It should be a great event and details will follow shortly. We’ve had some other wonderful events recently with Celeste Wallander of the Defense Department, Michelle Bachelet of UN Women, and Dina Powell of the Goldman Sachs Foundation. And we’ve got an exciting Author Series event coming up with board member Diana Negroponte on El Salvador on June 14th.

So, it is my great pleasure to introduce to you tonight our speaker, Congresswoman Jane Harman, the nine-term member of Congress who represented and served on all the major security committees—Armed Services, Intelligence, and Homeland Security. Since February 2011, she has served as the Woodrow Wilson Center’s first woman President, Director, and CEO. That’s a great title, Jane. [*Laughter.*] She’s also a member of the Defense Policy Board, State Department Foreign Policy Board, CIA External Advisory Board, and Director of the National Intelligence Senior Advisory Board. And I urge you to read her bio in your program book because it’s very, very impressive. She has traveled to all the world’s hot spots—most recently was in Egypt, where she talked with political candidates who had protested in Tahrir Square, was in Tunisia for the election of the constituent assembly, and most recently visited Japan and South Korea. On a personal note, Jane is a wonderful mentor and a wonderful friend and a great example to all of us who aspire to have some kind of impact in the world of public service. Just a personal note, since I think she’s a wonderful person, as is our moderator, David Sanger, *New York Times* Chief Washington Correspondent. He’s an author and analyst on American national security, and he’s reported for *The New York Times* for 30 years from New York, Tokyo, and Washington. He is currently an adjunct professor of public policy at Harvard’s Kennedy School. I always said I was the oldest living adjunct at the Kennedy School—and I still am. [*Laughter.*]

David Sanger: I'm pushing it!

Ms. Isaacs: He's the first senior fellow in National Security and the Press at the Kennedy School. He's the author of *The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power* and has just finished—right, and will soon release—a new book on *Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power*. He, too, has traveled all over the world, of course, and to many of the world's trouble spots. So, the Congresswoman will speak first and then she and David will have a conversation as I said, and then we'll turn it over to the floor.

Ms. Harman: Good evening everyone. Max—Maxine—is way too modest. I think you all know about her career. Before her PhD and her Harvard days, she was the communications guru for Fritz Mondale and maybe others, but I think that's when I intersected with her. And, having just attended two days ago the reunion of the Carter-Mondale White House, which was geriatric central, she looks a lot better than the rest of us who worked in that century. But it was a chance to remind all of us of a time when a President put human rights on the international agenda. It wasn't there before. And when some things—whatever you vaguely remember about the Carter Administration, like the Panama Canal, some very controversial things that were very important happened. And Carter was saying—he was reading off all the legislation that had passed when he was President. I was stunned. There'd be no chance in the modern day that that could happen. So there was a big record there and Maxine was part of that history and the Mondale history, too. So let's not forget that.

Women in foreign policy is a good thing. I think our foreign policy can only improve with more women in it. Madeline Albright tells this adorable story about her grandson asking her if a boy can ever be secretary of state. I don't think so. And I'm happy to be here with David. I asked him, "Why is a man doing this? Where's the woman in foreign policy?" He said he would leave if I wanted him to. No, but you should know that David's first book—I don't know if it's [his] first book, but the *Inheritance* book—was written at the Wilson Center, so of course it's marvelous. The next one wasn't, so don't buy it. [Laughter.]

Anyway, moving along. Security's my bag, so let me just put out a few of my thoughts. I've had a chance, in this incarnation at Wilson actually, to think a little more deeply than I was able to in Congress. And I have these extraordinary opportunities on the Defense, State Department, CIA, and Director of National Intelligence advisory boards to be with a lot of people, including the people who hold those positions, and talk about the issues. That doesn't make me the world's expert, but it makes me a little smarter than I was a year ago, and maybe a little more clear-headed. So let me just sort of cut to the chase, at least as I see it, so then maybe we can start to have a conversation. Starting with a view of Obama, his aggressive approach to fighting terrorism—I am getting to Iran and Syria—but his aggressive approach has been a hallmark and I think one of the surprises of his first term. In 2009—we should remember this—he outlined his views on war in, as irony would have it, his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. And here's what he said, and it's worth remembering this. He said, and it's probably in David's book, but I haven't read it—

Mr. Sanger: It's in the new book, the one that's coming out.

Ms. Harman: Whoops. Well I'll read it to you now so now you don't have to buy the book. [Laughter.] "Make no mistake. Evil does exist in the world. A nonviolent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince al Qaeda's leaders to lay down their arms. To say that force is sometimes necessary is not a call to cynicism—it is a recognition of history, the imperfections of man, and the limits of reason." So this was Obama in 2009 and the record is pretty clear. We joined, led from behind, a NATO mission in Libya. We have a massive—now it's been outed by John Brennan at the Wilson Center a week and a half ago—drone program in Pakistan. In Afghanistan, we had a major surge in troops, which is now drawing down. But on Obama's watch, the decision to surge was made. In Yemen, we have been engaged again in extensive drone attacks, one of which killed Anwar al-Awlaki—a controversial action only because he was a dual citizen. But I think there's no question, at least this would certainly be my take, that his

actions posed an imminent threat to the United States and the kill was justified. But the two places where we haven't used force—this is my little segway—are Iran and Syria. So, why is that?

Let's start with Iran, where I actually think our strategy is working. In March of this year, the President had a very extensive interview with Jeffrey Goldberg of *The Atlantic*, and also has defined his ideas elsewhere. But he's defined Iran as a global threat. It's important to remember that Hezbollah, not al-Qaeda, was the one that did massive bombing attacks that were lethal in Buenos Aires in 1992 and 1994. Hezbollah also operates in Canada and has been active in Colombia and possibly in Mexico. So Iran has its proxies outside of Iran poised to harm us and our interests. Obama has made clear that he will do everything he can to keep Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. He said at AIPAC, "Let there be no doubt. America is determined to prevent"—the operative word is prevent—"Iran from getting a nuclear weapon and I will take no options off the table." He's ordered the Pentagon to prepare a military option, but I think—I strongly believe, and I think most of you do too—that the military option is not an appealing one, under any set of circumstances.

So what should we do? Well, my view is that we should give success a chance and my point here is that we now have both domestic and international support for coercive sanctions against Iran. Obama has done a good job of bringing other countries on board. International pressure on Iran has never been greater. Yes, there have been moves in the EU to roll back a little bit of the sanctions they voluntarily imposed on Iran, but that's because their economies are so fragile. But even Russia cancelled its S-300 sale—the air defense system—to Iran. And the tightest economic sanctions don't bite yet. They're going to bite this summer. The P5+1 is meeting with Iran at the end of the month. The IAEA is calling for more open inspections. But there is a lot of action that I think most people objectively would say is having a huge impact on the Iranian economy. Some of it's hurting the Iranian people, which obviously is not the point. But there are tensions between the clerics in Iran and Ahmadinejad and he was just dealt a setback in a recent election. So one grandma's opinion here is that we are on the right path in Iran and we actually have a chance of figuring out a way to change Iranian policy. I think our strategy is for a change in policy, not regime change. I wouldn't mind regime change, but the point is to change policy. And if we just focus on policy and not changing the regime, I think we have a chance to get there faster. So that would be my opinion.

On Syria, I think the news is much worse. I think the UN plan—the Kofi Annan plan—to have UN observers and to try to get to a ceasefire is hopeless. And a ceasefire gets us nowhere. It gives that government a chance to retrench and rearm. And unless there's a chance to get one of the allies of Syria—those would be Iran and Syria—it's going to be really hard, no matter what we do, to disarm the Bashar regime short of massive bloodshed, or rather even more bloodshed. And so I keep writing op-eds about the notion that we should do what we can to persuade Russia, one of the two allies of Syria, to negotiate a Yemen-like solution in Syria. A Yemen-like solution is the removal of the Bashar family to some kind of safe haven in Russia—I know, one might question whether there is such a thing—and the structuring of a good enough or a stable enough government, including Alawites, to succeed them. I think that would be face-saving all around, and it would stop much of the bloodshed and it would continue to give us access, as we have in Yemen, to true bad guys. Al-Qaeda is now, we think, present in Syria. Al-Qaeda is obviously present in Yemen. And we are having some success rooting them out—obviously much more work to do in Yemen. Al-Asiri, the bombmaker, needs to be found. I think if you had to pick one guy who can cause us the most damage, he's the guy I would pick. But at any rate, my Yemen-style plan is not getting anywhere yet. Most people think Putin is not interested, and Bashar thinks he's safe and so, sadly, the Syria position stays stuck. And I, ever hopeful, think circumstances can change. I think Turkey is playing a very constructive role. And I think that, as it becomes clearer that the demonstrators in Syria are a mixed lot—again, al Qaeda, and some of them bent on ethnic cleansing of some of the different groups inside of Syria—the idea of arming them will increasingly be perceived as a worse and worse idea. I think it's a very bad idea. And I don't see how we do a no-fly zone—a Libya-type action—in Syria. So I think the best option is this Yemen plan. I'm hoping we find a way. I read in the newspapers, and maybe David will tell us, that Putin and Obama have a decent relationship.

Mr. Sanger: Well they did until he cancelled his trip.

Ms. Harman: Oh, well I thought that Obama was still not totally enraged by that.

Mr. Sanger: Well that's their story.

Ms. Harman: So if they have any kind of decent relationship, I would think that Putin would need some friends. And this could be a reset moment for Putin in terms of his place in the world, which seems a bit tarnished by the election in Russia and some of his actions since the election. But at any rate, I think that Iran could be a success story. Syria is harder. Let me just mention a couple other things.

On China, the way the Chen issue worked out was pretty good, I think, all around. It remains to be seen if he actually is permitted to leave the country and what happens to his family. But if he can get here to one of our universities, it seems like NYU is likely but it could be somewhere else. I think that both China and we handled a very complex situation carefully and well. And, to remind, this was all going on while Hillary Clinton was there participating in the strategic economic dialogue, a process set up by Hank Paulson in the Bush Administration and taken over by the Obama Administration—face to face meetings among senior leaders on our side and their side on the economy, treasury officials, and foreign policy. Hillary added that piece in the Obama Administration. And that's the way you get cooler heads—when you actually know the other side. That's actually something I would recommend to Congress, my former employer. If Republicans and Democrats only would take ten minutes to get to know each other, some of the noise level and the demonizing might cease.

Finally, a couple of other things that interest me. I was just in Tokyo and Seoul just after or during—I don't remember any more—the North Korea missile test and then the “saber-rattling” about more nuclear tests. Two observations. I think the new leader, Un [Kim Jong-un], is trying to change the topic because the economy of North Korea, as always, is in dreadful shape. So he is trying to clarify to his people that he can't focus on that because he has to confront the enemy of South Korea and us and others. I don't think it's working so well. The missile test was a disaster, and they had to tell people because there is now social media in North Korea—a very a good thing. So that's one thing. Number two—I think the timing of the Indian missile test after the North Korean missile test was simply dreadful. And really, the Indians can think this is all about their theater and it's all about Pakistan and China, but it isn't. If it goes uncriticized, which so far it has, it can be a message to North Korea and Iran that India is doing this and India is defining its own version of the NPT and so, “Why can't we define ours?” So I thought that was, sadly, a misguided action and destabilizing in an unstable world.

So, in conclusion, I love the Wilson Center. Because people like David show up and are brilliant and write great books there. And because we have programs that take a deep dive on issues, which many of you also do. And because it is totally non-partisan. And having endured 17 years—that's 119 dog years—in an institution that is in theory one of the most interesting and honorable places one could—it is a high honor to be elected to the US Congress—but in practice uses a broken business model. We are very honorable people in both parties wanting to improve our world and beat their heads against the wall every day. But I am relieved to be somewhere else, and I invite my friends from Congress to come down—and they always accept—so that we can discuss more seriously and carefully about issues that obviously engage me and still engage me and engage them, and obviously engage you. So David, go ahead and try to ask me some questions, and I'll try to answer them. And if I can't answer them, Max will. Thank you all very much.

Mr. Sanger: Well, thank you. You've now all seen why Jane was always such an interesting interview target—and target is the word chosen carefully—when she was still in Congress. So I was going to propose, Jane, that what we do is sort of a public version of what we would do on the phone or together when you were still in office and I'd pretend that you didn't know me—and that is to sort of press your thinking on a couple of these issues. And let me start with Iran. So you came with a fairly optimistic message, and that message is that sanctions are working and have driven Iran to come to the table. We're talking here about a country that has negotiated pretty well for three or four thousand years, and

they're not new to this. So let's push this out a little bit and think about this at a more granular level—what the next weeks and months can look like.

Ms. Harman: Okay.

Mr. Sanger: So you're the Supreme Leader, which you are anyway.

Ms. Harman: My grandchildren got that. [*Laughter.*]

Mr. Sanger: So you've got two objectives here. Number one is stretch out these negotiations as long as you possibly can while you are still enriching uranium so that you can go to the point of having nuclear weapons capability without actually having a weapon—an issue the President didn't address when he was talking about containment. He didn't talk about how he would deal with an Iran that goes right up to the edge.

Ms. Harman: Now, he didn't talk about containment.

Mr. Sanger: Well...

Ms. Harman: He never said that. He talked about prevention.

Mr. Sanger: Oh, he definitely used the word containment. And what he said was, "There's not a workable containment strategy for a nuclear Iran." But when I asked him, "Is there a workable containment strategy for an Iran that moves right up to the edge—"

Ms. Harman: Ah.

Mr. Sanger: His answer was, "I'm not going to parse that for you, David." So you're going to parse it. [*Laughter.*] The question here is what you do with a situation in which the United States negotiates something where Iran can continue spinning the centrifuges and producing low-enriched uranium, which looks like sort of where we're headed. And we've got to have an assurance in our mind that they can't get so close to a weapon that they can throw the inspectors out one day and race for it within six months or a year. This is the scenario that's most discussed at the CIA, the DNI's office—every place where you sit on an advisory board, this is their nightmare. So tell me how you deal with that.

Ms. Harman: Well, they're not there yet. Nobody thinks so. And this is on the public record. I want to be very careful here.

Mr. Sanger: I was afraid of that.

Ms. Harman: Well hey, you know what. [*Laughter.*] We got to get this right. I'm not one of the policy makers, but I'm one of the policy watchers—well, I guess I'm a policy advisor. But we've got to get this right. And they're not there yet. There's still time, regardless of what some may say—certainly a year or so and certainly beyond when the sanctions will fully bite. So yes, the goal has to be to get this policy changed before enrichment, which can go rapidly after a certain point—I'm not going to say what that point is, but they're not there—before enrichment to the level of a weapon could occur. It's already scary as hell, let's understand that. I mean if you think about dirty bombs and the danger they can do—dirty bombs don't have the catastrophic impact of, you know, full-blown nuclear bombs. There is enough in enough places—not only in Iran—that could be proliferated to bad guys so that that story could happen. In fact, there is enough in this country that could be proliferated to create dirty bombs. So I don't want anyone to think we're safe until this red line appears. But I think, David, the answer to you is that I didn't recall Obama using the word contain at all because that says—

Mr. Sanger: He did in both the speech and—

Ms. Harman: Well that's very interesting. Missed it totally. Shows why you're the reporter, and I'm just the brain-cell-depleted, ancient person. But, at any rate, I know what the magic line is before a nuclear weapon, which I'm not going to talk about. But I think we're close enough to that now so that we just have to go full boar on the ways to change behavior.

Mr. Sanger: Let me formulate it one additional way. They've got two forms of uranium. They've got 20% enriched, which is relatively close to that red line for the bomb, and they've got a much larger stockpile of much lower enriched, further away from the bomb. Is there any scenario of success for President Obama in which that 20% enriched is not shipped out of the country?

Ms. Harman: Well I think there is. Is not shipped out of the country to where?

Mr. Sanger: Out of Iran. Any place the Iranians don't have their hands on it. So, you know, the discussion underway is Russia...

Ms. Harman: Oh, you mean—oh, yeah—the Russia proposal from a few years ago...

Mr. Sanger: Right, and it's back now.

Ms. Harman: The proposal to ship it out and have it enriched to civil nuclear grade so that Iran can use it for power generation. I don't know why nobody points out to Iran that they have massive oil supplies, but hey. The notion of—I mean I still favor this, and so does the IAEA—I mean, many countries want civil nuclear capability. Our country has a nuclear industry and wants to expand our civil nuclear capability. And this notion of an international fuel bank doesn't have to be just Russia and Iran in some bilateral agreement. It could be an international fuel bank under IAEA auspices that makes fuel up to the adequate grade for civil nuclear power available anywhere, including here. I mean, we could actually play in such a regime. I don't know what Obama's response to that would be. But my own response is that that could be—again, you talk about a face-saving place and that way everyone could buy in and our nuclear industry here wants to expand. And if we had that scenario, we might be able to actually get more traction than it's getting presently. So, yes, I can imagine that happening on some basis. Is it likely to happen? No, I don't think so.

Mr. Sanger: You don't? Okay. Because the Israeli position is that, if you don't get the 20% out in a relatively short period of time, they're so close to bomb capability that they've got to go back to plan A. And you know what plan A is.

Ms. Harman: Yeah, well, we all know what plan A is. But, again, let's wait. The sanctions are hitting in a couple months. That could change the chances of getting the 20% out. If the sanctions really bite, which most people think they will and if—

Mr. Sanger: They're already biting.

Ms. Harman: According to my newspapers, the fuel is on ships and can't go anywhere. And the sanctions on private banks are enormously effective in many places around the world. Even China and others who have used Iran as a gas station are cutting back and have joined that side of the argument. They haven't joined in on Syria but they have on Iran and, as I mentioned, Russia did not ship, as she said she would, the anti-air-defense system to Iran, which would have been very harmful to anyone who tried an air attack. At any rate, I think—as I said, let's give success a chance.

Mr. Sanger: Let me put you on Syria for a moment. So the President, when he went into—when he agreed to go into Libya in that sort of light-footprint way—which was no ground troops, support for NATO, and don't hold any press conferences about the fact that NATO completely ran out of ammunition and we had to go supply them, in a situation where they weren't being shot back at, which

was somewhat remarkable. When he did all of that, he laid out the criteria for when the United States would go in under the “responsibility to protect” kind of doctrine—he didn’t use that phrase, but he laid out all the rules. When you talk to people in the State Department and you say, “What is the difference in the scene in Syria today and in Libya?” the first thing they say is, “Well, a lot more people have died in Syria than in Libya.” The second thing they say is, “It fits all of the President’s criteria except it’s too hard to do. We would have to be on the ground. Syrian units are in the cities. They’re not out in the desert where we can bomb them. And so forth.” Is it a sufficient explanation for us not taking this kind of action that it is simply too high and not casualty-free the way Libya was?

Ms. Harman: Well, no. I was not a fan of our Libya action because I don’t feel we adequately justified it as essential, as meeting a strategic requirement of the United States.

Mr. Sanger: In fact, our Defense Secretary said the opposite. He said it had no strategic value.

Ms. Harman: Well, I actually agree with that. I’m against massacres of millions or thousands of people by their governments everywhere. And I think the Rwanda experience, where we held back, had a searing influence on many who were part of the decision-making process in Libya. Notwithstanding that, I do think we need a frame, a common frame, for the different situations we are confronting now and will continue to confront in the greater Middle East and possibly elsewhere. I think that this Arab awakening is not going to be limited to Arab countries. I think there’s a little bit of Russia awakening going on, and there’s going to be China awakening. And there’s actually US awakening—this Occupy movement, which hasn’t been very effective so far, is a version of that. So I don’t think any countries are immune from that, and I think we need a common story. We’ve talked a lot about, sort of, our values and our interests—some kind of a way to graph that. And really, our values are offended by ethnic cleansing, by massacres of people, and let’s remember the Holocaust. Were US strategic interests threatened there? Maybe not initially. They ultimately were. Pearl Harbor was bombed in the greater World War II. But that’s a really tough question, I think, for many of us. Surely our values were offended. I would like to hear a clearer explanation of our strategic interests, in all these countries and in a more—can’t be standard because every country’s different. And, oh, by the way, a show for Wilson. Robin Wright, celebrated author and former reporter for a number of news magazines, has just written a book for Wilson called *The Islamists Are Coming*, making the point that there are over 50 different Islamist movements. It’s not just one or two, and we fail to understand them in our peril. So my point is that one size does not fit all. But the Libya campaign, to remind—not only just to expose some of the weaknesses of NATO and we did lead from behind—I think you’ll agree with that, David. But also the way Qaddafi went down—he was murdered in the streets by the uprising. The message that sends to many places, including Iran and North Korea, was you give up your weapons of mass destruction, which Libya did, and you potentially get murdered at the hands of your citizens whom you’ve repressed.

Mr. Sanger: So overall the message to Iran and North Korea was, “Don’t do what Qaddafi did”?

Ms. Harman: Well, yeah. And they’ve acknowledged that, and I’m sure you agree with me. So you’re asking me about the Obama Administration and Syria. Syria is much harder. They have much more effective defenses. They have allies in the region, like Russia and Iran, which makes it harder. But we have to have a pretty strict set of principles around our strategic interests, and we should be very careful and thoughtful about where to intervene. Let me close with something funny. I had the nerve—don’t ask me how I ever got up the nerve—to go on the Bill Maher show a couple years ago. More people watch that than anything I go on, other than that, ever. So Bill Maher says, “So, Jane, we’re bombing five Muslim countries. That’s a lot of countries. Don’t you think three would be enough?” And I said, “Sure, if I can name the three.” I was very proud of that. But more seriously, in the end—in this struggle against terror—it’s not a war on terror. Terror is a tactic. It is not an enemy. It is a means that some enemies use against us. But in the end, we can’t bomb our way to a win or fight our way—we have to win the argument. And the way we win the argument is to be very clear about where we will use the US military or assist international military organizations in intervening and where we won’t. And so I have a lot of problems with the way we did Libya.

Mr. Sanger: Well, let me open it up to all of your questions. I'm going to ask that you stand up, give us your name, and actually ask a question—like with a question mark at the end. Let's start. Yes, Patricia.

Patricia Ellis: Yes. Just on the topic of Iran. Today, the Gulf Council met and the Gulf states are talking about forming a closer union. Iran is clearly very opposed to this and very upset about this. Do you think that this is going to have an impact on Iran's capabilities in the region? And also, one other thing related to Iran. Catherine Ashton, the EU foreign policy person, is very optimistic about the next round of policy talks. You were somewhat optimistic. But if they will be cutting back on some of the sanctions, is that concerning and how much has to be done, or does more have to be done, with countries that are still buying a lot of oil from Iran?

Ms. Harman: Well, first of all, the neighborhood—if any of you read any of the Wikileaks stuff—has been saying for years—I mean, let's be clear, there is a difference between Sunni and Shiite. And the Sunni neighborhood has been very anxious about Shiite Iran for a long, long time.

Mr. Sanger: "Cut off the head of the snake" is I think what the Saudi King said.

Ms. Harman: I think that would be right. But, they've been very worried privately and said very little in public. David may have been there—I was there in Aspen a few summers ago—when the UAE ambassador—who is still employed as the UAE ambassador—courageously said, "We would love some kind of change in Iran." But at any rate, if they're now going to organize publicly in some sort of fashion, I think this is very good news and very helpful. They are the neighborhood. So that's my first point.

On Europe, I think the P5+1 meeting is important and I think its timing is excellent. It's in a couple weeks, I think—the 23rd, the same day as the Egyptian elections, folks. Next week. Interesting. So I think that's good. As far as cutting back on the European sanctions, I think that had to do with cutting off ship deliveries with third countries which is going to prohibit Europe from exporting, and which, in the economic straits that it's in, was viewed as a bridge too far. But they're still cutting off their fuel orders and bank lending and a variety of other things. So, so far as I understand this, the sanctions are still extremely tough.

Mr. Sanger: I just want to point out that Jane was a lot more enthusiastic about Wikileaks now than she was when she was still in office and I was publishing them.

Ms. Harman: Well, I don't think that's the best way—you know, I'm not in favor of leaks. I really—I understand, David, but you're careful. David told me about a story which I won't repeat, but about how careful he's being with this book—but he should be. I mean, let's understand that if sources and method are revealed, people die and it is not okay with me. I am not for over-classifying information. In fact, I worked on legislation to reduce over-classification. But I strongly believe that programs that are classified for the right reasons should be protected.

Question: Joanne Young, Kirstein & Young PLLC. First, let me personally thank you for your incredible work in the House on intelligence matters and other. My question, and I got stuck in traffic, so if it was covered, I apologize. But, we seem to have largely left Iraq, and the Shiite government there seems to be very simpatico to the Iranians, including in respect to Syria. And my question is—what are the chances that Iraq might begin to assist Iran in its nuclear ambitions?

Ms. Harman: Well, I've actually thought about that a lot. You know, Malaki is close to Iran and he is not proving to be a hugely tolerant and very democratic leader yet. But so far, the place is sort of, kind of hanging together. And we're still there, and we will still have an over-the-horizon force in Kuwait I believe. We are cutting back on some of the plans we had, like training the Iraqi security forces. But I guess, while I see Iran playing a role there and I see ties between the Malaki and Iran, I don't see at any time soon Iraq becoming some type of proxy or aiding and abetting an Iranian nuclear industry.

Question: How would you explain their—it appears to be—support for Syria and the Assad regime?

Ms. Harman: Well, it's interesting—Syria's also Iraq's neighbor, not just Iran's neighbor. There's a huge border with Syria and in fact a lot of bad stuff came into Syria over that border and a lot of bad stuff came into Iraq over that border and a lot of people left Iraq over that border. So, I don't know what the reasons are. Do you?

Mr. Sanger: No, but at this point the Iraqis are not in a particularly good position to play much of a role. Okay, so for the bonus round here, since Jane's time here is short, we're going to take a few questions together. Sir, we're going to take you first, and then there was a hand over here—sir that will be you next.

Question: Stanley Kober. You made a passing reference to Pearl Harbor. The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor because we were sanctioning them. Sanctions were very effective—they were hurting—and instead of yielding, they went right at us. So why would you think Iran would react any differently, especially given all the forces that we have in the area and the arms that they have been acquiring?

Mr. Sanger: Okay, that's one question, and then the gentleman over here.

Question: What effect do you think the new coalition government in Israel will have on any decision in timing? And similarly, how do you think the upcoming presidential elections will factor into their decision either to do something and if so—

Ms. Harman: “Their” meaning the Israeli's elections?

Question: The US elections.

Mr. Sanger: The US presidential elections and how that will factor into what Israel may do. Okay, two excellent questions. So let's start first with the question, “Could the Iranians choose a Japanese strategy?” Well asked on this block because the telegrams that announced the Pearl Harbor code that came too late were decoded right across the street. So we're in the right spot.

Ms. Harman: Oh that's interesting. Well, certainly there's speculation that Iran could attack the Straits of Hormuz, for example—mine them with very advanced mines and do other actions which have been threatened, or attack us in Iraq or Afghanistan not so far away. Yeah, could happen. We've had a lot of conversation in the press about whether Iran is a rational actor or not a rational actor and so forth. I think we're a lot stronger and I think that the stakes for Iran doing that are so huge that I don't see that happening. Is it possible? Yeah, it's possible. And you are right about Pearl Harbor and the lessons from Pearl Harbor. And these sanctions have to be targeted exquisitely well, and that is the intention. Whether that will be the reality or not—I think some of the Iranian people are being hurt by these sanctions. There's rationing there and there's a lot of difficulty there, and they're not our target. Obama often says we have no problem with the Iranian people, etc.

Mr. Sanger: And the second question was whether the new coalition government will—I'll tell you what, I want to try to add to the framing of this by saying that, if you wander around the halls of the State Department these days, you get more nervousness that the new coalition government would feel freer to act. Even while they feel that this new government would work harder on the Palestinian issue, they think that it frees up Netanyahu. Are they right?

Ms. Harman: Well, we can do all this psychoanalysis of Netanyahu. His father died, and that was one of the issues about him pulling very far right Zionist. Mofaz, as far as I know, is lukewarm-to-negative on bombing Iran and I think the coalition's a good thing. I wish there had been a coalition years ago. I certainly urged that when Tzipi Livni was unable to form one, but it seemed to me that having Netanyahu and Tzipi work together was the right way to go then. She says—she still says—that she

wanted it from the beginning. He says that she didn't and that she came around to it late, at which point he wasn't interested for a number of reasons. At any rate, this coalition means that, if he chooses to, he can move in ways with the Palestinians that I think are in Israel's interest and obviously consistent with US policy. I think that if we have to find keys to push a two-state solution, we can't want it more than the parties. And at the moment, the parties haven't wanted it enough. But I sure think the clock is ticking in a variety of ways—not just the demographic time bomb that Peter Beinart talks about, but the leadership time bomb. The more moderate leadership in Palestine is at or beyond retirement age and I think that that is enormously sad. And what will this new coalition do? I think the jury's out. I think what it could do is very good things in terms of being patient on Iran and working hard for a two-state solution, but I don't know if either of those things will happen.

Mr. Sanger: Okay, so we're going to do one more combo of two, and then Jane's got to hit an airplane. So we'll start with the young lady on the aisle here and then we'll go to Diana.

Donna Constantinople: Well, I really appreciate the "young lady" comment, especially just after Mother's Day. I wanted to go back to the Putin-Obama relationship, because it seems as though their willingness to help in Iran and now the unwillingness to meet this latest little maneuver. Is it screened for the Syria problem? And why would Putin be willing to help with Iran with those sanctions and yet have the same resources used looking at the relationship with Syria? What do you think is behind it? And do you think the reset area is the beginning of the end?

Mr. Sanger: That was the first question, and Diana will have the second.

Diana Negroponte: Jane, you missed the second part of the question from a notable friend here, which is about the impact of our elections. We do not wish an increase in the price of oil between now and November and the Iranians would like to have these extra months to develop. So what is the impact of the elections on our options available?

Mr. Sanger: Two great questions. So let's start with Putin, and let's start also just by noting the fact that President Obama and President Putin—or I guess President Obama and the new President-for-life Putin—have barely had a relationship, because Obama has really invested very much in Medvedev and there really has been very little contact between the two.

Ms. Harman: That's true. But Medvedev was never really a free actor, so I don't see how you could say that even if that chemistry between President Obama and President Medvedev was sort of positive, that there wasn't some sort of Putin shadow over that. It had to be true. I think that Obama's a pragmatist and I think that he has realized that he's going to have to deal with this man for a while and that he's going to try to make this come out well. There's an agenda for more strategic arms limitations for the future—I think we're all reading about that, and it is in our interest—I certainly believe this—to have as cooperative a relationship as we can with China and Russia. They can be "frenemies," but with an accent on the "friend" part. Much more useful than the opposite, and lots of reasons to cooperate. With Russia becoming a member of the WTO—just a lot of good reasons. Putin's reasons for—first of all, after he was accommodated with moving the talk to Camp David after coming up with a lame excuse that he has to fill out his cabinet when he's the president, not the prime minister—hello? I think he's not ready to deal. And I think it was awkward the way he handled it, and people think it was awkward. But I think it's in our interest to keep the pressure on and try to make it work better. I'm not excusing Putin. I think their election was what you think the election was, and I think his reclaiming power is of great concern. On Syria, why would he break with us on Syria and agree with us on Iran? Again, I think it's the old power play. Having Syria in Russia's camp and not our camp has some strategic value to Russia, or so he thinks, and I think that's what it's about.

Mr. Sanger: He's also got his only base in the Middle East.

Ms. Harman: Oh, he's also got his only base in the Middle East there, I forgot about that—that thing! So I think that's why he's doing it. My advice to him, if he ever called up, is to say that being the workout specialist on Syria, getting the Bashar family out of there would give him far more than taking that side of the issue against the whole world and against the whole neighborhood now, especially if the Gulf states get more active in all this—and Turkey is extremely active. So, I think he's getting bad strategic advice. On Diana's point about the election and how does that play with Israel? Well, the conventional wisdom is that if they're going to attack Iran, they should do it before the election, because no candidate can afford to criticize them for doing it. I still think that a bombing option for Israel or anyone else, while it has to be on the table, is the least desirable option. I think the reaction to bombing is worse than—well, bombing may have to happen. I'm not for taking the military option off the table forever. But bombing by Israel or somebody that has less military capability than we do, can postpone—I think everyone agrees—Iran's nuclear capabilities maybe for a year but would lead to the population there rallying around the fragile government which might otherwise fall apart, could blow up the international coalition that is so far on the same side of sanctions, could end the sanctions on buying a lot of folks and I think give Iran a storyline that I think Iran doesn't have, and just redouble Iran's intentions—if they aren't there now—to proceed full tilt. And many people think they're not there now—with crossing that red line and building nuclear capability. So I don't know what Israel's decision will be. Israel has a right to defend herself period and I profoundly believe that—as an independent country and so forth. But I think that, at least so far, some of the rhetoric around bombing has cooled, which I think is a good thing. And I hope that we will at least, as I put it, give success a chance and see what these more coercive sanctions give us by mid-summer.

Mr. Sanger: Jane, let me just push one more thing, and I promise this is the last question. There are some on both the left and the right that—if the talks fail, if you end up with no chance but to do a military option—better that the US do it than that Israel do it.

Ms. Harman: Well, I would say better that an international coalition do it. I think—back to Bill Maher—“How many Muslim countries are we going to bomb?” I think that an international coalition—the coalition that supports the sanctions needs to move to plan B if the sanctions fail. I would not like them to fail, and I think part of plan B has to be this international fuel bank or some kind of other work-out consistent with Iran achieving a civil nuclear capability which many countries have and which some of you may not love. I'm not saying I love it either, but I think if we're going to allow some countries like India to have it, I don't understand—and they're peaceful, sort of, kind of, oops. India's nuclear tests as I said I thought were hugely ill-timed and should be condemned for their timing. But nonetheless, I think if we're going to allow other countries to have civil nuclear capability and they're intending to be peaceful, carving out Iran, given all the bad options, isn't our best move. So my bottom line is that I think, if and when it comes to a bombing mission, it should be an international mission. That's something that we should continue to steer. And it's interesting that Obama, who had virtually no foreign policy experience when he came to office—no one has missed this—when he became president has surprised us with I think a pretty effective counter-terrorism stance in the world. And here, and in a couple other places—China was pretty well done last week—if we can come up with solutions that are face-saving but also in a positive direction that's a good thing. So, no, I'm not in favor of containing a nuclear capability in Iran, but I am in favor of moving an international coalition towards a strategy of Iran that ends up making it hard or impossible—I would prefer impossible—to take that final step to develop a bomb. And all this is very complicated and tricky and that's why we need the best female minds on the problem, and that's why we need this WFPG to help us. *[Laughter.]* And David Sanger has, in my view, performed well enough to be able to stay on the team and I think we should make him an honorary girl. Thank you very much. *[Applause.]*

Ms. Isaacs: Thank you very much for a very interesting and a very important program. Thank you all for coming and come back again.