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## DIPLOMATIC DISPATCHES

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### Rational Talk in Irrational Times

**I**n irrational times like these, the realm of the rational is alluring. So heavy hitters from the Cabinet, three Supreme Court justices, politicians, diplomats and think tank wallahs were happy to gather to toast American Nobel laureates in physics, chemistry and economics at the residence of Swedish Ambassador Jan Eliasson Monday night.

In pre-dinner chitchat, Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist explained to curious Colombian Ambassador Luis Alberto Moreno that the Supreme Court has typically ruled on the propriety of wartime measures curbing civil liberties one or two years after the fact. Rehnquist said he did not know how long it might take for measures introduced by the Bush administration following the Sept. 11 attacks in New York and Washington to come under the high court's scrutiny. The chief justice noted that martial law was imposed in Hawaii the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. It was ended first by presidential order and then, 18 months later, declared unlawful by the Supreme Court.

The tone got somewhat lighter as guests were seated for dinner and the talk turned to other issues.

Eliasson and his wife, Kerstin, the embassy's science counselor and chairman of the auditors of the Nobel Foundation, focused on fielding mostly brainy questions from each table for the laureates about science and economics: Einstein's doubts about his own theories on condensation, the best course for development in postwar Afghanistan, the potential benefits of stem cell research for Parkinson's disease and the merits of the competing economic stimulus packages on Capitol Hill.

*Among the evening's pearls of wisdom:*

Einstein did wonder whether his theories could be proven in reality. Science, in case anyone wondered, develops with small steps and many doubts.

In Afghanistan, new institutions have to be built from scratch in addition to the introduction of a Marshall-type plan.

If stem-cell research would help cure Parkinson's, it is worth pursuing. Therapeutic cloning is inevitable.

The proposed economic stimulus is "incredibly bad policy," said George A. Akerlof, an economics honoree.

Rehnquist, who is of Swedish ancestry, came to this annual black-tie event wishing for some "trickledown effect" and hoping he would "get smarter," he said in thanking Eliasson. "After several years, it certainly has not happened to me," he joked. Maybe he was just not standing in the right place.

#### 'The Vehicle for Intolerance'

Pakistani Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi, who was introduced as the woman who coined the phrase, "We must win the war, but more important, we must not lose the peace" after Sept. 11, emphasized in comments made at the annual luncheon of the Women's Foreign Policy Group yesterday the need to eradicate the deprivation and despair that yield ready recruits for terrorism.

"Prosperity is the vehicle for tolerance, and poverty is the vehicle for intolerance," she said. Lodhi argued for a "universal, clearly codified definition of terrorism" as the killing of innocent civilians and called for a "distinction between terrorism and justified political struggle."

She said the world came together to condemn the horrendous acts of Sept. 11, but actions taken down the line will have to be in keeping with international law so the U.S.-led coalition can be maintained to address the root causes of terrorism.

Rep. Jane Harman (D-Calif.), ranking minority member on the House subcommittee on terrorism and homeland security, said that while the international war on terrorism has gone well, the domestic war was falling short. Speaking after Lodhi, Harman criticized the mistakes made in the health sector and the dispute over what kind of powers to give to the Office of Homeland Security. She also took issue with the return of unlimited detentions,

eavesdropping on conversations between attorneys and their clients and the broad order that sets up military tribunals for foreigners suspected of terrorist activity. She warned that the sweeping measures jeopardized the careful case that has been made domestically and internationally since Sept. 11. Both Harman and Lodhi emphasized the need to include women in making key decisions.

#### Reporter Won't Be Hushed

One important voice at risk is that of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya, the intrepid reporter who covered the war in Chechnya for the daily Novaya Gazeta and who has been threatened by Russian officials for reporting on military abuses.

Despite the threats, she said during a visit to Washington last week, she is trying to return to Moscow from the safety of Austria.

She said she is determined to return to work alongside other journalists who are being intimidated. "I think it will be quite difficult to destroy me now, because I have said so much," she said. "It will be obvious if they kill me."