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REMARKS

**Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
In a Joint Discussion with Israeli President Shimon Peres
Hosted by the Saban Center at Brookings
Moderated by Martin Indyk, Brookings Vice President and Director of Foreign Policy**

**June 12, 2012
The Hay Adams Hotel
Washington, D.C.**

MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in a very special welcome to the president of the state of Israel Shimon Peres and the Secretary of State of the United States Hillary Rodham Clinton. (Applause.)

MR. INDYK: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you very much for joining us. It's a great pleasure to have you here on the occasion of this event to honor Haim and Cheryl Saban for their support, 10 years of support for the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings. I'm Martin Indyk, the director of the Foreign Policy Program at Brookings. One time I had something to do with the Saban Center. And we're especially appreciative that so many of you who have been involved in the work of the Saban Center over these 10 years are here to join us today.

I especially want to welcome Senator Inouye, Senator Feinstein, Justice Breyer, Chairman Genachowsky, and the ambassadors of Israel, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates for honoring us with their presence today.

When I asked Haim how he would like to be honored, he first, of course, refused. And then when I said that no was not an option, he said that we should do it in the Brookings Saban Center tradition of an exchange of ideas about the Middle East. "And who would he like us to invite to conduct that exchange," I asked him. And he answered in a flash, "Shimon and Hillary." It's a great testament to their friendship for Haim and Cheryl that they both agreed to join us today, and it's a great testament to their high reputation and fame that I can say the words "Shimon and Hillary" and everyone will immediately know to whom I am referring, the president of Israel, of course, and the Secretary of State of the United States. Thank you both very much for doing us the honor of joining us today for this conversation.

I'm not going to spend time – our precious time – on introductions, since you know them both so well. But instead, I thought we should go straight to the conversation. I'm not sure what the protocol is. I suspect the president outranks the Secretary. (Laughter.) But since Shimon is such a chivalrous gentleman – he's known for that amongst his many other good characteristics – that I'm sure he would agree that it should be ladies first. (Laughter.)

So, Madam Secretary, I wanted to start by asking you about Syria, just to go to the heart of the matter. You've done an incredible job dealing with the world's problems, but I suspect the one that at least for the time being is the most vexing one for you is Syria. So tell us, please, what's your approach, what's the U.S. strategy for trying to deal with this tremendous brutality that we seem to be witnessing going on there from day to day?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, Martin, first let me thank you and Brookings, and particularly the Saban Center and especially Haim and Cheryl, for inviting us to be here. I am the one who is especially delighted and honored to be with a longtime friend and someone whom I don't think I'm alone in saying I admire so greatly. And I appreciate the chance to talk about some of the issues that we are addressing together. Certainly what happens to Syria matters greatly to the United States, but it matters drastically to Israel. And how we work through the many difficulties that are posed by this unrelenting, brutal crackdown carried out by the Assad regime and their military loyalists will have far-reaching consequences for the region and beyond.

Let me just make three quick points. First, we continue to support Kofi Annan's efforts, and we do so because he represents both the United Nations and the Arab League. It's quite unprecedented to have a joint special envoy who is speaking for two organizations that have seen their common interest in trying to bring an end to the violence and help to precipitate and then shepherd through a political transition.

And the six-point plan that former Secretary General Annan laid out is a good plan. Of course, it's not being implemented. And of course, the contempt and rejection of the first principle of that plan, namely the cessation of violence by the Assad regime, has certainly been a grave assault not only on the lives of the Syrian people but on the international effort intended to bring an end to this ongoing conflict.

Kofi Annan is now trying to put together a group of countries that would include Russia that we agree should be included to work on a roadmap for political transition. Russia has increasingly said that it was not defending Assad, but it worried about what came after Assad, and that it would work on political transition. But there are always a lot of caveats that they then interpose.

So I met with Kofi Annan on Friday. We talked through what his strategy would be and he is working very hard to try to implement it. The redline for us was the inclusion of Iran. We thought that would be a grave error since we know that Iran is not only supporting the Assad regime, but actively mentoring, leading, encouraging not merely the regular army, but the militias that are springing up, engaging in sectarian conflict.

So we have a timeline in mind to see whether or not this effort of Kofi's can be successful. The outer limit of that is mid-July when the Security Council has to decide whether or not to extend the mission. And certainly, if there is no discernable movement by then, it will be very difficult to extend a mission that is increasingly dangerous for the observers on the ground.

Secondly, I think that the challenge faced by so many, from the near neighbors in the area to those further out, is what one can realistically do to try to bring an end to the violence without seeing an increase in the activities of certain elements of the opposition that could lead to even greater violence and the likelihood of the civil war that we're all trying to avoid.

So you hear from time to time that the Turks are meeting with certain elements. The Qataris, the Emiratis, the Saudis, others are trying to figure out how to support people who are under the assault of the Syrian regime. And it's quite challenging to actually deliver on that. Now there are lots of weapons on the black market, there's money that's available, there seems to be an increasing capacity in the opposition both to defend themselves and to take the fight to the Syrian military in an irregular way. But there's no doubt that the onslaught continues, the use of heavy artillery and the like.

We have confronted the Russians about stopping their continued arms shipments to Syria. They have, from time to time, said that we shouldn't worry; everything they're shipping is unrelated to their actions internally. That's patently untrue. And we are concerned about the latest information we have that there are attack helicopters on the way from Russia to Syria, which will escalate the conflict quite dramatically. There seems to be a massing of Syrian forces around Aleppo that we've gotten information about over the last 24, 48 hours. That could very well be a redline for the Turks in terms of their strategic and national interests, so we're watching this very carefully.

Finally, I would say that part of the reason why this is complicated in the face of a clear rejection of what the Assad regime is doing is because there is such a fear among many elements of the Syrian society and in the region about what would come next. You haven't had a wholesale departure, support, or even into exile of a lot of major players in the Syrian society. We are approached on a regular basis by representatives of different groups within Syria who are terrified of what comes next. I don't know how else to say it.

So how we manage a political transition, assuming we could manage a political transition; how we provide reassurance and some level of protection to Christians, Druze, Alawites, Kurds, Sunni business leaders and the like; how we prevent a massive inflow of refugees across the Jordanian and Turkish borders; how we protect Lebanon from getting caught up in the sectarian divides that afflict them as well as Syria – if these questions had self-apparent and actualizing answers, I would certainly share them with you. But as things stand, this is our constant, painful analysis as to how we can push the Assad regime out – there's no doubt it needs to go – but create a transition that gives at least some possible reassurance to those who fear what comes next.

So I think with that, I'll end.

MR. INDYK: Great, thank you.

Mr. President, Syria is, of course, your northern neighbor. The Israeli army is 40 kilometers from Damascus. Your chief of – deputy chief of staff is in the papers in the last two days

warning about the danger that Syria's chemical weapons could get into the wrong hands. How do you see this, and what do you think can be done about it?

PRESIDENT PERES: Thank you very much, Martin. I want to thank very much Cheryl and Haim. With them, I feel at home on matters of peace and in (inaudible) of matters of social justice. I shall have a few words to say about the institute later.

I want to also to say a word or two about Hillary, not because my – only my personal admiration, which is really tremendous, but by the uniqueness of her role. Never before did anybody in history, men or women, traveled thousand of thousands of miles, from place to place, day and night, not because traveling is such a great pleasure but because she has an unprecedented responsibility.

All the previous Secretaries of States – not because of them – were dealing with international relations, which is one thing. Hillary is dealing with global responsibility, which is a totally different thing. When you have had international relations, it's enough that you go to a capital and that's it. No more. She has to face people all around the world with unbelievable differences.

Occasionally, the people are leading the government or the government is leading the people. And we live in a world where governments became weak because two of their main instruments were taken away from them: the control of economy and the control of security. Since economy became global, it affects every country, and look, no country can really affect it. So you have a global economy without the global government.

The same with terror. Because security, there is terror. It's global. It's wild. It doesn't have a law. It doesn't have an address. And again, there is no government that controls it.

So Hillary is trying, really, to fill the gap by creating alliances, by trying to have common basis, by being passionate. And the Administration wasn't built to handle it. So you have to penetrate an entirely new experience. Saying it, I believe in the Middle East we have to think about two tracks, not one: the present, which is transitional; and the future, which is permanent. I don't have the slightest doubt that finally the Arabs will (inaudible) the new age. They don't have a choice, as none of us has a choice.

But in between we have a transitional situation, which is not the same for all countries but different for every country. The Russians have had a Stakhanovich, a man that works a lot. So one of the doctors of (inaudible) came in the hospital and tell the nurses, "My girls, I'm so much in a hurry. Give me the average temperature of the sick people." (Laughter.) Well, there is no average temperature in the Middle East. (Laughter.)

So you have to have every situation to deal separately, now with Syria. I think in Syria two unprecedented things. First of all, the bravery of the Syrian people, which in my eyes is admirable and unbelievable. People are facing fire every day, a dictator that kills children. For me, the most shocking photo is to see a small coffin and a dead child in it. I can't stand it.

People are reluctant to say, “Well, if Assad will go, we don’t have an alternative.” My answer: Assad stopped to be an alternative. Even if there is no alternative, he’s neither an alternative.

So this is the first time that I really want to express my admiration for an Arab attempt to fight for their own freedom. It’s admirable, and I wish them success.

The second point, which is unprecedented, is that the Arab League took on responsibility against an Arab country. And as Hillary has mentioned already, it’s a joint venture between the United Nations and the Arab League. I would say, gentlemen, you send observers. Now you know the situation. What is your proposal? You don’t want anybody else to intervene because this will be foreign intervention. Okay, do it yourself and the United Nations will support you. Better that the Arabs will do it, particularly when Syria is a very complex case.

You have the (inaudible) and the Shiites and the Kurds. It’s either a dictator that will force them to be together or a confederation that will make them agree. Let the Arabs do it. They are ready. Let them take responsibility. Let’s not accuse anybody that we are intervening. Let’s support them in any way we can, clearly humanitarian. I don’t speak about Israel. I’m not sure that they would like that very well. We would like to help – not by arms, but by foot, by support, by voting, and by morale. And I think right now this should be the decision.

The leaders of the world, and what can Russians do? The Russians will be finally accused of intervening. They may be admired in Syria, but they are creating a great deal of opposition in the rest of the Arab world. So no single country can do it without being accused. The Arab League should and can do it. And if you ask for my advice, this should be the right policy.

MR. INDYK: Thank you. Shimon, just following on from that, I wonder if we can shift to the Palestinian issue for a moment? Here, we say that the status quo between Israel and the Palestinians is unsustainable. But out there, where you live, it looks from day to day like Government of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, even Hamas and Gaza, all of them seem to be satisfied with the status quo, at least for the time being. So in your view, is the status quo sustainable?

PRESIDENT PERES: I don’t think there is a status quo. I think there are two. They’re the same movement. Once I think Henry Kissinger said that in Israel the foreign affairs is an extension of the domestic situation. Now I can say about the rest of the world that the domestic situation is the result of the outside world. We cannot separate ourselves on the global world from the changes in Egypt, the changes around the world. It’s moving. It’s moving.

And I think even – between us and the Palestinians now, some positive moves. For example, I would outline two. One is that the economic development – because in order to make peace, you have to build a nation, and the Palestinians started to build a nation with the American help, with the Israeli support and agreement. Secondly, the Palestinians have never had a force of their own. And I wouldn’t like to generalize, but in the Middle Eastern terms, you don’t have real parties – you have real forces.

Abu Mazen Abbas didn't have a force. Now, for the first time, he has a force, fifteen thousand youngsters that were trained by you, that are loyal to him. They clearly wouldn't like that Hamas will command them. And I think that Abbas is a serious man. I know him for a long time. Actually, he and myself signed agreement here on the White lawn –

MR. INDYK: Just over there. (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT PERES: Yes. And clearly we miss (inaudible). And it was presided by Bill Clinton. I shall not forget it. At 19 years past since then, I wished it would be faster. But you know, you cannot make a baby become a boy in a short while, and a boy become a grownup personage. There is age. It takes time. But it's growing.

I think now it is the time to make peace with the Palestinians. The Israeli Government has a wider base. The Palestinians understand that not everything which was happening in the Arab Spring is necessarily bringing them time, because one of the important thing about the Arab Spring is the Arab youngsters understand that their situation is not a result of the conflict between us and the Palestinians. They know that reform begins at home. What's happening in Syria has nothing to do with Israel. What happened in Tunisia has nothing to do with Israel, or Libya. And I think we should let the Arabs reform their lives and stop using the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as an excuse.

Now, elections are important, and I think – I believe the youngsters in the Middle East achieved doing things, important things. They brought an end to dictatorship after the uprising of the youngsters. I don't recommend anybody who seeks a guaranteed job to be a dictator in the Middle East. It's over. (Laughter.) It became totally uncomfortable.

Then there was a (inaudible) people to go to the elections, but they made one mistake. They didn't prepare themselves for the elections. Now, whoever will be elected, even if he'll have a majority, if he doesn't have a solution for the economic problems of Egypt, the elections don't mean much. If they don't have a solution for the security of Egypt, elections doesn't mean much. And I would just say to people that I know in Egypt don't forget for a moment that 60 percent of the population are young people. The future is theirs, and they are sick and tired. They don't want to remain poor. They are not ready to accept corruption. They want freedom. Many of them opened their eyes in Tunisia. I watched that many of the demonstrators were young ladies who are sick and tired of being discriminated.

And by the way, if you discriminate women, you discriminate your people, because you allow only half of the people to participate in building the nation. But if the women doesn't have a chance to be educated, the children are uneducated; they don't give a future to the children. Forty-one percent of the Egyptians are illiterate. And for that you don't need money. You really have to reform at home. And believe me, I wish and I pray that the young people will succeed, not because of us, because of them. They better they will have it, the better we shall have it.

MR. INDYK: It sounded for a moment like Shimon was channeling Hillary. (Laughter.) So do you want to pick up on the women's issue in the Arab Spring and your view of how things are going for the women in this process?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I think it's too soon to tell. I think Shimon is right that we have a transition that we're going through to get to whatever future there will be. And it's not going to happen quickly and it's going to have, I would expect, some bumps in the road and difficulties along the way. But I believe that one of the important indicators as to how the whole process of democratization, political reform, economic reform is going is the way that the newly formed governments and their allies in the various countries treat women.

And to that end, there is both – there is mixed news. There is some positive news in that there are certain guarantees being put forth about women's rights and opportunities, but there are some worrying actions that certainly don't match those guarantees. And I think that raises the larger issue, because Shimon is right that democracy has to deliver. I mean, a lot of what was behind the revolutions of the Middle East and North Africa was economic aspirations that were not being met, outrage at corruption, the difficulty of doing business, the doors that would slam in one's face, the absence of jobs even if you were an educated young person.

So there has to be a level of economic returns for people's leap of faith and investment in a democratic future, and that is going to be extremely hard. Every one of the countries that is making these changes has a lot of work to do to open up their economy, to go after corruption and the like. At the same time, the political reforms that are occurring and the commitment to democracy, albeit unformed and quite not – I guess quite not yet clear in the minds of leaders or citizens – is raising a lot of issues. Because for us, democracy is not one election, one time. We're not sure exactly how others see this democratic enterprise that they have signed onto, because democracy is about building institutions. It's about extending rights to everyone, protecting rights of minorities, ensuring that people are equal under the law, requiring independent judiciary, free press, and all the rest.

So it's not just what happens to women, although we will keep a very close watch on what is happening to women. It is what is happening to the democratic experiment. And what we're trying to do is encourage the countries that are pursuing this to keep reaching out, learning from the experiences of others, most recently the post-Soviet nations but also Latin America. We come with a long 236-year experiment. And people in the region may or may not think that we're a relevant example, but we've encouraged a lot of outreach to countries that threw off military dictatorships, totalitarian regimes, and to find common cause with their experience.

And I think we also have to have a certain level of both humility and patience. We have to call out, at any turn, developments that we think endanger the democratic enterprise: the consolidation of power, authoritarian tendencies, and the like. But we also have to recognize that we didn't have a straight line. There were a lot of changes that we had to do as we moved toward a more perfect union. We didn't include everybody in the first run. We excluded women, among others. We had to fight a civil war to extend citizenship to former slaves.

I mean, we have to be honest enough to recognize that time has sped up. And to some extent, the work that has to be done in building these new democracies is much harder today than it was even after the Berlin Wall fell. I mean, every single move is now scrutinized, spread around the world through social media. It's really hard. So even if the people involved are coming at it

with the best of intentions, good faith, they're going to face a lot of setbacks and challenges to their decision making and other problems that will make what they're attempting to do in the economic and political realms very difficult.

So women are the canaries in the mine, as many have said before, in these societies – in many societies. How they're treated, whether they're included, will tell us a lot about what we can expect from the democratic movements that are ongoing. But I think we have to do all we can to support the right tendencies and decisions in order to get the right outcome.

MR. INDYK: Thank you. Mr. President, if we can shift to Iran.

PRESIDENT PERES: I want to say well, about the women, I won't give up easily. See, I'm a gentleman, so I'm more optimistic than Hillary about women. President Obama asked me, "Who is against democracy in the Middle East?" I told him, "The husbands." (Laughter.) They don't want to share with the women equal rights. So why I'm becoming optimistic? Doesn't (inaudible). My optimism stems from a different point.

Today, the children are on the side of their fathers, not on the side of their mothers. And that is my hope. They understand that if they want reform, really, their country, and many of them went to the universities, and are equipped with modern communication, they won't give up.

The world democracy is a little bit complicated because some people think democracy is another religion. So you have to convert from being a Muslim to be a democrat. Well, it's not the case because Islam is a spiritual position, not a economic doctrine. And for that reason, I am a little bit even more optimistic than you are. And I think one should watch the combination of the women and the youngsters. And the fathers may find themselves all of a sudden in troubles. They won't take it, they will boss the future. So that is my note of optimism. (Laughter.)

MR. INDYK: Thank you, fabulous. You do the question about Iran then.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Oh, no, that – (laughter) – no use in (inaudible). (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT PERES: No, here I am not just a gentleman. (Laughter.)

MR. INDYK: All right. Shimon --

PRESIDENT PERES: Iran?

MR. INDYK: In – Iran. In 1981, you recall that you were opposed to the use of – in 1981, you were opposed to the use of preventive force against Iraq's nuclear program. And I wonder, when you look back on that, what were you thinking about that at the time? What was your reason for opposition?

PRESIDENT PERES: Let's not talk about Iran without patience, ability, strength, and cool, and say Iran, the Iranians are not our enemies. In history, we have many very friendly relations,

and now very dangerous. So I'm asking myself, why are we really against Iran? Is it just because of nuclear bomb? Not only.

What revolts the world against Iran is that in the 21st century, the Iranian leaders, not the Iranian people, are the only one that wants to renew imperialism – we can't accept it – in the name of religion. From that, it started. That's the reason why many Arabs are against not Iran, but the Iranian hegemony. The Iranians don't say the hegemony should be Arabic, because they're not Arabs. So they want to say it Muslim, because they're Muslims.

And we see the way they want to construct an empire – by terror, by sending money, sending arms, hanging, bluffing. We cannot support it. The world cannot support it, whether you are a Russian – I am speaking in – with Putin and Medvedev to say we cannot support a nuclear Iran. Now, if Iran will win, the whole Middle East will become the victim. Actually, the world economy will become the victim, because the way they rule is without any regard to anybody else. And this is the first problem. We cannot allow it to happen – all of us.

The second thing is the ways they do. It's against a return to the Machiavellian formula that the goals justify the means. So you can kill, you can lie, you can murder, you can collect arms. My God, we are over it. We cannot return to it. It's a human problem. The globe is already so complicated. It doesn't govern without the government in economic terms. And this is a terrible alternative. And I'm afraid that some countries may take advantage if the Iranians will ruin the situation in Iraq, in Syria, in Lebanon, and they won't stop. They will go further, wherever there is a drop of oil, wherever there is a chance of gaining anything.

We can't agree with it. And that is why the nuclear weapons became so dangerous, because they serve a purpose and nobody can guarantee that they will restrain. And it's governed by a single man who nominated himself as a deputy of Mohammed, my God. And where such a complete holiness arrives, reason stops, prediction stops.

And it's a situation that I am not aware of anybody that threatens Iran, that wants to oppress Iran or govern Iran or reduce Iran, nothing whatsoever. Iran could have flourished without it. They have oil. They have a large country. They have an old culture. Who is against Iran? We're against a policy that endangers our age. And unfortunately, they use the time – I can understand exactly the United States of America. It can say well, the United States, why did you do this, why did you do that, (inaudible), but Iran cannot take away from United States one thing: the character of their history. There is no trace of imperialism in American character.

Yesterday, I've been at the headquarters of your army. I told them you're the only army that doesn't fight to conquer or to occupy but fights for freedom and peace, not only for America, for the rest of the world. Historically speaking, the Americans are fighting for values, no matter if you do this or you do that. So you cannot be caring of the rest of the world and indifferent to Iran. And the Iranians are speeding up. They are taking the American process of democracy and making the wrong use of it.

So I believe that President Obama represents the deepest assumptions and concepts of the American history. It's above politics. It's above everything else. I think the reasons are

profound and serious and urgent because they may reach a point of no return. Then it is too late. So the President said rightly I want to try with nonmilitary means, which is typically American, rightly so. But America understands if this will be the only option, the Iranians will laugh at them, say okay, the sanctions won't act, and then she'll be free. Then they said – the Americans are saying there are other options on the table, please don't forget it. And we are aware of the time element as well.

So this is the way really I look at it. I don't take it as a personal whim or as a personal ambition. Clearly we are more sensitive than others because when nobody threatens Iran, Iran threatens us. What did we do to them? We are the only country which is being threatened to be destroyed by them. But I don't suggest that this is the only reason that makes us more sensitive. But it doesn't reduce the great and major danger that we are facing.

MR. INDYK: Madam Secretary, maybe you can tell us how it's going with the negotiations after an initial sense of optimism with the IAEA as well. Both tracks, both the IAEA and the negotiations have taken place in Baghdad. There's a sense that not much progress is being made. Is that an accurate perception?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I think the point of the negotiations is to do exactly what Shimon said, which we have been consistent in pursuing since the beginning of the Obama Administration, to have a credible pressure track that united the entire world. That was not the case when President Obama took office, and it now is. It's quite remarkable that not only the international community in general but the P-5+1 and, most particularly, China and Russia have remained as committed and forceful in the diplomatic negotiations with Iran over the nuclear program.

There will be, as you know, meetings in Moscow starting next week, over the weekend. And there is a unified position being presented by the P-5+1 that gives Iran, if it is interested in taking a diplomatic way out, a very clear path that would be verifiable and would be linked to action for action, which has been the approach that we've advocated and that has been agreed upon.

I can't, sitting here today, tell you what the Iranians will or won't do, but I am quite certain that they are under tremendous pressure from the Russians and the Chinese to come to Moscow prepared to respond. Now, whether that response is adequate or not, we will have to judge. They, for about the last 10 days, have been pushing to get a so-called experts meeting, pushing to try to even postpone Moscow in the absence of such meeting. And there was not a single blink by any of the negotiators. And then, as you saw in the news, there was a statement that yes, the Iranians would show up. My counterpart from Russia, Sergey Lavrov, is either there or on his way there.

And the Russians have made it very clear that they expect the Iranians to advance the discussion in Moscow, not to just come, listen, and leave. We'll know once it happens. But I think that the unity and the resolve that has been shown thus far is of real significance, because clearly the threats that Shimon outlined are very real. The continuing effort by the Iranians to extend their influence and to use terror as a tool to do so extends to our hemisphere and all the way to East Asia. So the threat is real. We're dealing with a regime that has hegemonic ambitions. Those

who live in the near neighborhood are well aware of that, trying to manage it, and avoid the Iranians' ability to score points and create more islands of influence is one of the great challenges that we are coping with.

But I just want to end with a story that I brought back from Georgia last week. I was in Batumi, which my friend, Strobe Talbott knows well, which is being turned into a kind of mini Las Vegas on the Black Sea – lots of casinos, big hotels, all kinds of public art. And I was talking to one of the municipal officials, and I said, “Well, what kind of tourist season are you expecting?” He said, “We think we’re going to have a huge tourist influx.” I said, “So who are most of your tourists? Where do they come from?” He said, “Well, we have a lot of Turks and we have a lot of Russians and we have a lot of Iranians and we have a lot of Israelis.” I said, “Oh, how’s that all work?” (Laughter.) And he says, “Well, I’ll tell you,” he said, “if you go to the discos late at night, the two kinds of people that are left are the Iranians and the Israelis.” (Laughter and applause.)

And shortly after hearing that story, I walked into a public building in Batumi, which is one of President Saakashvili’s very creative and impressive advancements, where truly it’s one-stop shopping. You go into one public building; you can get a marriage license, a work license, a passport. It’s quite remarkable. So I was wandering around, being shown this modern technological wonder. And I walked into the visa section, and these three men came running up to me and they said, “We love you, we love you. We’re from Iran.” And I said, “Oh well, we’re trying to get along with you.” “Oh, we like you. The people like you.”

Now, who knows? (Laughter.) But I think that – I think that the larger point in Shimon’s very eloquent and, as usual, compelling description is that there continues to be this disconnect between the people of Iran, which is a much more diverse society than most of us understand or know how to deal with, and this leadership, which is becoming more and more rigid, more of a military dictatorship, if you will. And so there is a lot happening inside Iran, and keeping this pressure on, keeping the sanctions on, keeping the world united against this nuclear threat and what it represents to this regime, remains our highest priority. So we’re pushing forward on it, and we’ll see what comes out of Moscow.

MR. INDYK: Unfortunately, the time has come when we have to conclude. And you’ve been both very generous with your ideas and analysis and time.

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