

# **THE ISRAEL PROJECT**

**CONFERENCE CALL WITH AARON DAVID MILLER:  
ABBAS VISIT TO WASHINGTON**

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MICHAEL GELMAN: Welcome to the call. My name is Michael Gelman. We're still waiting for Dr. Miller to come onto the phone. He should be along shortly. (Pause.)

Hello and welcome. My name is Michael Gelman and I am the chair emeritus of the Israel Project. On behalf of our entire team, I'm very pleased that such a prominent group of journalists could join us today to hear from Dr. Aaron David Miller. Today's briefing with Dr. Miller is on the record.

I'm particularly honored to be moderating this call because I've known Aaron for many years, and he is a good friend. As you know, the Israel Project, or TIP, is an international, nonprofit organization dedicated to providing journalists accurate information about Israel. TIP is not related to any government or governmental agency. We have offices in Washington and in Jerusalem. Our team of more than 30 experts and former journalists is always ready to help you to get the facts that you need to cover the Middle East, so please do not hesitate to contact us at any time. The information on our website is in 10 languages.

Now, I'd like to introduce you to today's speaker. Aaron David Miller received his Ph.D. in American, diplomatic and Middle East history from the University of Michigan in 1977 and joined the State Department the following year. For two decades, he served at the Department of State as an advisor to six secretaries of state, where he helped formulate U.S. policy on the Middle East and the Arab-Israel peace process, most recently as a senior advisor for Arab-Israeli negotiations. He also served as deputy Middle East coordinator for Arab-Israeli negotiations, senior member of the State Department's policy planning staff, and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research and in the Office of the Historian. He has – (inaudible, audio breaks) – Aaron Miller. Aaron?

AARON DAVID MILLER: Thanks. It's great to be with you on this call. And I'm pleased to be here with all of you. A few ground rules – (inaudible, audio breaks). Ground rules are more personal. Number one, I'm really not – (inaudible) – moralize or editorialize. I'm going to leave that to the advocates of one side or the other. And I'm not here to reconstruct the tick-tock of what actually occurred on the Mavi Marmara. It may well be that the truth, if in fact, it can ever be obtained, will emerge, but frankly, I doubt it. Both sides are very invested in this narrative. The damage has been done. And people will see, feel and believe what they want to see, feel and believe.

And finally, I'm not going to try to reconcile morality and ethics with history and politics. What I want to do is make four or five points on the broader situation in an effort to put the events of last week in context, Abbas' visit to Washington tomorrow in some sort of perspective. Number one, the Gaza crisis flows, in my view, from a general dysfunction in the Arab-Israeli arena that has persisted at least since 2005, and I would argue probably five years before that.

So even if a way can be found to manage this crisis through some sort of investigative commission and easing of the Israeli economic restrictions and blockade against Gaza, the

realities on the ground the shape both Palestinian and Israeli behavior are not going to end anytime soon. And these realities, I'm afraid, looking at the world the way it is, rather than only the way we want it to be, is going to also constrain the administration's options and approaches to this issue.

Number two, I would argue to you that Gaza – and I'm going to make both points, second and third – came from two basic realities. Number one, you have a – back to my second point – you have a Palestinian Humpty Dumpty. I don't mean to trivialize this or make light of it, but the Palestinian national movement, 50 years after its creation, is dysfunctional, to some degree rudderless, and has not yet agreed on a coherent, cohesive and effective strategy to realize Palestinian national aspirations. I would argue to you that, that may well be the root cause of what transpired in Gaza.

We dealt with Arafat for many years. We spent countless hours with him. My conclusion, in the end, was that you couldn't do a peace agreement with him, but that you couldn't do it without him. And despite his many imperfections, he managed to maintain control through any number of instruments and co-optive mechanisms. He managed to maintain control. What's occurred now is basically the – I would describe it as the Noah's Ark of Palestinian politics.

You've got two polities, separated by geography, governed by two separate administrations with two separate sets of security organizations, two separate sources of funding, two separate sets of patrons, and most important, two quite discreet national visions for what constitutes the best way not only to realize Palestinian national aspirations, but what those national aspirations actually are.

And this problem – the problem of the Palestinian Humpty Dumpty, which predates this crisis – clearly, it's rooted in Fatah's own dysfunction, its inability to deliver, both economically and to end the Israeli occupation through negotiation. It's rooted in Arafat's corruption. It's rooted, in part, in Sharon's decision – and who could have blamed him – in 2005, for dismantling Israeli settlements then, removing the IDF as well as Israelis from Gaza. Certainly, the previous administration didn't fault him for that. But it left, in its wake, an acceleration of what would be – or set the stage for what would be Hamas' consolidation of power in Gaza.

And this problem, it seems to me, which is, on the Palestinian side, the greatest obstacle and challenge to Israeli/Palestinian peacemaking, poses a huge problem. Because in the end, when you strip it all away, the real mark of statehood, whether it's a democratic polity or an authoritarian polity, is the state's capacity to maintain control over a monopoly, over the sources and forces of violence within its society. Without a capacity to do that, a state will never have the respect of its own constituents, and it cannot have the respect of its neighbors.

And this notion of the absence of monopoly over the forces of violence is a huge problem, because without writing a brief for the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which I'm not here to do, I would argue that an Israeli prime minister only gets one thing, these days, from a conflict-ending agreement with Palestinians, and that's an end to the conflict. So that a

Palestinian partner has to be in a position to maintain not only control over all of the guns – (inaudible, audio breaks) – but the capacity to silence them. That does not exist now.

That dysfunction will persist long after the flotilla fiasco has ended. Third, there is a more organized form of dysfunction, I would argue, on the Israeli side. And it's really composed of a much broader problem, which confronts the state of Israel and has predated this crisis. And that is essentially a transition from a founding generation who created, sustained and maintained the state – and you know their names. They are historic figures – Ben Gurion, Begin, Golda Meir, Rabin, Sharon. At the moment, there are two founders who are physically alive – Perez, president of the state, and Sharon, who lies in a coma.

That generation, and I would argue this notion of founders to sons – the conceit of Amos Elon's book – actually captures a regional challenge. But on the Israeli side, the founders have given way to a younger, very experienced set of politicians. And we've seen Barak, Olmert and now, Benjamin Netanyahu, who, by the way, is only the fourth Israeli prime minister to serve twice in non-consecutive terms. These are men of experience; they are very smart men. And yet, they are men who have stumbled badly in matters of war-making and peacemaking.

And more to the point, they are men who have failed to conceptualize, if there is one available, a strategy to deal with the current dysfunction that exists on the Palestinian side. And any number of challenges have been mounted over the last four or five years, as a consequence of the absence of an Israeli strategy, which I think has weakened Israel's deterrent capacity and handed it a public relations nightmare at almost every turn.

When you marry the disorganized dysfunction on the Palestinian side with the absence of Israeli strategic thinking – and I don't want to suggest, here, that the creation of a strategy for the state of Israel to deal with non-state actors who function in non-state environments – and there are two of them, after all. There's Hamas, functioning in the non-state of Palestine, and there's Hezbollah functioning in the non-state of Lebanon.

Having just come back from three weeks in Beirut, Damascus, Jerusalem and Ramallah, I can tell you that domestic politics prevails. And the question of who is big and who is weak, who is strong and who is powerful, is really very counterintuitive. Hamas has managed, as has Hezbollah, to retain a capacity to block and to retard progress. And they've done it extremely well. They're not 10 feet tall, but they've capitalized on Israeli stumbles, as well as, to some degree, on American stumbles.

My fourth point deals with the issue of external actors, who have only made the situation worse. And I think the key here is understanding another transition that is underway. Arab monopoly over the Palestinian issue seems, to me, to be giving way to other states – non-Arabs – who seem to have found a way to capitalize on the problem of the much-too-promised land and to use it to their advantage. The Iranians have done it, for sure, but most recently, the Turks. I am not an expert on Turkish politics. I am not entirely sure I understand Erdogan's calculations here, but I think they flow from several factors.

One is his conviction that EU accession may well be blocked, or made much more complicated, in the course of the next 10 years. Second, Turkey's own changing role, with respect to NATO. Are the Turks as important as they were when there was a Cold War and East-West tensions were high? And finally, there's the AKP's – Erdogan's own party's – sensibilities. And it seems to me that Erdogan, right now, is interested in a regional role. He can clearly overplay his hand, since he does have a relationship with the United States and he has to be quite – still careful about protecting it.

But this notion, or this transition from the Egyptians, the Saudis, the Jordanians, who, frankly, are suffering from their own dysfunction and have not played the Palestinian card well, positively or negatively, a transition which, now, gives other states the capacity to use it, not very constructively, certainly with respect to American and Israeli interests, and the interests of our Arab friends, is an important new development which I think is only going to make the situation worse.

Finally, let me just comment, briefly, on the Obama administration. I told Colin Powell, when I left government, that I understood that when you're outside, it's a lot easier, and that I wouldn't criticize administrations. Because to be inside is to be faced with imperfect choices; to be outside is to have very little responsibility and be in a position to wax eloquent, and sometimes not so eloquent, on any number of matters. My problem with the Obama administration is not that they can't solve this problem. The real question is whether anyone can solve it, given the realities on the ground.

My problem with the Obama administration is, after 16 months, they have raised expectations without a strategy to manage those expectations. And I find myself in the anomalous position of being extremely supportive of a negotiated solution and yet, wondering, with the respect to the policies of the administration, who's in charge? Crises in the U.S.-Israeli relationship is an occupational reality. Any serious American president and secretary of state who ever did serious peacemaking always fought with Israel.

But the fight was – had a purpose. The fight was driven by a strategy. The fight was consequential. And at the end of the fight, it was a fight in which everybody wins. An American president looks good, whether it's Richard Nixon – disengagement agreements; Jimmy Carter and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty; George H.W. Bush, Madrid, Israel's interests are advanced.

And the interests of the Arabs and the Palestinians are advanced, as well. Fighting with Israel without a strategy and not understand that if, in fact, you do want to get anywhere, you're going to have to find a way to create a relationship with the prime minister of Israel doesn't mean rolling over. It means creating a relationship based on some reciprocity and having a strategy that both can invest in.

You're not going to get very far. And again, I find myself in an anomalous position of having supported an administration and a president who was potentially transformative, who was a thinking man's president, wondering why there is no strategy, or why expectations are raised to

the point where extremely difficult now for this administration to retreat. And this, in the end, is the real danger of the current situation.

Obama put himself on the high wire when it comes to Arab-Israeli peace. He's said things, he's done things, he's made it absolutely clear. And here's a wartime president with a Nobel Peace Prize. That is a very intriguing marriage because the wars that he – (inaudible, audio breaks). So I'll stop here. And I'd be more than happy to – (inaudible) – any questions.

MR. GELMAN: Great. Thank you. People have sent in questions in advance; we'll be asking those. The first one – (inaudible, audio breaks) – article you wrote called “The False Religion of Middle East Peace.” (Inaudible.) In that, you said that the peace process has developed a dogmatic creed with three basic principles: First, the pursuit of a comprehensive peace was a core, if not the core U.S. interest in the region and achieving it offered the only sure way to protect U.S. interests.

Second, peace could be achieved, but only through a serious negotiating process based on trading land for peace. And third, only America could help the Arabs and Israelis bring that peace to fruition. In your article, you basically state that almost every president has sort of drunk that Kool-Aid, basically. And so I would ask you why you feel that you're no longer a believer in these three principles?

MR. MILLER: Well, you know, I didn't renounce one religion in order to embrace another. And I've made this point before. I defer to Groucho Marx here, who is one of America's most pre-eminent philosophers, who basically said, “Who are you going to believe” – in “Duck Soup” – “me or your own eyes?” I mean, look. I see what I see, and to ignore or deny the realities of what I've seen over the past decade, even during my believer days, during more rational moments – each of these three articles of faith contain elements of truth. I'm not abandoning them. I'm arguing that, in religion, they are not nuanced and they are taken to an extreme.

Arab-Israeli peacemaking is not the most important – the core issue that America confronts. There are several others which are at least as important, and may well be more determinative about the fate of American power and influence in this broken, dysfunctional region than grappling with what I call the problem of the much-too-promised land. I'm not saying we should abandon or disengage, but we need clarity and honesty here.

The sources of anger against the West are deep and they are not going to be addressed – if we could do it – and, which brings me to my next question – by somehow finding a comprehensive settlement to the problem of Palestine. It's not that negotiations can't work. I worked for six secretaries of state and we reached some agreement; they can work.

But on this particular negotiation – big enchilada, so to speak – Israel-Palestine, Israel-Syria, Lebanon – the parties are not now willing and/or able to pay the price of what it would take to make negotiations work. And I choose my words very carefully here, even though the article has been hijacked, or used, to support any number of other purposes.

A conflict-ending agreement – and I'll choose my words – I'll be very precise – a conflict-ending agreement in which the four core issues that drive Israelis and Palestinians – and they're borders, security, Jerusalem and refugees – can be resolved, leading a finality of claims in which an Israeli prime minister would stand before the Knesset, or before the Palestinian legislative council – and a Palestinian president would stand before the Knesset, and say the following:

“We don't love you. It may take generations to reconcile. But our conflict with you is over. There's no more irredenta. There are no more claims to be adjudicated. Whatever hopes and dreams we have, we've abandoned.” I find the prospects of that, anytime soon, almost unimaginable. And finally, on the issue of America, we do have a critical role to play. But it isn't the sole role.

Every breakthrough, without exception, occurred first, whether it was Dayan showing up at the State Department in October, '77, announcing to my predecessors that he had been meeting secretly with Sadat's national security advisor, or – which essentially led to Sadat's trip to Jerusalem the next month; whether it was King Hussein negotiating with every Israeli prime minister secretly and conducting most of the negotiations that led to the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty by themselves; whether it was getting a call from the State Department operations center in August saying, you'd better come back to Washington because there's an agreement that Israel and the PLO is going to sign – these agreements, all of them, occurred because pain and gain combined to force Arabs and Israelis to change their calculations.

Only then did America move to do what America can do when the diplomacy is fair, tough and smart. So it's not that we don't have a role to play; it's just simply this: I don't care how transformative this president is. He cannot compensate for the absence of partnership, leadership and urgency, which is lacking in that region, with his own. And that, in essence, is the problem.

My article is a cautionary tale. It says beware because if we go to the well again – as we did 10 years ago next month at Camp David – in an effort, on the high wire, to get an agreement and we do not succeed, or we go when we're not ready, or we go or impel the parties to go when they're not ready and we fail – and we fail again – under these circumstances, with America's influence and prestige in the region much reduced as a consequence of these two ongoing wars, an inability to stop Iran's acquisition of fissile material to make a weapon, the asymmetries of power which allow Hamas and Hezbollah to frustrate the plans of much-broader powers – if we go and fail again, you can hang a “closed for the season” sign on American efforts and on a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That's the essence of what I'm arguing.

MR. GELMAN: Thank you. I'm going to – I have several questions from people. This is from Eric Pastman in New Jersey: “Will President Obama request that Abbas make concessions in their meeting tomorrow? And what would you expect to come out of that meeting?”

MR. MILLER: Will Abbas make concessions?

MR. GELMAN: Yeah.

MR. MILLER: You know, the reality is he comes to Washington at the worst possible time for him, even though he must come, because he comes on the heels – I mean, Abbas is in a box. It truly is very sad because the truth is, he and Fayyad do, in fact, constitute the best, most enlightened Palestinian partners that the state of Israel have ever had. And yet he's caught. He's caught in a box.

He is weakened as a consequence of the flotilla fiasco and his future is tied to Israel and the United States. And in terms of timing, he would argue that he comes to Washington when his two potentially most important allies, Israel and the United States, have rendered his position, domestically, very weak. He used the same argument in the wake of Cast Lead and the Goldstone Report.

So if you're Abbas, what do you want? Well, if, in fact, a mechanism is worked out to relieve the economic restrictions, or ease them – not just in terms of humanitarian aid, but in terms of reconstruction – one of the problems here is it's not just humanitarian assistance. Middle-class Gaza is disappearing. And Palestinians are growing ever-more dependent on Hamas and its own consolidation of power as a consequence of the lack of openness.

But if you want something, you want to be in a position that the Palestinian Authority delivers on whatever easing and absence of restrictions may apply in the post-crisis era. Now, how do you do that? It's extremely tricky. But if I were Mahmoud Abbas, that would be one of the things that I would want for the short term.

But for the long term, I think his request is extremely difficult, and that is he wants forceful American diplomacy. He wants a U.S. set of bridging ideas, a plan, a policy statement. And this is an extremely difficult situation to be in because that, he's not going to get. At least, he's not going to get it yet. It may well be that the proximity talks, which are so oddly named because they're not proximate at all – you've got George Mitchell in between Israeli and Palestinian leaders – may morph into direct negotiations.

But I would argue to you, rightly or wrongly, all roads will probably end with some sort of an American bridging proposal. Abbas wants to be sure that this is where the president is as well. And it gets very, very tricky because in September, two clocks stop ticking. One is the four-month clock on proximity talks, sanctioned by the Arab League and by Abbas. The second clock is the de facto settlements freeze, which the prime minister agreed to, which ticks down, I think, at the end of September.

At that moment, you may well have a crisis in these negotiations. And for the prime minister of Israeli, it seems to me, to continue the freeze, he's going to need one thing. He's going to need the proximity talks to evolve into direct negotiations. Now, is Abbas capable of doing that if there's no progress?

And then there's the Obama administration. If, in fact, it is interested in doing something serious – bridging proposals, policy statement, full-blown plan – tactically, when do you do it?

Do you do it south of the midterms, which, by anybody's calculations, will not go well for the administration – particularly in view of the perception of crises that now haunts the administration? Or do you do it north of the midterms?

That may be a tactical decision, but it will bear consequentially on what happens to the so-called peace process in the fall. So Abbas is in a box and frankly, I'm not sure he manages. But one thing I do know: His relevance and staying power are inextricably linked to what he believes to be his narrative, which is how to end the Israeli occupation through negotiation directly with Israel.

MR. GELMAN: Thank you. There were several questions having to do with Turkey. One was from Ahu Ozyurt, a blogger and journalist from Istanbul. And another was from Gary Zimmers, from Rockville, Maryland. And they want to know if Turkey and Israel are no longer partners in the region. And how big of an impact does that have on the region?

MR. MILLER: Well, I think given the fact that the Turks came out of the box so early, in terms of recognition of Israel – recognition of the state of Israel – and that the Turkish-Israeli relationship has been such a positive relationship for both sides, that I think it's a huge loss. Are we at the point now where we can basically, you know, stick a fork in this relationship and basically say it's done, it's over? Are we close to a formal break in relations?

Is there anything that can be done to mend fences, or is this being driven by a set of internal, AKP, Erdogan calculations? That has very little to do, frankly, with the Palestinian issue. Is it anything other than a device to further Turkey's own ambitions, which are drawing increasingly – for commercial, political and psychological reasons – to the Arab and Muslim East, rather than West?

I mean, I really don't and I wouldn't presume to offer an intelligent answer to that question because I don't think I could. You really do need, since all politics really do begin with – (inaudible, audio breaks) – you really need to ask that question to someone who understands – (inaudible) – the dynamic in the AKP in Turkish politics and how it conceives of its own role. Because I think therein is the answer to the question.

MR. GELMAN: This is from Linda Korrow, who's a – (inaudible, audio breaks) – likely not be able to impose sanctions – (inaudible).

MR. MILLER: Well, I would argue to you, having watched this, that the two-state solution is the least-bad outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the least-bad outcome. And yet, it carries an enormous number of uncertainties in a region that is broken, dysfunctional and whose stability, by the way, will be enhanced, but certainly not – given the extraordinary depth of the problems that confront the Arab world – somehow resolved by the two-state solution.

But at the same time, I think if you close the option down, you thereby remove the one instrument that is designed to manage and contain what is likely to be a perpetual confrontation between Israel and Palestinians, which, I think we would all agree, is not in anybody's interest. It was Mark Twain who said that proximity breeds contempt and children. And the reality is

that's the problem in the Israeli-Palestinian area. It's the proximity problem. It's the inextricable linkage, sometimes in as narrow a space as meters, between Israelis and Palestinians.

And for the Israelis, a tiny state with little margin for error – despite the perception of Israel's status as a superpower – the political and demographic and public-diplomacy problems that flow from this, you know, anomalous situation, where the Middle East's only proven, over time, democratic polity tries to manage a Palestinian problem, is, over time, a strategic challenge, it seems to me.

And so, I would argue that there is no better solution, but this one is going to have to be pursued extremely carefully. In view of developments over the last decade, much more carefully than we ever anticipated in the good, bad old days, in the '80s and '90s, where other problems – Iran, America's involvement in two ongoing unpopular and unwinnable wars, al-Qaida, the fact that we've dodged two bullets, one last Christmas and one in Times Square last month – all of these factors have made the Middle East angrier, nastier and more dysfunctional.

And that dysfunction has to be factored in when you consider as revolutionary a development as a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be. This is not an Rx for abandoning that solution. But I think it's one that argues for great caution and a lot of strategy and planning should you ever get to the point where Israelis and Palestinians are literally on the verge, or well before that, of making the core decisions that would allow such a state to emerge alongside of the state of Israel.

MR. GELMAN: We have time for two final questions. One comes from Joyce Ellington from Houston, Texas: "What conditions does Israel want the Palestinians to meet in order to continue the peace talks?"

MR. MILLER: You know, I think that the government of Israeli would be only too happy, tomorrow, to continue either the proximity talks or to watch them evolve into direct negotiations. And I think that the problem here is not conditions or the process. The problem is whether or not the negotiations will produce.

And this is something that – my view on this is that the conflict-ending solution by which you take the territorial issues and the identity issues – refugees and Jerusalem as identity issues – and try to solve them all, given the gaps that exist and the dysfunction that exist both on the Palestinian side in terms of their political structure and the division that exists between the positions of the current prime minister and Mahmoud Abbas on these issues make for a comprehensive solution – makes it very unlikely.

My own view would be to find an issue – and I think you all know what it is – where the gaps are narrowest – and it is on the issue of the territory. Territory would enable you to get to the settlements question and security. It might even – if you were creative and very artful – allow you to pick off one piece of the Jerusalem issue, the issue of neighborhoods outside of the Holy Basin and the Old City, and maybe even begin to come to some measure of understanding on those.

But, look, let's face it. The farther you go in this process, the more complicated the internal positions of Mahmoud Abbas and Benjamin Netanyahu will become and the greater the responsibility and the focus on our president is going to be. With strong leaders, then we'll encourage and there might be a way forward. But it's going to take every ounce of creativity, courage and power to produce it.

And I think the risks of a premature effort that is not thought through – and again, I'm a product of the second Camp David summit 10 years ago next month. As Bill Clinton told us after the second briefing, guys, trying and failing is better than not trying at all. I was very moved at the time by that. But that is not a substitute for a foreign policy of the most consequential nation on earth. Thinking before acting is.

MR. GELMAN: Thank you. What you said deals with the – when you're talking about the settlements, you're talking about the West Bank. But how do you deal with Hamas and the situation between Fatah and Hamas?

MR. MILLER: If I had the answer to that question, I think I would have already provided it to people who were actually in power to act on it. I don't know the answer to that question because reconciliation, to me, strikes me as a fantasy right now. Reconciliation would work to Abbas's disadvantage right now. And even under normal circumstances, had the flotilla fiasco not occurred, the question is whether reconciliation between Hamas and Abbas is anything more than tactics.

And even if you could do it, yes, it would buy you peace at home but then the question becomes, what does it buy you vis-à-vis the Israelis and the Americans, the two parties that need to be persuaded and convinced? So cooptation isn't going to work either. Hamas is under no urgency to buy off on the quartet's position.

And the notion of a – what other national movements have done throughout history – Vietcong, the FLN – where you have your Night of the Long Knives and one faction who's dominant imposes its will through force if necessary, and can then impose discipline on the other parts of the national movement. That was never done within the Palestinian national movement and it can't be done now.

If you want to blame Arafat for anything, don't blame him for not signing on the dotted line when Barak proposed his very bold, but still deficient proposal. Blame him for letting loose or acquiescing in forces of violence within an already-decentralized, angry and aggrieved Palestinian society because we have not yet recovered from that.

And I'll repeat it again: The Israelis undertake all kinds of behaviors – land confiscation, settlement activity, collective punishment, all of that – but on the Palestinian side, the greatest challenge, threat and dysfunction to a negotiated solution right now is the absence of one gun, one authority, one negotiation. Until you have that, or until you can guarantee that, there is no chance for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

MR. GELMAN: Thank you. Final question: As you know, we've been talking, obviously, about the peace process but what seems to be primarily in the minds of Israelis and the leadership of Israel is not the peace process, but it's a nuclear Iran. What are your expectations for the sanctions coming out of the U.N.?

MR. MILLER: They'll come, but – well, let me start this way. There's only one country that will determine whether Iran crosses the nuclear threshold or not, and that country is Iran. And as far as I'm concerned, the Iranians may be interested in virtual weapon – that is to say, developing a breakout capacity which would enable them to develop enough fissile material, develop a weaponization program and marry it to a delivery system.

But Iran believes itself to be an entitled and insecure country. That is the worst conceivable combination. North Korea wanted a weapon; they got one. The Indians wanted a weapon; they got one. The Pakistanis wanted a weapon; they got one. The Israelis, long before any of them, wanted to develop a nuclear stockpile; they got one.

Diplomacy will not work because at the moment, the Iranians don't want it. In fact, they use the United States as an agent of mobilization to try to maintain their control. Sanctions will not prove crippling or sustainable enough to make them yield. That leaves drift, deterioration and the prospects – prospects; I didn't say certainty – prospects of a military confrontation.

And by the way, I wouldn't rule out – or to use that famous government expression, take this option off the table, either, when it comes to the United States. This is not a happy situation, to say the least. I don't like the word "game-changer," but if you want to talk about the transformative points of departure, Iran's acquisition of the capacity to produce weapons that they'd actually be a position to produce has the transformative impact on power-balance, on the question of who is big and who is small and the state of American interests in this region.

And without internal change, as all nuclear powers are not created equal – the North Koreans are not analogous to the French; Iranians are not analogous to the Israelis – that problem, it will change the dynamic in this region in a way few other events have been capable of changing it.

MR. GELMAN: Thank you very much, Aaron. That was very informative. I hope that everyone appreciated the time that Aaron has put in to present to us. And I want to, again, thank you for taking the time in joining us, and thanking all our guests who participated in today's briefing.

If you want more information about Israel's security threats, please be sure to visit [www.theisraelproject.org](http://www.theisraelproject.org). As always, if there is anything that The Israel Project can do to help you get the facts or sources if you cover Israel, please do not hesitate to contact us. Once again, thanks to Aaron Miller.

MR. MILLER: Take care, bye-bye.

(END)