

**National Institute for Deterrence Studies & Peter Huessy Seminar**

**Nuclear Crossroads: Iran, Deterrence, and the Future of Nonproliferation with Dr.  
Chris Ford**

August 29, 2025, 10:00-11:00 AM (Eastern)

---

**Webinar Transcript**

---

---

**How to cite:**

Ford, Chris. *Nuclear Crossroads: Iran, Deterrence, and the Future of Nonproliferation*. Huessy Seminar, National Institute for Deterrence Studies, August 29, 2025. Video, 59:07. <https://youtu.be/42iPOE1yeXA>.

**Abstract**

In this Huessy Seminar hosted by Peter Huessy of the National Institute for Deterrence Studies (NIDS), Dr. Chris Ford—former Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation—explores the evolving nuclear threat posed by Iran and the strategic implications for global nonproliferation efforts. Drawing on two decades of experience, Dr. Ford outlines Iran’s long-standing ambitions for nuclear weaponization, recent revelations confirming those intentions, and the significance of European nations invoking snapback sanctions under UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

The seminar highlights recent Israeli and U.S. military strikes on Iranian nuclear infrastructure, assessing their impact on Iran’s capabilities and the diplomatic window they may have opened. Dr. Ford proposes a novel “double block” framework for a new UN resolution that balances sanctions enforcement with a pathway to negotiated resolution. He emphasizes the urgency of multilateral diplomacy and the need for robust verification mechanisms, while cautioning against ideological narratives that could undermine deterrence.

This session offers a critical analysis of Iran’s nuclear trajectory, the role of deterrence, and the prospects for a durable nonproliferation strategy in a rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape.

---

**Executive Summary**

The National Institute for Deterrence Studies (NIDS) hosted Dr. Chris Ford, former Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation, to examine the evolving nuclear threat posed by Iran and its implications for global nonproliferation and deterrence strategy. Drawing on two decades of experience, Dr. Ford provided a comprehensive overview of Iran’s nuclear ambitions, recent military developments, and diplomatic opportunities.

Key highlights included:

- **Iran’s Nuclear Intentions:** Dr. Ford reaffirmed longstanding concerns about Iran’s covert weaponization efforts, citing recent revelations from Iranian officials and extensive documentation obtained by Israeli intelligence.
- **Snapback Sanctions:** The seminar emphasized the significance of Britain, France, and Germany invoking snapback sanctions under UN Security Council Resolution 2231, restoring mandatory international sanctions and increasing pressure on Tehran.
- **Military Strikes and Strategic Impact:** Recent Israeli and U.S. strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities have degraded Iran’s capabilities, potentially opening a diplomatic window for negotiations while demonstrating a credible deterrent posture.
- **Diplomatic Path Forward:** Dr. Ford proposed a “double block” mechanism for a new UN resolution that would allow for sanctions relief contingent on Iranian compliance, while ensuring the ability to reimpose sanctions if Iran violates terms.
- **Verification and Compliance:** The seminar stressed the need for robust monitoring mechanisms beyond the Additional Protocol, including provisions to inspect weaponization-related activities.
- **Strategic Outlook:** Despite ideological challenges within Iran’s leadership, Dr. Ford expressed cautious optimism that a negotiated solution is possible, especially with coordinated U.S.-European diplomacy and sustained pressure.

This seminar provided timely insights into the intersection of deterrence, diplomacy, and nonproliferation, reinforcing the importance of strategic clarity and international cooperation in addressing Iran’s nuclear challenge.

---

## Unabridged Transcript

*(Note: there will invariably be some word errors in the following transcript.)*

00:00:05;16 - 00:00:32;00

Kimberly Cherington

Good morning. I'm Kimberly Cherington, and on behalf of the National Institute for Deterrence Studies, or NIDS, I want to welcome you to today's seminar, *Iran, Deterrence and the Future of Nonproliferation*. And a special welcome to our featured guest, Dr. Christopher Ford. Next up on September 19th, will be joined by Doctor Matt Kroenig as he details the nuclear priorities for the Trump administration.

00:00:32;02 - 00:00:54;03

Kimberly Cherington

We welcome you to go to Thinkdeterrence.com on the events page to learn more and register you and your colleagues for all of our upcoming events. During today's presentation, we encourage you to submit your questions in the chat or the Q&A at the top of the screen at any time. We will address these during our Q&A portion of the talk.

00:00:54;06 - 00:01:10;25

Kimberly Cherington

Now, it's my pleasure to introduce our host for today's seminar, Mr. Peter Huessy, President and Senior Director of Strategic Deterrence Studies at Geo Strategic Analysis and a senior fellow here at NIDS. Peter, over to you.

00;01;11;16 - 00;01;36;19

Peter Huessy

Well, thank you very much, Kimberly. I want to welcome everybody to this and our next seminar on nuclear deterrence and modernization. Arms control, proliferation and missile defense issues. We're honored today to have Chris Ford, who is a lawyer and a government official, and he's served from January 2018 and January 2021 as assistant secretary of state for International Security and Nonproliferation.

00;01;36;22 - 00;02;16;22

Peter Huessy

He was unanimously concerned, confirmed by the United States Senate for that position. And then Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delegated him as the undersecretary of state for arms control, international security until January 8th, 2021, and for that as Assistant Secretary of State. Mr. Ford served in the first Trump administration as Special assistant to the President and senior director for weapons of Mass Destruction and Counter Proliferation on the United States National Security Council, and he was a senior US State Department official in the George Bush administration, working again on issues of nuclear proliferation, ambition, tool verification and compliance policy.

00;02;16;22 - 00;02;38;09

Peter Huessy

And previously, I think I first met Chris when he was a Senate staffer. He also was with the Hudson Institute. Currently, he is a professor at Missouri State University and their extraordinary program on defense and national security issues. He's also affiliated with the American Foreign Policy Council. Chris, I want to welcome you on behalf of the National Institute of Deterrence Studies.

00;02;38;11 - 00;02;46;21

Peter Huessy

We always find great value in what you have to tell us. And so over to you, sir, and welcome to our program.

00;02;47;02 - 00;03;09;13

Chris Ford

Well, it's a pleasure to be here. Thank you for having me, Peter. And as always, it's great to talk to you guys. I've been I mean, you know, as going back quite a few years now, I've been struggling professionally since, gosh, the early aughts, I suppose, with the threats that Iran's nuclear program presents and Tehran's efforts to position itself for nuclear weaponization.

00;03;09;13 - 00;03;27;26

Chris Ford

So, I mean, in some sense, this is, you know, it's been a periodic preoccupation of mine ever since I first joined the Department of State in 2003. So that was itself just a few months after the world first knew. I mean, there were people who knew about this before, but the world first knew about Iran's, ambitions.

00;03;27;26 - 00;03;56;15

Chris Ford

When news broke that Iran had been secretly building a uranium facility enrichment facility at Natanz back in August of 2002. So, you know, in terms of the public face of this, I've been struggling with this for the, you know, probably the better part of my professional career. So, I guess I should be pleased that

3

after watching this issue for 20 years or however long it may be, that, you know, Iran still hasn't got a weapon in hand, but this does not feel like a success story yet.

00;03;56;15 - 00;04;22;27

Chris Ford

Right? So, we're at a very critical threshold point. And that's a long-winded way of saying you've picked a great topic to talk about today, and this is a really important time for talking about it. I mean, naturally, I can only offer my personal opinions. That's how these things work. And these will not necessarily reflect those of anybody else, but I am pleased to be able to offer some reflections on the Iranian crisis and what chance there may still be for a good resolution.

00;04;23;03 - 00;04;58;13

Chris Ford

And it is, I think, especially good week. I mean, I don't think you find it this way necessarily, but an especially good week to be discussing this topic, Peter, because it's been a really eventful week. I mean, one more minor thing, as you've obviously been following in the press, the former deputy speaker of the Iranian Majlis, their parliament, Ali Matahari, has, it's been reported this week to have, admitted that Iran actually did intend to build nuclear weapons, as he put it in a 2022 video that's apparently only now surfaced for reasons I don't fully understand.

00;04;58;16 - 00;05;38;19

Chris Ford

As he put it, quote. Our real goal was to build a bomb. No point denying it. So, I mean, let's be fair. In one sense, that's not news, right? For anyone who has been paying the slightest bit of attention since 2002 is pretty much known that, as the International Atomic Energy Agency, has detailed for example, there's lots of information out there now making it very clear, for years now that the, that this was the case and the Israelis managed to smuggle out of Iran something on the order of 55,000 pages of documentation and a similar number of regional files on CD's, including videos, that provide remarkable detail into

00;05;38;19 - 00;05;59;11

Chris Ford

Iran's nuclear weapons work up there. Around 2003, the IAEA also detailed how some of this work in dribs and drabs actually continued for some time thereafter. And it's also been reported that Iran has kept its weaponization team working together on relevant topics that can easily be leveraged back into weaponization whenever the regime wants to do so.

00;05;59;11 - 00;06;27;15

Chris Ford

So, in that sense, Marty Harris statement was not news at all. It was basically telling everyone that the scope of this guy is blue, and the grass is green. Right. But it's interesting nonetheless. Despite its openness, because it serves to highlight why this is also important. But the really big news, this week, and I, you know, had no idea we will be talking about this people today, but it's my pleasure to have it having occurred.

00;06;27;18 - 00;06;45;27

Chris Ford

In just the last few days, the news is that Britain, France and Germany have jointly informed, the UN Security Council that they believe that Iran is in significant violation of the 2015 JCPOA. Now, you might say, well, of course, Chris, that's also avoiding out that this guy is blue and the grass is green,

4

which is true.

00;06;45;29 - 00;07;15;09

Chris Ford

But the significance of this in terms of Security Council and international law is that this re invocation or this, this invocation of Iran violations here will trigger, what's called snapback sanctions under U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231, thereby restoring full mandatory sanctions on Iran under international law, including the old arms embargo, restrictions on ballistic missile production, asset freezes and a visa that, that doesn't make all countries unnecessarily comply with this.

00;07;15;09 - 00;07;43;09

Chris Ford

Of course, that's going to be a challenge for us to work. But in terms of international law, countries will be obliged to, and any law-abiding country will hopefully follow those rules. And that will amount to a very significant increase in pressure on Iran, I think. And that's great. And that's extremely important. And something that I've been urging the Europeans to do that is to say re invoking snapback, revoking sanctions through snapback, I should say, I've been urging that for a long time.

00;07;43;14 - 00;08;10;09

Chris Ford

And I would argue it's a critical step that they've now done this. And if we are smart and clever and actually take the time and effort to engage in real diplomacy, topic, I think there really is a chance now, to make a negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear problem. Possible. So kudos to you, Peter, for, I mean, having the brilliance of timing your, your, your webinar here today with the, with the European diplomats.

00;08;10;09 - 00;08;22;10

Chris Ford

Right. So let me take the chance in the wake of that, to outline how I think such an approach to a diplomatic solution might actually work. Now that we've got snap back in, starting to be in motion.

00;08;23;17 - 00;08;45;24

Chris Ford

Yeah. If anybody's interested in the sort of in the who shot John of how we got here, negotiations wise and all these problems that we've been struggling with since, you know, at least since Natanz first became public knowledge in August of 2002. I'd encourage folks to turn to a paper that I wrote, the center for Global Security Research at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, earlier this year.

00;08;45;26 - 00;09;07;10

Chris Ford

It can be found through their website. So I was among I was urging an approach to which I will be drawing from today urging approach to diplomatic solution in that paper, but also giving something of a condensed history of the negotiations and the struggles we've had with Iran during the course of all of the diplomatic back and forth at the IAEA and elsewhere.

00;09;07;12 - 00;09;29;10

Chris Ford

Since 2002. So, if your viewers are interested in a sort of a brief history of that, how we got their stuff, I would refer them to that paper. But for today, I want to walk us through a little bit about where we are

right now on the substance, because I think that helps us understand what the possibilities are potentially, for some kind of a good, negotiated outcome.

00;09;29;13 - 00;10;01;05

Chris Ford

Because I think there have been some really important developments in addition to snapback. Since my CXC paper came out in February. So, most of all, of course, but nuclear strikes, right? I mean, the news back in June, of course, was that Israel began a series of strikes upon Iran's nuclear program. Following up on its very successful campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon, which had strategic significance to in addition to being a bloody good thing on its own terms.

00;10;01;08 - 00;10;25;25

Chris Ford

It had strategic steps because it essentially that campaign against Hezbollah essentially removed the deterrent factor that people long assumed that test. Hezbollah's terrorist rocket, you know, barrages from southern Lebanon would, would, present to the Israelis and had long been assumed that the threat of Hezbollah jumping in with a ring of fire on northern Israel would prevent direct Israeli moves against, against Iran.

00;10;25;28 - 00;10;56;03

Chris Ford

But the campaign against Hezbollah basically took that off the table, freeing up the Israelis to indeed launch strikes upon Iran's nuclear program. And then President Trump added American firepower to the mix, with a single strike by, B-2 bombers that dropped a fistful of these enormous bunker busting GBU 57 munitions onto the, a couple of hardened underground nuclear facilities at Fordo and Natanz, and also cruise missile strikes on surface targets at, that is for hot.

00;10;56;06 - 00;11;23;13

Chris Ford

So, between the Israelis and the Americans, that's a huge development here as well. Now, as we know, as anyone who's been following the papers at the time knew, there's been a lot of debate about how successful those, American strikes in particular, were in destroying things that the Israelis had lacked. The, you know, the capacity, the capability to damage, President Trump immediately claimed the targets for the Natanz underground had been completely and totally obliterated.

00;11;23;15 - 00;11;45;26

Chris Ford

And in response to that, some critics have claimed that our strikes were largely ineffective. Now is this hard to tell from the outside, but as best one can, it I would guess that the truth is somewhere in the middle with the attack apparently having been successful and doing a great deal of damage and setting back Iran's progress quite significantly, but certainly not erasing Iran's program from the face of the Earth, either.

00;11;45;26 - 00;12;09;16

Chris Ford

So, the truth is sort of in the middle, I suppose. And I have no doubt that, observers will be armchair quarterbacking the June 2025 airstrikes for many years, but I feel pretty comfortable in my conclusion that even if you think these rallies move too fast, too quickly, too precipitously against Iran's nuclear program, the US, that's really was right to drop those protesters when President Trump chose to do so.

6

00;12;09;18 - 00;12;32;27

Chris Ford

When I when I ran the WMD and Counter Proliferation Directorate at the NSC in 2017, I distinctly recall speculating about just such a scenario to National Security Advisor Air Master, having a conversation about possible sort of Iran, you know, pathway futures. And, and I remember advising him pretty clearly that, you know, maybe can start this, but it would need to be us or that would have to finish it.

00;12;32;29 - 00;12;59;24

Chris Ford

And I still think that's right. The attacks certainly provoked and enraged Iran and of course, that's risky. You know, what it chooses to do in the aftermath of those attacks is it really open question? Of course. But once the line had been crossed, once the Israelis started the campaign against the Iranian nuclear program, I would much prefer that the resulting, you know, angry Iran have a small and bashed up nuclear capability than a large and intact one.

00;12;59;24 - 00;13;21;24

Chris Ford

Right. So, you could argue that Israel jumped the gun, perhaps. But once the fight was on, President Trump absolutely did the right thing to try to destroy the most viable remaining Iranian nuclear capabilities. And I very much hope the resulting damage is indeed great, which will critically buy us a bit more time in which to try to work, to try to work on a better and a more enduring solution.

00;13;21;24 - 00;13;42;12

Chris Ford

So, where do these attacks leave us? I do think they have great significance diplomatically. Now, in fairness, on the negative side, Iran still clearly does have a technical pathway still ahead of it for nuclear weaponization. And in principle, Iran certainly can reconstitute what it has lost. It hasn't lost the knowledge of how to do it.

00;13;42;12 - 00;14;04;09

Chris Ford

It has just had some things get smashed. And potentially it may be spurred by these hostilities to try even harder and sprint even faster, although to my knowledge, there's no sign of that yet, which is encouraging. It also sounds like this is still on the pessimistic side of the ledger. It also sounds like we may have not hit Iran's stockpile of uranium.

00;14;04;12 - 00;14;25;08

Speaker 3

A lot of that was already ready at a level of 60% pure U-235. Just a quick bump away from, really, you know, proper weapons grade levels. Although it's also true, you might be able to make a pretty crude weapon with that material, even as it is. Now, this stockpile of uranium could easily become the feedstock for a clandestine enrichment sprint somewhere.

00;14;25;09 - 00;14;47;21

Chris Ford

If Iran still has facilities of, you know, centrifuge cascades squirreled away someplace. And, and that is a concern. But on the positive side, and this is really important, the positive side, the US attacks do appear to have set back, the Iranian program quite a bit. And as I said before, this buys us some time that we

7

previously didn't have.

00;14;47;24 - 00;15;13;09

Chris Ford

And it may be also that the US strikes have very constructively disabused the clerical regime in Iran of any assumptions that it may be made that neither the Americans nor the Israelis would, at the end of the day, really prove willing to use military force to preclude weaponization. They might have thought that. And indeed, you know, successive U.S administrations may have trained them to think that, but clearly that's not true right now.

00;15;13;11 - 00;15;36;27

Chris Ford

And that's really one thing too, that may be, in fact, very catalytic, useful for, for negotiations. So, the challenge, of course, is, you know, what do we, you know, what can we do and what will we do with any time that these strikes have now brought us? That's the real question. But if we want a good negotiated solution, it is time to get going on that diplomacy.

00;15;36;27 - 00;15;57;16

Chris Ford

Right. Now, it's not quite as bad as I had feared, precisely because the Europeans have invoked snapback. And that's why that's so important. One of the biggest conceptual challenges here for some time now is that we have been really very much up against a, a countdown clock, because the resolution 2231 expires in October.

00;15;57;18 - 00;16;20;20

Chris Ford

And it was that which held open even the option of restarting sanctions, as is, is now in motion. Right. So, the prospect of that expiring was a real, real shadow looming over this question. And that's why the European announcement this week is so critical. So, let me talk a little bit for those who aren't familiar with the snapback mechanism, because I do think something like it will be important also to a solution here.

00;16;20;26 - 00;16;44;21

Chris Ford

Whatever you think of the ill-fated JCPOA that President Obama's team negotiated and out of which President Trump pulled us in May of 2018. Hey, by the way, for the record, as you know, the Europeans criticize the JCPOA a plenty. Speaking about it publicly, you know, again and again, you can. Right. But whatever you think of the JCPOA as a deal, you have to admit there was some pretty clever drafting that went into formulation of resolution.

00;16;44;21 - 00;17;09;22

Chris Ford

2231. I'm not aware of any precedent for that. I thought it was quite interesting. Clever. I won't bore you guys with the mechanism of how it works. Precisely. But the basic idea is that while resolution 2231 did lift UN sanctions on Iran in 2015 as part of the JCPOA, it preserved the unilateral right of any JCPOA partner treaty to invoke, now have to impose all such sanctions at any point.

00;17;09;22 - 00;17;31;08

Chris Ford

If they thought that Iran was cheating. Right. And if you guys were following the news, you will remember that we actually tried to do this. We did. In fact, I should be clear, we did. We did invoke snapback in 2020 during the first Trump administration. This, however, of course, produced lots of debate about whether we were still entitled to do so.

00;17;31;10 - 00;17;50;20

Chris Ford

Between by that point already declared ourselves to be out of the JCPOA. Now, think as a lawyer, I think we were right, since those who count as parties to the JCPOA for purposes of being entitled to invoke snapback, you know, those parties who can invoke snapback are expressly defined in the text of resolution 2231, and that text has never been modified.

00;17;50;20 - 00;18;11;20

Chris Ford

So even though we stopped participating, the US was still legally entitled to trigger the re-imposition of sanctions for so long as 2231 remained on the books, which, of course it does. At least you talked about it, but this was controversial. And as a result of that controversy, most countries just ignored us. Secretary of State Pompeo invoked snapback, I think, quite properly.

00;18;11;20 - 00;18;33;19

Chris Ford

And the world, well, sort of beyond, but that was the end. This is now whatever you think of that kerfuffle, in the legal issue, you know, five years ago, I guess, invoking snapback remained all the while unquestioned, seemed to be available to Britain, to France and to Germany or, you know, at least until October, when the resolution is going to expire.

00;18;33;21 - 00;18;55;22

Chris Ford

It evaporates. The resolution dies on October 18th. Right. Which is ten years after what the JCPOA had no new as adoption day of October 18th, 2015. So, the option of using snapback would have gone away, but it was still available to the Brits, the French and the Germans. And that's why their announcement this week is really, really important because now they've set that in motion.

00;18;55;25 - 00;19;17;11

Chris Ford

Time was getting very short before that option disappeared. But now, or, by the way, it was also quite clear that after the 18th of October, when resolution 2231 expired, the only way to put sanctions back on Iran would have been the affirmative step of, of the Security Council, you know, passing new sanctions terms.

00;19;17;13 - 00;19;33;26

Chris Ford

And there's going to be no way to do that, of course, because the Russians and maybe the Chinese would surely veto it. Right. So, this was the one shot that we had to put full U.N. sanctions pressure back on the Iranians. And, if we wanted to put in place that kind of incentive structure to ground a negotiated settlement.

00;19;33;26 - 00;19;54;17

Chris Ford

Right. You know, that's a much better type of answer in terms of, of trying to, to reach a solution than just assuming that we have no choice after October 18th to, you know, do some kind of what the Israelis, they call it, mowing the grass periodically, going back and striking again, to try to keep ahead of efforts secret reconstitution.

00;19;54;19 - 00;20;12;00

Chris Ford

You know, if you wanted to avoid having to be in that world, putting the UN sanctions pressures back on and giving Iran the requirement then of having to negotiate their way out from under them. That was absolutely essential, I think, to a diplomatic solution. And that is why there's, this European invocation of snapback is so critical.

00;20;12;02 - 00;20;35;10

Chris Ford

But that having occurred, now it's time for us to get to the it, we need to work together with our European friends, on a package that both gets Iran to the table and gets Tehran to agree to a meaningful, enduring resolution that it isn't just another round of JCPOA style diplomatic campaigning that merely postpones nuclear weapons ambitions in Iran for a bit longer.

00;20;35;10 - 00;20;54;01

Chris Ford

So how do we do that? Right. And that's what I'd like to sort of suggest here. How do you imagine a plan that capitalizes on this? On Iran's recent setbacks and averages, the snapping back of sanctions that is now about to occur? Let me offer some thoughts. So first of all.

00;20;54;04 - 00;21;20;07

Chris Ford

This strikes of this summer against Iran's program and also more broadly against Iran and the Israeli campaigning of Hezbollah, all these things together of the recent sort of military hard power aspect of Iran crisis. Those make it challenging to get around the table because it, you know, presumably pisses them off. But I think in some ways it is very positive things will in fact make the negotiating of a deal somewhat easier to match.

00;21;20;10 - 00;21;42;01

Chris Ford

Which might sound counterintuitive but let me explain what I mean. When Mike Pompeo was secretary of state, spoke at the Heritage Foundation in May of 2018, to outline the first Trump administration's criteria for what the good deal with Iran needed to look like. He voiced a lot of demands. Quite a few demands. In there was.

00;21;42;03 - 00;22;16;24

Chris Ford

Yeah, it'll be a fairly maximalist laundry list, but he included things actually, like Iran had withdrawn its forces from Syria, having to rein in Hezbollah, the threats that it presents to the region and to Israel, and having to cease developing nuclear capable militias. Now, these kinds of demands for some time in the hands of a deal with the Iranians seem pretty slim because it was surely clearly going to be really hard to get Iran to abandon all those things, in addition to agreeing to the kind of no fissile material production requirements that, that were also on this list, visit a rocket for a nuclear deal.

00;22;16;24 - 00;22;37;14

Chris Ford

Right. So, all of this was asking great deal of Iran and on the basis even of the purely nuclear issues in question, you know, by that point, Iran had been, you know, already had a, you know, relatively sizable material production program. And in the years since then, it's only gotten bigger. I mean, Iran has been steadily building up, it's its capacities there.

00;22;37;14 - 00;22;59;12

Chris Ford

The stockpile of uranium has been bigger. And so, you know, that difficulty, the diplomatic difficulty of asking them to, you know, get rid of all of that. Right. You need to get rid of this and this and this and this. These are all increasingly big things, right? A bigger missile program, a bigger nuclear program. So over time, since then, it has gotten harder and harder to imagine Iran giving up all of those things as part of the deal.

00;22;59;12 - 00;23;14;10

Chris Ford

Just because, you know what? What do they call the endowment effect in cognitive psychology? Right. It's hard to get you to give up things that they already possess. And the more they possess, the harder it is to ask them to get it up. And for that reason, for a while I was getting really pessimistic about negotiating a deal.

00;23;14;10 - 00;23;49;28

Chris Ford

Had you asked me several months ago, I would have said that the odds of a negotiated resolution were extremely low. Indeed. With a successful negotiation needing to achieve so much, I was starting to feel that the better odds by far, would be on either Iranian weaponization or on, well, war or perhaps both. Right. So that's why, despite the tensions that, you know, certainly have been raised by the strikes against Iran, that the Israelis and then we did, despite all those tensions, the last few months may actually have made things more slightly more hopeful from a negotiator's perspective.

00;23;49;28 - 00;24;14;18

Chris Ford

Right. Simply put, you know, the Hezbollah has been quite effectively smashed by the Israeli attacks and the Assad regime in Syria and Iran's advisors have been expelled. And Iran's missile program has also been dealt a significant, you know, series of targeted reversals by Israeli airpower. Even while showing itself not to be nearly as effective in pummeling states in the region as the Iranians surely hoped.

00;24;14;20 - 00;24;32;00

Chris Ford

So, you know, those are both good things on their own terms. They also mean that Iran now has less to do, if it is to meet a reasonable set of criteria for, for, you know, regional good to be either. And Iran also has to give up fewer concrete capabilities now, not just in those areas.

00;24;32;03 - 00;24;54;25

Chris Ford

You know, for the reason that it's already deprived of them. Right? So, it's been pretty deprived. So you don't have to negotiate away quite so much. But it's also true in the nuclear context. Right. So, you know, in a sense, the primary objective for the non-nuclear portions of a negotiated deal had been reduced from

11

persuading Iran to dismantle most of its capabilities for regional destabilization, to simply persuading Iran to reconstitute them.

00;24;54;28 - 00;25;16;09

Chris Ford

And that's a different game. I think it was a little easier game. Not necessarily possible and certainly not guaranteed, but much less challenging thing to be undertaking. And the same is true with the nuclear right, nuclear peace, thanks to especially President Trump's strikes against the underground facilities, Iran now also has a smaller nuclear program than it would have to dismantle under a deal.

00;25;16;09 - 00;25;41;04

Chris Ford

So, you know, a range of circumstances have coincided to make that endowment effect much less of an obstacle to a successful negotiation, I would think, than before. And as I also suggested earlier, Iran can no longer assume that we in the U.S. are too timorous to take action against the nuclear program. Right. So there really is a plan B from our perspective in Iran and C to know that I'm willing to do that.

00;25;41;06 - 00;26;06;11

Chris Ford

And they also can't assume anymore that these really are two deterred by the prospect of hellfire from southern Lebanon, from Hezbollah, to, to, you know, to be willing to attack Iran. So both of those assumptions, if indeed they were assumptions about Iran beforehand, have been shown to be quite false. So, in a sense, this is a weird kind of perfect storm that might perhaps make a negotiated solution possible.

00;26;06;14 - 00;26;33;27

Chris Ford

We've now and we now see an Iran that has both, you know, less to do than it would have had to do before for the successful conclusion of a deal and a great deal more reason to do it. And that reason now includes snapback sanctions. You know, now, rather than facing the prospect of everything going, you know, the option of sanctions going away, Tehran now faces the prospect of having to negotiate its way out of a sanctions regime in order to avoid economic catastrophe.

00;26;34;00 - 00;27;00;06

Chris Ford

And that is a really important thing, and very, very promising. So, what would a deal look like? All right, well, first element has occurred, right? Got to get snapback going. And that's critical. But the point, of course, isn't just to punish Iran with sanctions. The point is to get to a solution, hopefully. So, I would argue that we now need to accompany this re-imposition of sanctions with some pretty sophisticated multilateral diplomacy.

00;27;00;09 - 00;27;24;12

Chris Ford

How do we do that? What does it look like? I would like to suggest a new U.N. Security Council resolution on Iran sanctions. That includes what you might call a double block mechanism. This is kind of like a, you know, two faced snapback on steroids. If you will. And that phrase probably needs some explaining. So I would envision a new answer, a new U.N. Security Council resolution, that establishes those two things primarily.

00;27;24;17 - 00;27;44;27

Chris Ford

First of all, it has to establish a pathway for once again lifting sanctions on Iran. I know it's not I don't want that to sound pretty mature, and I'm not suggesting we do that yet. But by the time this resolution is enacted, sanctions will already have snap back on Iran thanks to the Europeans move this week. But a new resolution has to have a mechanism to take those off again if and when they agree to a proper deal.

00;27;44;29 - 00;28;15;18

Chris Ford

Right. So it has to provide Iran a pathway out of the problems that have now been promised for Tehran by European invoked invocation of snapback. And that's great. So that's the first piece. But I talked to this is a, you know, a double block, right. So in addition to having something in place, you would if for the same reason that you've had snapback in 2021, in the first place, you would also have to have another sort of snapback mechanism, the second block, if you will.

00;28;15;21 - 00;28;31;04

Chris Ford

I'm sorry, the first block would be, allowing something like snapback to be in this new resolution so that were we to release sanctions on Iran as part of a deal, we could still reimpose them without being subject to a Russian or Chinese veto. Right. So we do need to use a snapback provision again in this resolution.

00;28;31;04 - 00;28;53;24

Chris Ford

So that's the first block. So if and when the sanctions are lifted, they remain subject to a new reimposition with the new snapback. But I use the phrase double block and I should explain what the second block is, because I just talked the first month so far. The second block would arrive from the fact that we would not want to make this new resolution exclusively a tool with which to implement a successful deal.

00;28;53;26 - 00;29;10;19

Chris Ford

You know, by lifting sanctions that are now stopping back and with which to incentivize Iranian compliance by holding out the possibility of reimposition, that's critical. Yes, but we would also want to make the position work as a tool to help us reach an agreement in the first place. Right. So, this is something that would be set in place before a deal to help make a deal possible.

00;29;10;25 - 00;29;35;04

Chris Ford

And that's where I envision this sort of second block. And that would apply to the new resolution's lifting of sanctions in the first place. That is to say, the sanctions on Iran that are now resuming pursuant to European invocation of snapback would, under the new resolution that I envision automatically be lifted unless one or more of the specified parties is presumably, you know, the same roster of folks, including the United States, unless one of those parties objected.

00;29;35;04 - 00;29;55;26

Chris Ford

Right. So only if all of those countries agreed upon putting sanctions would such a lifting occur. So that gives us the second protection here. So, unless a good, negotiated solution were in hand, there would be no lifting of sanctions again. And unless Iran kept to the deal, Iran sanctions could easily be put back on again.

00;29;55;26 - 00;30;13;10

Chris Ford

Right. So that's the double block, right? So, it faces in both directions. And that would be the assurances, I think diplomatically, we would need to keep on the table the sanctions pressures on Iran that I think are essential to it. Reaching a deal now with the Chinese and Russians agree to this? Well, ordinarily, no. Right.

00;30;13;10 - 00;30;33;24

Chris Ford

They're very Iran protective these days. They're much more on the appropriate ration than the nonproliferation mode. But that's why the European indication of snapback this week is so critical, too, because now, with that back in motion, the default setting of the Security Council is on indefinite continuation of Iran sanctions in the less affirmative steps are taken to the contrary.

00;30;33;27 - 00;30;55;11

Chris Ford

And as a permanent member of the council, we could easily or the French or the British, right, could easily veto any proposal that offered Iran sanctions relief. Right. So that's why the... is so critical to get that in place, so that Iran both has a pathway to get out of sanctions if it behaves properly, and also knows that if it doesn't behave properly, it will, you know, those sanctions will never be lifted again.

00;30;55;11 - 00;31;30;08

Chris Ford

Or if it cheats on a deal, those sanctions will immediately come back as indeed they are now. So that double block may sound a little complicated, but I think it is eminently adaptable. And to some degree, the intellectual work's already been done by the snapback drafters, whoever they were back in 2015. So I would argue that this is the time to articulate such a plan openly and clearly, and for U.S. officials to work really closely with their French, British and German counterparts now that they've got snapback in motion, we need to work with them to put together a new Security Council resolution along the lines of what I'm proposing and that would show

00;31;30;08 - 00;31;55;26

Chris Ford

that Iran show to the Iranians that we really do and envision a path forward that allow them sanctions relief, but that we are very serious about ensuring that they won't. They will face sanctions indefinitely until they reach something good, and that were they to cheat, they will surely face sanctions once again. So, you know, I think that's the yeah, in some sense that's the diplomatic package that in fact could perhaps facilitate negotiations.

00;31;55;26 - 00;32;16;08

Chris Ford

And, and now that snapback is in motion, even the Russians and the Chinese, I think, might find that kind of a package preferable to just the indefinite continuation of resumed 22, 31 sanctions for the indefinite future on Iran. So, I think this is kind of potentially, you know, a recipe that might work. I don't guarantee success.

00;32;16;08 - 00;32;39;15

Chris Ford

But, you know, if we build that kind of institutional substructure for a deal, we've got a lot of fighting chance of getting the Iranians to the table. And if we're able to, you know, do this the diplomacy deftly and with, you know, full willingness to turn to skilled subject matter experts to make sure that the technical details of any such deal we do negotiate are worked out properly.

00:32:39;17 - 00:33:03;27

Chris Ford

I really think we've got a fighting chance for success here. And that's why, despite all the weirdness of the last few months, I remain cautiously optimistic about the way forward and, and optimistic too, that if we do this, we may also have a fighting chance to do a lot of healing for a nonproliferation regime globally that has, well, let's just put it diplomatically, that rather needs a win right now after a period of, some real challenges.

00:33:03;27 - 00:33:15;25

Chris Ford

So cautious optimism from forward. And I'd love to talk about this with you, Peter, and with your, the other participants here today. So, thanks for having me. And it's, I'm looking forward to our, to our discussions.

00:33:15;27 - 00:33:55;00

Peter Huessy

Thank you. Thank you, Chris, very much. Let me. I'm... I put a series of questions in the chat box, which I'd like to go over with you. And this is going to repeat a little bit of what you said, but there are two key questions. What was the major change in how this administration approached Iran in the NPT versus previous and second, what was the key understanding that the Trump administration adopted that was critical to moving us forward beyond just, well, we have the JCPOA, and they're not abiding by it.

00:33:55;02 - 00:34:28;24

Peter Huessy

They have the NPT and they're not abiding by that either. And then you have the additional protocol, which they're not abiding by. So, the solution is have a JCPOA. Number two, which they wouldn't abide by. So, the two things I kind of just clarify, what was the major change in how the administration approached Iran and the NPT, and what was the key understanding or assumption that they flipped that made it possible to move as far forward as we have?

00:34:28;27 - 00:34:48;27

Chris Ford

Well, on the NPT specifically, I actually, I don't I'm not sure I have a good feel yet for how the second Trump administration approaches and in general, we just don't know that yet. The people who would do that or not in place in the government yet, I have not seen anything publicly articulated. Perhaps we'll see inklings of this if a new national security strategy emerges.

00:34:48;29 - 00:35:15;29

Chris Ford

You know, if and when there's something equivalent to a nuclear posture review. So, you know, the jury's still out on sort of how this current administration articulates that stuff. And I wouldn't begin to speculate, about, you know, to predict exactly what they will say. On the Iran thing, obviously, specifically, I mean, you know, what there clearly has been, as I was trying to suggest, is, is a demonstrable commitment to demonstrating that, you know, there really is a, you know, a hard power plan B here.

00;35;16;01 - 00;35;38;27

Chris Ford

And I think that is something that not everyone probably thought that we thought, as the United States before, you know, I, I worry a little bit that we had sort of trained people, in effect, to conclude that as many times before, it would indefinitely continue to be the case that, as long as there was some prospect of, well, negotiations are underway or they might come to the table, or if you do this, they'll walk away from the table.

00;35;39;03 - 00;35;55;15

Chris Ford

As long as that was sort of the predominant trope that nothing would ever really get done, because that was sort of what we showed for a long time. That's been, you know, as I say, that anybody who thought that is probably been disabused of it, at least to a great degree now, and that's probably pretty constructive.

00;35;55;18 - 00;36;19;06

Chris Ford

So that's a big shift. You know, add another piece. I mean, going back to the first Trump administration, not to, you know, to relitigate old issues, but, I do think, I mean, although, you know, clearly there were there were challenges associated with pulling out of the JCPOA and Iran, you know, if Iran had if the JCPOA had been kept in place and Iran had complied with it.

00;36;19;06 - 00;36;37;16

Chris Ford

And those are, you know, two different questions. But, you know, they would probably not have as much stuff as they do right now because they would only now be beginning to do the ramp up that they did start a few years ago. With, with, you know, the U.S. having pulled out. So, you know, that needs to be considered, I suppose.

00;36;37;16 - 00;36;54;02

Chris Ford

But on the other hand, the whole problem with the JCPOA, as we pointed out endlessly till we were blue in the face in the first Trump administration, was precisely that that kind of a big Iranian ramp up wouldn't have been a derogation from the JCPOA. It would have been permitted by the JCPOA. Right. So, the JCPOA wasn't the solution to the problem.

00;36;54;02 - 00;37;13;25

Chris Ford

It was a as I said before, I sort of a temporary camp kicking. And, you know, sometimes that's useful, right? I mean, I'd rather have a bad situation later than a bad situation sooner, I suppose. But buying time like that is only useful if you do something constructive with it. And there was no sign that either the Obama administration or the Biden administration had any such, you know, plans or ability.

00;37;13;25 - 00;37;27;27

Chris Ford

I mean, the Biden folks desperately wanted to get back to something like the JCPOA, but it was clearly not going to happen. And after a while, they sort of quietly stopped talking about it and hope that no one would notice that they weren't talking about it anymore. You know, that's not an answer. That's not a

strategy, that's not a diplomatic approach.

00:37:27;27 - 00:37:46;20

Chris Ford

Right. So, in a weird way, by like, making things sort of uglier and more tense, we maybe have now been able to get back to a position where there is, in fact, at least a possibility. I certainly won't promise this, and this could still be a catastrophic failure, don't get me wrong, but it's at least possible to imagine a way forward now that provides an enduring answer.

00:37:46;22 - 00:38:04;27

Chris Ford

Not just a temporary answer. And we'll see. It's really up to Iran right now. But I think, between the military campaigns and the snapback of sanctions now, we really, you know, do have a set of circumstances in place that make it at least conceivable. But in fairness, that's also not just shift in the US.

00:38:05;00 - 00:38:23;23

Chris Ford

I mean, I'm, I was very worried that the Europeans would not actually ultimately get around to invoking snapback sanctions. You know, there's a showing of ultimate resolve here that isn't just our hard power. It also had to do with their willingness to bite the bullet and invoke snapback. And I'm delighted that they're willing to do that.

00:38:23;25 - 00:38:48;05

Chris Ford

That is also a sign of seriousness that Iran really should or should pay some attention to. So now it's up to us, I would argue, to work with the Europeans really closely in ways that I think are absolutely essential to be working closely, but also that I'm not entirely. I hope that the second Trump administration is actually willing to work with the Europeans in this way on diplomatic solutions and doesn't try to just go it alone, because I think their cooperation is essential.

00:38:48;05 - 00:39:08;16

Chris Ford

So, I would urge us to be, you know, joined at the hip in working this together. And since we have both shown in our very different ways, they with sanctions and us with, you know, bunker busters, that, you know, we're more serious than the other side may have thought we were. Now that we've demonstrated that we kind of work together, to make it happen, I hope that both sides are willing and able to do that.

00:39:08;19 - 00:39:34;27

Peter Huessy

Let me follow up. A question we talked about before, we went on the air and that is that the value of the IAEA in Vienna, but in particular, in line with a question from the Stimson Center, is what monitoring and verification measures would you add to not just the NPT, but the implementing, which is done by the IAEA and its member states?

00:39:34;29 - 00:39:54;14

Chris Ford

Yeah. I mean, I think adding things to the NPT right now is probably a rather a tall order, putting provisions into an Iranian deal with Iran, is a different question. And indeed, even the JCPOA, for all of its faults, did have some provisions that went beyond just where, you know, more conventional

safeguards authorities would allow it to go.

00;39;54;19 - 00;40;21;07

Chris Ford

There was a section that actually, in principle, allowed work to look into potential weaponization activities, which is not something traditionally that the IAEA has much of anything to do with. I mean, their mandate historically goes only to the issue of, you know, actual uses of fissile material. So, if you're, you know, if you're machining a hammer and a shell, out of uranium, okay, that's using, you know, nuclear materials that are subject to safeguards so that that's subject to monitoring, I suppose.

00;40;21;09 - 00;40;39;19

Chris Ford

But if you're doing hydrodynamic calculations on a computer that in fact doesn't involve any nuclear material, that's not traditionally an IAEA sort of thing. And so giving the agency some ability to look at, weaponization related stuff that is not specifically fissile material stuff was a critical step in the JCPOA, except that no one really followed up on it.

00;40;39;19 - 00;40;52;16

Chris Ford

And people were kind of like, really afraid of trying to invoke that. That was a lot. That's heavy. Oh, gosh, that would upset people. That was, you know, the reaction to that was stupid. But the idea to put stuff in there was not stupid. That was very clever. And I think any future deal would have to do more on that kind of thing.

00;40;52;16 - 00;41;15;24

Chris Ford

I think it was what section T, if I remember correctly, of the deal. More of that will be needed, I think, to take this seriously. And, you know, ironically, you go back to the 2005, there's an obscure footnote in a, an IAEA report that I have loved to point to since then, or even Mohamed ElBaradei, who, you know, I remember him clearly as being not precisely a hawk on the issue of Iran proliferation.

00;41;15;24 - 00;41;17;25

Chris Ford

Right. I'm trying to be generous.

00;41;17;28 - 00;41;19;11

Peter Huessy

You're being very diplomatic, Chris.

00;41;19;15 - 00;41;46;09

Chris Ford

Even he admitted in a footnote to this report and I think in 2005 that, that given Iran's track record and history of, you know, sort of evasion and hiding things and know dissimulation to the agency and so forth, you know, given that track record, he would need to go to, to really properly get a handle upon the compliance issue for Iran in safeguards, you would need to go beyond even what the Additional protocol provides, which is not nothing that's important to, but even he admitted, you need to go.

00;41;46;10 - 00;42;01;02

Chris Ford

You need to go beyond the AP. Right? So, we clearly need to go well beyond the AP and into issues related to weaponization. And that's not the only problem, however. Right? You don't just put that into the provisions of the deal like we sort of did with the JCPOA. You got a minute. And you've got to act on it.

00;42;01;02 - 00;42;28;28

Chris Ford

You've got to have the intestinal fortitude to to follow up on it in a way that makes it clear that Iran needs to comply with, you know, any inspector inquiries in that respect and that if it doesn't comply, there will be real concrete consequences. And, you know, that's in a sense the harder part, the drafting you could do if you're willing to work with the subject matter experts in the labs and all the right technical people, you can come up with a good you know, I'm sure you can draft a good, good deal.

00;42;29;01 - 00;42;52;00

Chris Ford

And then, you know, inshallah the Iranians agree to it. But the really hard part is actually just going to be the politics of making it work in practice thereafter and keeping Iran's nose to the grindstone with compliance. So that's the really hard stuff where the, the, the community, the global nonproliferation regime, the international community in this respect, they've found that historically much more difficult than actually the thoughtful drafting.

00;42;52;00 - 00;42;58;12

Chris Ford

So, you know, the cleverness in the negotiating, you know, that's only step one.

00;42;58;14 - 00;43;32;23

Peter Huessy

The next question comes up, Henry Sokolski was previously speaking and he raised the issue was quite interesting. Is there a right to enrich within the NPT? The Iranians claim they have that as a member of the NPT. Henry pointed out that, no, that's not there. And but unfortunately, both Mr. Hadley and former Secretary State Kerry said publicly that Iran did have a right to enrich.

00;43;32;25 - 00;43;40;05

Peter Huessy

And they intimated that it was contained within the NPT. Could you address that, please?

00;43;40;08 - 00;44;09;24

Chris Ford

So, this is actually a topic that I've written on. Well, some years ago now, after I first left government back and when I went to Hudson Institute, I wrote a piece actually for Henry and, which is, you know, I'm glad you mentioned him. Wrote a piece in a book that he, that he edited that the topic put out, in which I try to address this issue, my own view is that there is not a right to enrich, the text of article four of the NPT, which is a critical bed, talks about, you know, the right to, you know, essentially sharing the benefits of nuclear energy.

00;44;09;24 - 00;44;26;18

Chris Ford

Right? So, there's a there's a clear right, if you will, to partake in the goodness that nuclear technology can provide. But it's not specific about what that means in particular. And my argument in the piece that I wrote for Henry, which I think was good, article four Rights and Wrongs, I think was the title of it or

19

something.

00:44;26;20 - 00:44;53;27

Chris Ford

Yeah. I was arguing for an approach that looks at the treaty. It looks at the question of detail, what is it that one is allowed to do? I view that as being context specific in the sense that the entire structure of article three and the in the IAEA safeguard system is based upon the idea that, well, I mean, the peaceful use of nuclear activities, nuclear technology, materials needs to be safeguarded against diversion and misuse.

00:44;53;27 - 00:45;09;20

Chris Ford

And so, if it can't be effectively safeguarded, then you don't have a right to do it, and you only have a right to do what the system is capable of making safe. And if it can't make it safe, then it's wrong to say that there's a right to do it. That doesn't mean it's prohibited, per se. Weaponization work is clear, prohibited, but it means there's no right to do it.

00:45;09;22 - 00:45;36;17

Chris Ford

And, that's a distinction which I think most of the article four community has missed over the years, and that most observers just don't see, and I have to admit that I am in this regard in a minority. I've been saying there's no right to enrich. Most folks probably wouldn't agree with that position, but, but, you know, I think there's a there's a good legal argument that can be made that, that, that contingent upon safeguard ability, if that's the right word.

00:45;36;20 - 00:45;56;00

Chris Ford

That's the prism that you need to look at what it is that you're specifically allowed to do. I know that's controversial, but, but I would quarrel with the right to enrich thing, and it's a it's an easy crutch for the Iranians because they know perfectly well, that in the context in which they're asking this of the international community, it's not effectively safeguarded because they won't agree to effective safeguards.

00:45;56;02 - 00:46;13;12

Chris Ford

You know, maybe if Iran, you know, agreed to the kind of terms that I would like to see put into a nuclear deal, and if it showed us all collectively that it had, you know, really genuinely complied with this and built a track record of trust rather than a track record of, you know, falsehood and cheating and violation.

00:46;13;15 - 00:46;30;06

Chris Ford

You know, maybe at some point people would come around to that. Yeah. Okay. It's actually a safeguard of, well, maybe a little bit of that is okay. I don't know. But we're clearly not there right now. And Iran, you know, at the very least, needs to build that kind of a track record before it's even worth having an intelligible conversation, about, how about this in the future?

00:46;30;06 - 00:46;32;18

Chris Ford

So that's at least press what stake for whatever it's worth.

00;46;32;21 - 00;46;56;27

Speaker 2

You know, I just it's quite interesting. There was an article in Foreign Affairs, just recently, this week in which the author argued that Rand now has no choice but to pursue nuclear weapons, given the Israeli and American airstrikes, because how else are they going to deter us? What's your comment?

00;46;56;29 - 00;47;24;16

Chris Ford

I mean, if Iran couldn't magically go from where it is today to having a sizable nuclear arsenal with a survivable second-strike retaliation capacity, sure. That would deter us, I guess, or at least it would be. It would make us strike a lot more hard to contemplate. But, you know, that doesn't just happen, right? I mean, the path between here and there, you know, what you're describing is, you know, very much a sort of the kind of narrative that you would imagine Iranians making.

00;47;24;19 - 00;47;50;18

Chris Ford

But the path between here and there includes a whole lot of pain for Iran, of where it will presumably be there at some point when they might be able to do some things clandestinely, but probably not super much. Their track record of this is not great. So the path record, the path between today and some future hypothetical, you know, deterrent capability, probably involves a lot of American and Israeli mowing of the of the grass.

00;47;50;20 - 00;48;13;00

Chris Ford

You said before, right. So, I don't you know, that's a false choice right now. And I think in terms of what really I mean, you know, I don't want to be just one of those American former officials who likes to lecture other countries on what their best interests are. But even from Iran's perspective, I have to think that that, you know, Iran's best interests look a lot better.

00;48;13;03 - 00;48;44;21

Chris Ford

If they are not repeatedly being bombed by Americans and Israelis to keep a record of, you know, he could constitute the weapons development effort under control. Then if, then, you know, by comparison to a deal in which, you know, maybe we get to lift sanctions on them and they get to reintegrate finally, you know, for real, into the global economy in ways that they very much want and that they're, you know, they're really sophisticated, dynamic, you know, that this is not an on target little North Korean, you know, Hermit Kingdom, right?

00;48;44;21 - 00;49;10;29

Chris Ford

This is a sophisticated ancient culture with a really sophisticated economy. Vibrant culture and a lot of history. They're positioned to be, you know, wonderfully prosperous participant in a global world if they wish to be, and, you know, if you're making... surely has to at least see that there is an argument in favor of the kind of deal that would allow them to do that.

00;49;11;02 - 00;49;18;20

Chris Ford

It is, I think that what you're describing is a, it is far too simple and probably a misleading, set of choices.

00;49;18;23 - 00;49;47;01

Peter Huessy

Okay, I'm going to make a comment here. And it's from Keith Payne, who did a wonderful study on deterrence, and he did it for Herman Kahn when he was at Hudson. And Khamenei, the original leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, said when asked, if you hit Israel with nuclear weapons, Israel will destroy your country with nuclear weapons.

00;49;47;01 - 00;50;29;05

Peter Huessy

Probably. And... said, who cares? All the Jews are dead. That he and elaborated. And he said, basically, I don't care whether Iran goes one way or the other. That's not me. I'm in the business of fulfilling an Islamic goal, which is to get rid of the infidels, particularly the Jews and Christians. So just as a comment, I thought it was not dissimilar to Khrushchev was trying to control Castro and saying because Castro wanted Russia to launch the rockets at America in the Cuban Missile Crisis.

00;50;29;07 - 00;50;59;16

Peter Huessy

And Khrushchev said, are you crazy? It's Cuba will be incinerated. And so welcome. And to which Castro replied, yes, but socialism wins. We made the evil capitalists attack us with nuclear weapons and there again, that was Keith found this out in this incredible story of what deters people and what doesn't. And I don't know if you want to make a comment, I've got a couple other questions where we got about five minutes left.

00;50;59;16 - 00;51;29;03

Peter Huessy

But I've always thought that that or thinking in America about deterrence is how we think, and there's nothing wrong with it. It's actually rational. But this is not just rational. It's ideologically going in a direction that we couldn't fathom. Someone that you want to see all 10 million people in Cuba incinerated. That seems crazy because socialism wins.

00;51;29;05 - 00;51;43;25

Chris Ford

I mean, you do have to worry about those kinds of wrinkles sometimes. I mean, Mao Zedong had some really disturbing comments about how, yes, yeah, nuclear war might result in hundreds of millions of Chinese being dead, but not all of us. We have got a lot of people and, and capitalism to be destroyed. So maybe that's okay.

00;51;43;25 - 00;51;47;08

Chris Ford

Right. So, he said reasons that he said generations.

00;51;47;11 - 00;51;51;03

Peter Huessy

He said in three generations that Chinese women will make up the difference.

00;51;51;06 - 00;52;11;02

Chris Ford

Yeah. So, one does worry about that. And there isn't a logical you know, there's a there's a piece at least I mean a strain in Iranian, you know, theocratic thinking. That does, you know, thinking sort of, you know,

22

end of the world precipitate, the, the kind of, you know, Armageddon, what a Christian would call sort of an Armageddon narrative.

00:52:11:02 - 00:52:44:01

Chris Ford

Right? There's a piece of Iranian theology that is sort of, you know, open to those ideas. And, you know, I don't, you know, rule that out. On the other hand, even Khamenei, showed it in the, you know, in the late 80s, the end of the 80s, that was not in sufficiently constraining circumstances. Even he was willing to cut deals with, with Saddam Hussein and the Iran-Iraq War, which generally, if you know, the degree of vilification and demonization that had been associated with how they described and thought about the Iraqis during that war, I mean, makes even what they say about us, the Israelis, seem pretty mild.

00:52:44:08 - 00:53:03:21

Chris Ford

So, you know, they've also shown, yes, I worry about that mindset, but they've also shown that occasionally even the more theocratic minded of them can can, you know, they can cut a deal when they feel they have to in their best interests. And, and Khamenei even came up with theological rationalizations for how, in the interest of the state, you could do things that were, you know, even un-Islamic.

00:53:03:21 - 00:53:24:21

Chris Ford

And he said this publicly, which is kind of weird theologically, of course. And, you know, I won't begin to get into that debate, but it clearly shows that, you know, when push comes to shove, they're at least capable of, of making a much more sort of calculating decision notwithstanding, perhaps some very bad theological instincts. So, you know, maybe that's the side that we could get them to end up on.

00:53:24:21 - 00:53:26:12

Chris Ford

I like to hope so.

00:53:26:14 - 00:54:00:19

Peter Huessy

But when your what you're saying is that the even Khamenei's type will seek a dispensation. Something like that, something like that. Okay. My final question is Iraq, Iran, Libya, all had nuclear weapons programs. Iraq came within a number of months, and we only found that out after the Gulf War. And Libya. We grabbed a ship that had centrifuges on it destined for Libya.

00:54:00:21 - 00:54:30:21

Peter Huessy

And his answer was, okay, I do not want this Saddam solution. Just come here and get this stuff peacefully. And so, you have three countries, all with or within the NPT. The fourth country was North Korea. They're the only escapee. So, this week, they formally got out of the treaty. But within the treaty they were violating and building nuclear weapons.

00:54:30:23 - 00:54:52:23

Peter Huessy

So the question then is would you then say, yes, the NPT has been successful, but we need to amend it. And I know the difficulty of amending it because you have to get Russian and Chinese buy in. But what

23

you seem to be saying is you could amend the treaty insofar as you're dealing with a specific country.

00:54:53:02 - 00:55:01:24

Peter Huessy

We just make a deal that doesn't violate the NPT, but it goes further. But it's specific to the country you're dealing with, like Iran.

00:55:01:27 - 00:55:20:27

Chris Ford

Yeah, I wouldn't call it amendment of the treaty, but we you know, you would reach a sort of a supplemental understanding in a particular context by agreement, with, with one of the parties and you could, you know, make it legally binding. And, frankly, in the ways the JCPOA was not right. I mean, I'm not even sure that technically the JCPOA was actually an executive agreement.

00:55:20:29 - 00:55:43:05

Chris Ford

I don't think I don't recall anybody actually signing anything. It was just a sort of, well, we agree kind of thing. So legally it was very amorphous. You know, and one of the things that we, we told our European counterparts back in 2017, 2018, when we were beginning and we were still trying to figure out if there were a way to come up with a supplement that could be sort of tacked on top of the JCPOA to make it to make it tolerable.

00:55:43:05 - 00:56:06:29

Chris Ford

Right. This is after President Trump in late 17 told us that the, you know, our marching orders were to go out and to try to solve the sunset clause problem. You know, we were quite open to telling the Europeans and others that we were, you know, we at least were willing to talk about the possibility of trying to make it a, a legally binding deal, you know, a proper treaty and not just a sort of a hand-waving agreement of some sort.

00:56:07:02 - 00:56:21:08

Chris Ford

And, you know, my thinking at the time at least, was that, well, if anybody is going to get an Iran deal through the Senate, it certainly wasn't going to be President Obama, which he, of course, knew, which is why the JCPOA was just this hand-waving thing. Right. There was no prayer of that getting through the Senate.

00:56:21:10 - 00:56:37:11

Chris Ford

One way or the other. But, you know, could Donald Trump get a good Iran deal through the Senate? Yeah, very possibly actually. So, you know, we raised the possibility of like, you know, look, this is an X and, and China kind of thing, like, you know, only someone with Trump's anti-Iran credentials is going to have a prayer of getting a deal like that through the Senate.

00:56:37:11 - 00:56:45:06

Chris Ford

So, we are open to the idea of maybe making this legally binding as a proper treaty. You know, that itself would be a huge step forward.

00:56:45:09 - 00:57:09:09

Peter Huessy

Okay. Well, with that, Chris, I want to thank you again. It's always enlightening. It's a pleasure. Thank you for having me. I'm going to turn it over to Kimberly, who was running these events for me and does a wonderful job here with NIDS. Kimberly, would you just tell people what our next event is or next couple of events, and then we'll close it out.

00:57:13:21 - 00:57:48:23

Kimberly Cherington

Yes, sir. Okay, so, our next event is in two weeks. We have President Trump's nuclear priorities with Matt Kroenig. After that September 26th, we have Greg Weaver coming augmenting theater nuclear forces for the 21st century. And on October 3rd, we have European perspectives on China and its nuclear buildup with Dr. Max Howell. October 17th, we have Olli Heinonen and David Albright on Iran's nuclear crossroads.

00:57:48:26 - 00:58:23:25

Kimberly Cherington

Strategic risks and diplomatic dilemmas. And we have more events coming. Always a special thank you today to Doctor Ford for helping us bring these important topics to a broader audience. If you're new to NIDS, we are a 501 C3 nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing peace and promoting stability through a strong national security and nuclear deterrent. Please take a look at all of our offerings at, thinkdeterrence.com, and make sure to help us spread the word.

00:58:24:00 - 00:58:29:17

Kimberly Cherington

We are on all social media, and we'd love to add your colleagues to our guest list.

00:58:29:17 - 00:58:36:21

Chris Ford

That is a fantastic lineup. So, your viewers are going to love all that. That's a really great roster there. Cool stuff.

00:58:36:24 - 00:59:02:08

Peter Huessy

Thank you Chris, and thank you, Kimberly, for all you do. And I want to thank all our colleagues that were on the seminar this morning but also thank many of them who are our sponsors and supporters, without which we could not do this work. So anyway, Chris, thank you again for a wonderful. Kimberly will have the transcript in the video down in a little bit and get it to you.

00:59:02:08 - 00:59:07:15

Peter Huessy

And our colleagues. So, with that, we'll see you all in a couple weeks. Take care.