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## Mousavian: Iranian nuclear program is matter of consensus, pride

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During the question-and-answer portion of Friday's morning lecture, Seyed Hossein Mousavian addresses comments regarding the relationship between Western nations and Iran. Photo by Megan Tan.

**Nick Glunt** | Staff Writer

The final lecture of Week Six's topic, "Iran: From Ancient Persia to Middle East Powder Keg," featured Seyed Hossein Mousavian, who said, like many other lecturers this week, that the Iranian nuclear weapons conflict could be peacefully solved with the application of diplomacy, negotiation and compromise.

Mousavian, a former Iranian diplomat and policymaker, spoke at 10:45 a.m. Friday in the Amphitheater. His speech, titled "Iran's Nuclear Crisis and the Way Out," explored the rise of Iranian interest in nuclear energy, the options the U.S. has in dealing with Iran and what Iran can do to ease tensions.

### U.S. options regarding Iran

Mousavian said the U.S. has four options in the Iranian nuclear issue; all are topics of debate in both the American media and the government. These options are military strikes, sanctions, passivity and diplomacy.

These solutions are very similar to the ones provided by Wednesday’s speaker, Nicholas Burns. Most speakers this week supported compromise.

If military action were made, Mousavian said, Iran may change its peaceful nuclear policy to an aggressive one. The U.S. would not be able to fund a third war — and this war, he said, would be much bigger.

Furthermore, he said oil prices would likely skyrocket, as would anti-Americanism in the Middle East. He added that all Iranians, regardless of differences, would rally against the U.S. in war.

He also outlined several other problems that would arise for the U.S. and the world if the U.S. took military action in Iran.

Mousavian said the U.S. also could continue sanctions, but he said that would solve nothing. Sanctions, he explained, would be utilized in an effort to manipulate Iranian policies and to cause regime changes.

“No further Iranian government of any political stride — clerics or Shah, doesn’t make a difference — is likely to abandon its nuclear rights,” Mousavian said. “For Iranians, the nuclear program is a matter of national consensus and pride.”

A third option, passivity, is viable only if Iran possesses nuclear technology. As Iran does not, he said, this scenario is unrealistic. In 1995, a religious leader announced a directive denouncing Iranians’ use of weapons of mass destruction. As a result, he said, Iran poses no imminent nuclear threat.

The last option — the one Mousavian said should be taken — is diplomacy. At this time, no compromise can be made between the U.S. and Iran. Both parties must work together to come up with a realistic solution; otherwise, he said, nothing can be solved.

### Iran’s interest in nuclear energy

In the past eight years, Mousavian said, Iranian nuclear energy has been the top international issue in the world. However, since Iran’s nuclear program began in the 1950s, Mousavian said, the issue has remained non-negotiable.

“The U.S. and many other Western countries consider Iran as the most urgent nuclear threat,” he said. “This assessment, in my opinion, is neither realistic nor fair.”


The U.S. and Russia possess 95 percent of the world’s nuclear weapon stockpiles. France, China, the U.K. and Germany possess another 3 percent. Iran, he said, does not possess a single one, despite its various attempts.

He went on to say that Iran has shown little aggression in the past two centuries. It has not invaded another country but has been invaded. When invaded during the Iran-Iraq War, which lasted from 1980 to 1988, Iran became the only victim of weapons of mass destruction since World War II.

“Unfortunately, the international media has solely focused on the West’s concerns and overstating Iran’s nuclear capability,” Mousavian said, “while neglecting the concerns of the Iranian nation, which the West’s public opinion is unveiled to.”






The first Iranian nuclear facility was built in the 1967 as a result of President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s Atoms for Peace program in the 1950s. Under the program, the U.S. supplied countries all over the world with nuclear reactors to assure the world that the bombings like those of Hiroshima and Nagasaki wouldn’t happen again.






The U.S. promised to build 23 such reactors in Iran by the year 2000. Once the Islamic Revolution overthrew the Shah in 1979, however, the West “withdrew from all its contractual commitments under (the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) and left Iran with billions of dollars of unfinished nuclear projects,” Mousavian said.







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


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However, under NNPT, the U.S. and the rest of the United Nations Security Council were supposed to supply Iran with nuclear power. The council had found that Iran had violated the terms of the treaty's safeguard agreement.

Mousavian said this was the first of four mistakes by the West "that pushed Iran to seek self-sufficiency in nuclear technology."

The second was the U.S. backing of Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War invasion. Later, when Iran had a part in the release of Western hostages in Lebanon, the U.S. responded with "intensified economic sanctions and continued its hostile policies" — the third mistake, Mousavian said.

The fourth mistake, he said, was the continued distrust even after Iran signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, Biological Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

"Such events made Iranians conclude that, despite their commitments to international treaties," Mousavian said, "the West would continue depriving Iran from peaceful nuclear, chemical and biological technologies."

### **What Iran can do**

Mousavian said Iran can work to solve the issue by taking steps to "demonstrate cooperation, transparency and assurances for non-diversion."

Among many suggestions, he said Iran should strictly follow the policies set by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Furthermore, Iran could work with the IAEA to eliminate ambiguity surrounding past nuclear program activities.

Secondly, Iran also could reinforce that religious leader inquisition by legally banning the use of nuclear weaponry. Iran then could limit enrichment efforts to meet only its energy needs.

It could promise, he said, to export all unused enriched uranium and to convert all uranium to fuel, thereby breaking possible diversions to use in nuclear weapons.

He also said Iran could create a fuel-cycle consortium between other Middle Eastern countries in an effort to create more transparency. This effort already has been offered to the West; the West declined, he said.

Finally, Mousavian said Iran could promise to work to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction in all of the Middle East. The United Nations would likely pursue this action, he said.

Essentially, he said dropping the nuclear program in Iran is not an option. Instead, all sides should work to allow Iran to continue its development.

"I want to reiterate that sanctions, covert actions, sabotage and regime changes," Mousavian said, "will not compel Iran to change its nuclear policy."

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***Q: What do you do about the existential threat that Israel feels, given statements of key representatives of the Iranian government about the overt threat against Israel's right to exist? How does that coincide with your call there for a region-wide abdication of weapons of mass destruction?***

A: It is true that the Israelis look at their nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, biological weapons and missile capability as deterrence to defend their existence. But you should tell me that they have been able to solve their existence problem with the nuclear weapons during four or five decades. No. And these instruments cannot and would not be the right avenue to use for resolving this issue. I think a realistic approach for peace process, a justice peace, would be the best guarantee, rather than nuclear weapons.

***Q: Would the retraction of threats against Israel and joining with the Arab initiative for Middle East peace negotiations aid in improving Iran's image in the world?***

A: What I believe about Iranian policy — to be frank, Iran is not in a position to recognize, officially, Israel. And I do not see any future government in short-term or mid-term would be able to do so. But what Iran can promise — and the West can come to a deal with Iran — is a matter of non-interference. I think that would be good if Iran can promise that they would respect whatever solution; the Palestinians, they would agree in the negotiations. Iran can

promise that they would respect and they would not impede and they would not create an obstacle in the procedure of negotiation. For Iran, the maximum, I think, is to stay neutral and respect the decisions of Palestinians, whatever they want to decide about their future.

**Q: Why has the IAEA rejected Iran's offers for more transparency, limiting nuclear production, etcetera?**

A: It has a very clear reason. During our time, 2003, the European countries were the negotiating partners. They told us to suspend the enrichment for a short period as a confidence-building measure. This is what the IAEA is requesting. This is what the United Nations Security Council resolutions are requesting. But we accepted, and we did it. And for two years, enrichment activities were under suspension. The second issue they asked Iran was to accept additional protocol. Additional protocol is a protocol for NPT, which enables the IAEA for intrusive inspections. This is the maximum level of transparency which exists internationally, the additional protocol. This is again the main request of the IAEA resolutions and the United Nations Security Council from Iran. But we accepted December 2003, and it was implemented for two years, even. You can read the IAEA reports. During our time, President Khatami, 2003-2005, which I was a member of the nuclear negotiation team, we gave access to the IAEA beyond NPT, beyond additional protocol. And to add, we gave access to IAEA to visit Iranians' military sites. But after all these confidence-building measures, which are the maximum requests from Iran, the Europeans, they were not able to make the deal with Iran to recognize the rights of Iran for enrichment under NPT. Therefore Iran came to this conclusion. Despite suspension, additional protocol, transparencies, access beyond NPT, inspection of military sites, they would continue to play with time in order to stop Iranian rights. That's why during Ahmadinejad's period, everybody in the country was tired of the old policy, and the leader decided to start the enrichment activities. I think in the package which I presented you, if the West is prepared to recognize the rights of Iran — like every other member under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, not more — then Iran would be prepared for more confidence-building measures, because Iran has already showed, during 2003 to 2005, that they are prepared to make these confidence-building measures.

**Q: Have you made these views known to the members of the Obama administration? What's their reaction? Or beyond that, why do you think that both the U.N. and the U.S. have not entered into diplomatic conversations and negotiations of the kind you now promote?**

A: As you know, I'm not representing the Iranian government, and I cannot negotiate with the Obama administration, because I have no authority, but in an international conference on NPT which was held in March 2011 in Washington, where 800 experts on nuclear participated, I presented the package. Publicly. And then I have discussed during this period with nuclear scientists in academics, like Harvard and Stanford, in order to understand whether anywhere I'm wrong or if they have anything to add as confidence-building measures. I have not heard anything more than what I presented. Everybody, even the academics which are informed about U.S. policies, they are telling me that the problem is that the P5-plus-1 is not still prepared to recognize the legitimate rights of Iran for enrichment. As long as they are not ready, no package, no solution you can find.

**Q: Would you please comment on Iran's relationships with Syria or its view of what is happening right now in Syria?**

A: I think what's happening in Syria is just a part of what's happening in the whole Middle East. The demonstrations for democracy and reforms did not start from Syria; they started in Tunisia and Egypt, where the governments' administrations were allies of the U.S. and the West. Mubarak was the ally of the U.S. and the West. Ben Ali was the ally of the U.S. and the West. Therefore, we need to have an understanding of the whole developments. It is not a matter of countries which have good relations with the West, or hostile relations with the West. Gaddafi, Assad, Libya, Syria — they have hostile relations with the West, but many other countries which have strategic relations with the U.S. and the West, they have the same problem, even more than maybe Syria. Iran has various strategic relations with Syria, it's clear, and the reason, I think, are clear. But Iranians believe that developments in Syria is because of secret activities of westerners. But I believe all administrations in the region — regardless of their relations with the West; either they have good relations or bad relations — they should understand the people in the Middle East, they are tired of dictatorships, and they want democracy, and they want reforms. This is what really they should understand, and they should respect and cooperate with the nations. And the western countries also should respect and support the nations, not the dictator regimes.

—Transcribed by Josh Cooper

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