Madam Speaker, preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear

weapons ought to be the number one foreign policy objective of the United

States. A nuclear Iran would spark region-wide nuclear proliferation. In

fact, (Saudi Arabia and its allies have

already announced that they are beginning a nuclear program to respond to

what Iran is doing). Further, if the Iranian Government were close to being

overthrown, and some of us look forward to that day, it could smuggle a

nuclear weapon into the United

States—either in an effort to reassert

popularity with its own people, or with the idea that they would rather go out

with a bang. Now, we cannot stop Iran’s nuclear

program just by meeting with Iranian

emissaries. Secretary Rice has offered

to meet with representatives of the Iranian Government anywhere, at any

time, to discuss any agenda—so long as

during the talks Iran suspends uranium

enrichment, just as Iran suspended uranium enrichment when they were talk-

ing with European leaders. The refusal

of Iran to suspend uranium enrichment, even for a few days in order to

speak with Secretary Rice, speaks

loudly about their willingness and desire to speak with us.

Likewise, we cannot stop Iran’s nuclear program by making unilateral

concessions to Iran. We did that in the

year 2000. We opened our markets to

everything Iran would want to export

to us, except oil—things like carpets and dried fruit. In fact, we opened our

markets to everything we didn’t need, and they couldn’t sell anywhere else.

The result in public was nasty comments from the Iranian foreign minister.

In private what they did was redouble their efforts to obtain nuclear

weapons, and provide assistance to the 9/11 hijackers, according to the 9/11

Commission, though they apparently didn’t know the exact mission of those they were assisting.

But we can block Iran’s nuclear program only if we can pass extreme Security Council sanctions.

The mere adoption of strong sanctions at the United Nations would be of enormous political

impact on the people of Iran. A ban on

selling Iran refined petroleum products would dislocate its economy and bring

enormous popular pressure on the Government of Iran, because although Iran

exports petroleum, it doesn’t have the refining capacity—and

therefore is dependent on imports for almost half of its gasoline.

So how do we get these very extreme

U.N. Security Council sanctions? Only with a dramatic change in Russia’s policy.

Now, our current approach to securing that critical Russian support has

been very ineffective, and we have

achieved only token sanctions that Tehran can laugh off.

The only way to get the kind of Russian support we need is by offering real

changes on our policy toward issues in Russia’s own geographic region—issues

Russia cares a lot about, issues not of

great significance to most of us in the

United States. Our efforts to convince

Russia to change its Iran policy only because, well, they ought to do it, have

been remarkably unsuccessful. We need to address Russia’s concerns to change

their policy toward Iran’s nuclear weapons.

In particular, we may need to offer to

make modest changes in our policies

towards such issues as the Russian-speaking peoples of Moldova, Latvia

and Estonia, the route of Caspian Sea

oil pipelines, and Chechnya and Abkhazia. Now, the State Department bureaucracy

is prejudiced towards this approach for three reasons: First, a bureaucracy has bureaus, and they have

got an Abkhazia bureau that doesn’t want its interests sacrificed for some

more important national security priority. Second, there are those in the

administration with such an almost

faith-based excessive estimate of our

national power. They think we can achieve all of our national objectives

and that we don’t have to sacrifice or

delay any of them. Finally, many of America’s foreign policy experts grew

up in the Soviet era. They spent their

time strategizing how to encircle and

weaken Russia. And, Madam Speaker, old habits die hard.

Nothing is more important to America’s national security than an all-out

diplomatic effort to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.