Madam Speaker, I know

of no circumstance in the world in

which more options are all bad than

this particular one. We all have to be

clear-headed about the challenge of

Iran. It is a more difficult society to

deal with, a more difficult government

than Iraq.

It is absolutely clear that Iran does

seek nuclear capacity. It is absolutely

clear that Iran has been the greatest

State promulgator of terrorist activity

in the Middle East. Those are bases

that we all have to understand.

Then we have to think through what

is our response and what are the kinds

of strategies that the United States

should develop and are there lessons

that exist today that might lend to

this circumstance.

One of the lessons is that some

things we do as a society can be counterproductive.

All of us are concerned

with the security and the fate of the

State of Israel as well as the American

national security, but if we think it

through, does our policy in Iraq advance

the security of Israel? Does a

preemption of Iran advance the security

of Israel? Does it advance the security

of the United States?

If the United States acts militarily,

for instance, in Iran, do we spark and

ensure the great prediction, that none

of us want to come to pass, that we will

enter into one of these clashes of civilization

made inevitable by another war

of the West against another Muslim

State? Muslims would view this as a

circumstance that the Judeo-Christian

world is attacking the world of Muslim

culture. We have to think deeply and

seriously about this.

Then when it comes to nuclear weapons,

it is bad for Iran to have a nuclear

weapon, but there are things that are

worse. One of the things that is worse

is to give them reason to use that nuclear

weapon, whether it be against

ourselves or an ally of the United

States.

The administration has informed the

committee of jurisdiction that it profoundly

opposes this piece of legislation

and that it prefers a tack of

stressing international diplomacy, and

it is suggested to the committee in the

strongest possible terms that this type

of legislation undercuts their effort to

be multilateral.

And so, while many Members of this

body, many members of the public have

objected to this administration for

being too unilateral, this Congress is

saying, with this kind of legislation,

that we will be more unilateral than

the administration wishes to be. In

other words, with an administration

that no one of any stripe would argue

is not muscular—it is a very muscular

administration—this Congress is trying

to out-macho the muscular. That is

something we should all think very seriously

about.

Then we ought to think through

what it means if we go forth in a given

kind of direction, which words like ‘‘regime

change’’ imply. What does preemption

mean? It is clear that if we

move in a muscular direction and, for

example, preemptively strike Iraq,

that that will slow down the capacity

of Iraq to develop a nuclear weapon.

But will it stop it? Not necessarily,

partly because of the capacities Iran

has to develop WMD capacity in a more

decentralized way than Iraq once did,

but there are other ways of getting nuclear

weapons. One can get nuclear

weapons through the ‘‘loose nuke’’ dilemma

of purchase or theft. And if one

gives Iran reason to attack, it will, and

it will in many ways that are now

available in the world through decentralized

terrorist activities, but also

potentially through nuclear. And the

potential of nuclear use increases if

they are attacked.

Now we have the other option which

is stressed in this bill—but the first,

force being implied, but what is

stressed is economic sanctions. So our

two options are to shoot Iran or to

shoot ourselves in the foot economically.

And I will tell you that I can’t

think of anything that is more outrageous

in logic. So I think we have to

think through new types of approaches

involving new ways of dialogue, new

ways of international pressure of a

very different nature than are proposed

by this committee at this time.

While I have enormous respect for the proponents

of this legislation, particularly the distinguished

chair of the Subcommittee on the

Middle East and Central Asia (Ms. ROSLEHTINEN)

and our distinguished ranking member

on the full committee (Mr. LANTOS), I am

convinced that in its present form the approach

brought before this body complicates

ongoing diplomatic efforts to peacefully resolve

the building crisis with Iran.

Indeed, it is for this reason that the Department

of State indicated that the Administration

would be unable to support the legislation. As

noted in a letter to Chairman HYDE, the bill

would ‘‘narrow in important ways the President’s

flexibility in the implementation of Iran

sanctions, create tensions with countries

whose help we need in dealing with Iran, and

shift the focus away from Iran’s actions and

spotlight differences between us and our allies.

This could play into Iran’s hands, as it attempts

to divide the U.S. from the international

community as well as to sow division between

the EU–3, China, and Russia. It would also

create dissension among UNSC members, as

the Council considers the Iran nuclear dossier.’’

There are few areas of the world with a

more troubling mix of geopolitical problems

than the Middle East. The irony is that the war

in Iraq which has consumed so much of our

country’s political and economic capital may

hold less far-reaching consequences than

challenges posed in neighboring Middle Eastern

countries.

To the West, the Israeli-Palestinian stand-off

remains the sorest point in world relations,

complicated by the incapacitation of Ariel

Sharon and the rise of a Hamas-led government

in the occupied territories. To the East,

the sobering prospect of Iran joining the nuclear

club stands out.

In life, individuals and countries sometimes

face circumstances in which all judgments and

options are bad. The Iranian dilemma is a

case-in-point. But it is more than just an abstract

bad-option model because at issue are

nuclear weapons in the hands of a mullahcontrolled

society which has actively aided

and abetted regional terrorists for years.

Indeed, the issue has become even more

acute with the election in Iran of its hard-line,

populist President, Mahmood Ahmadinejad,

who suggested late last year that the murder

of six million European Jews by the Nazis did

not occur and called for Israel to be wiped off

the map.

In reference to recent disclosures of enhanced

Iranian efforts to develop nuclear

weapons as well as missile delivery systems

to carry such weapons, concerned outside

parties are actively reviewing options.

The Europeans have led with diplomatic entreaties;

neo-con strategists in the U.S. with

open-option planning—including, if investigative

journalist Seymour Hersh is to be believed—

the possible use of nuclear weapons.

In the background are references to the

1981 preemptive strike by the Israeli Air Force

against Iraq’s Osirak reactor.

At issue is the question of whether preemption

is justified; if so, how it should be carried

out; and, if carried out, whether intervention

would lead to a more conciliatory, non-nuclear

Iran or whether the effects of military action

would be short-term, perhaps pushing back

nuclear development a year or two, but precipitating

a new level of hostility against the

U.S. and Israel in Iran and the rest of the

Muslim world which could continue for decades,

if not centuries.

Since the American hostage crisis which so

bedeviled the Carter Administration in the late

1970s, we have had a policy of economic

sanctions coupled with comprehensive efforts

to politically isolate Iran.

Six years ago, Senator ARLEN SPECTER and

I invited Iran’s U.N. Ambassador to Capitol

Hill, the first visit to Washington by a highlevel

Iranian representative since the hostage

crisis.

On the subject of possible movement toward

normalization of relations with Iran, I told

the ambassador that while many would like to

see a warming of relations, it would be inconceivable

for the U.S. to consider normalizing

our relationship so long as Iran continued its

support of Hamas and Hezbollah. The ambassador

forthrightly acknowledged that Iran provided

help to both these terrorist organizations,

but also noted, in what for some might

be considered the most optimistic thing he

said that day, that his government was prepared

to cease support to anti-Israeli terrorist

groups the moment a Palestinian state was

established with borders acceptable to Palestinians.

For decades in the Muslim world, debate

has been on-going whether to embrace a

credible two-state (Israel and Palestine) approach

or advance an irrevocable push-Israelto-

the-sea agenda. The implicit Iranian position,

as articulated by the ambassador, was

support for a two-state approach, but if the

U.S. on its own, or Israel as a perceived surrogate,

were to attack Iran, the possibility that

such a compromise can ever become possible

deteriorates.

While angst-ridden, the Muslim world understands

the rationale for our intervention in Afghanistan

where the plotting for the 9/11 attack

on the U.S. occurred. It has no sympathy

for our engagement in Iraq, which had nothing

to do with 9/11, but if these two interventions

were followed by a third in Iran, the likelihood

is that such would be perceived in the vocabulary

of the Harvard historian, Samuel Huntington,

as an all-out ‘‘clash of civilizations,’’

pitting the Judeo-Christian against the Muslim

world. In the Middle East it would be considered

a war of choice precipitated by the

United States. We might want it to be seen as

a short-term action to halt the spread of nuclear

weapons, but the Muslim world would

more likely view it as a continuance of the

Crusades: a religious conflict of centuries’ dimensions,

with a revived future.

If military action is deemed necessary, the

U.S. broadly has only three tactical options:

(a) full-scale invasion a la Iraq; (b) surgical

strikes of Iranian nuclear and missile installations;

or (c) a surrogate strike by Israel, modeled

along the lines of Osirak.

The first can be described as manifestly

more difficult than our engagement in Iraq,

particularly a post-conflict occupation. The

second presents a number of difficulties, including

the comprehensiveness of such a

strike and the question of whether all aspects

of a program that is clandestine can be eliminated.

The third makes the U.S. accountable

for Israeli actions, which themselves are likely

to be more physically destructive but less effective

than the 1981 strike against Osirak.

In thinking through the consequences of

military action, even if projected to be successfully

carried out, policymakers must put

themselves in the place of a potential adversary.

A strike that merely buys time may also

be a strike that changes the manner and rationale

of Iranian support for terrorist organizations.

It may also change the geo-strategic

reason and methodology for a country like Iran

to garner control of nuclear weapons. ‘‘Loose

nukes’’ abound. Countries with money and will

can garner almost anything in the world despite

efforts by the U.S. and others to make

theft or sale difficult.

It is presumed that the major reasons that

Iran currently seeks nuclear weapons relates

to: (1) Pride: a belief that a 5,000 year-old society

has as much right to control the most

modern of weapons systems as a younger civilization

like America or its neighbors to the

west, Israel, and to the east, Pakistan; (2)

Power: the implications of control of nuclear

weapons with regard to its perceived hegemony

as the largest and most powerful country

in the Persian Gulf, particularly with regard to

its nemesis, Iraq, which not only once attacked

Kuwait, but Iran itself using chemical

weapons; (3) Politics: the concern that Israeli

military dominance is based in part on the

control of weapons that cannot be balanced in

the Muslim world, except by a very distant

Pakistan.

The issue of the day from an American perspective

is weapons of mass destruction, their

development and potential proliferation to nation-

states and non-national terrorist groups.

The question that cannot be ducked is whether

military action against Iran might add to the

list of reasons Iran may wish to control such

weapons: their potential use against the

United States. Perhaps as significantly, American

policymakers must think through the new

world of terrorism and what might be described

as lesser weapons of mass destruction.

Any strike on Iran would be expected to immediately

precipitate a violent reaction in the

Shi’a part of Iraq, where the U.S. has some

support today. With ease, Iranian influence on

the majority Shi’a of Iraq could make our ability

to constructively influence the direction of

change in Iraq near hopeless.

And there should be little doubt that in a

world in which ‘‘tit for tat’’ is the norm, a strike

on Iran would increase the prospect of

counter-strikes on American assets around the

world and American territory itself. The asymmetrical

nature of modem warfare is such that

traditional armies will not be challenged in traditional

ways. Nation-states which are attacked

may feel they have little option except

to ally themselves with terrorist groups to advance

national interests.

We view terrorism as an illegitimate tool of

uncivilized agents of change. In other parts of

the world, increasing numbers of people view

terrorist acts as legitimate responses of societies

and, in some cases, groups within societies

who are oppressed, against those who

have stronger military forces.

If Afghanistan, an impoverished country as

distant from our shores as any in the world,

could become a plotting place for international

terrorism, such danger would increase

manifoldly with an increase in Iranian hostility,

especially if based on an American attack.

If there exists today something like a one-inthree

chance of another 9/11-type incident or

set of incidents in the U.S. in the next few

years, a preemptive strike against Iran must

be assumed to double or triple such a prospect.

And Iran, far more than Osama bin-Laden,

has within its power the ability not only to destabilize

world politics, but world economies as

well. Oil is, after all, the grease of economic

activity, and an Iranian-led cutback in supply

precipitated by us or them cannot be ruled

out.

Given the risk, if not the untenability, of military

action, policymakers are obligated to review

other than military options. One, which

has characterized our post-hostage taking Iranian

policy for a full generation, is isolation of

Iran. This policy can be continued, but as

tempting as it is, there is little prospect of

ratcheting it up much more, except in ways,

such as a naval embargo on Iranian oil, that

would be difficult to garner international support

for and would, in any regard, damage us

more than Iran.

The only logical alternative is to consider increasing

dialogue without abandoning the possibility

of future sanctions with this very difficult

government.

Iran—its government and people—has to be

fully engaged, and I am pleased that U.S. Ambassador

Khalilzad in Baghdad has been authorized

to talk to the Iranians about the situation

in Iraq. The Iranians played a stabilizing

role regarding Afghanistan just several years

ago, and logically they have a stake in a stable

Iraq. I would urge the leadership in Tehran

to re-think its apparent decision to close the

door on this potentially productive avenue for

dialogue.

With respect to the Iranian nuclear program,

however, it is difficult to see how confrontation

can be avoided if we will not talk directly with

Tehran in appropriate foras about this and

other matters. The stakes could not be higher.

If diplomacy fails, there is a credible prospect

that Iran will follow the North Korean model of

rapid crisis escalation, including the cessation

of international inspections, with a wholly unsupervised

nuclear program leading in time to

the production of nuclear weapons and the

dangerously unpredictable regional consequences

that might flow from that; or a perilous

move to an Iraq-like preventive military

strike, with even more far-reaching and alarming

consequences both regionally and worldwide.

A proposal that might be suggested is negotiation

of a Persian Gulf nuclear-free zone,

which would reduce, although given the high

possibility of cheating, not eliminate entirely

one of the reasons Iran presumably seeks nuclear

weapons—fear that it may be at a disadvantage

in a conflict with an oil-rich neighbor.

In this context, Iran, the EU and Russia,

with U.S. support, might agree on a proposal

under which Iran would indefinitely and

verifiably suspend domestic enrichment activity

in exchange for an internationally guaranteed

fuel supply, U.S.-backed security assurances,

and a gradual lifting of sanctions by

and resumption of normal diplomatic relations

with the U.S., including expanded country-tocountry

cultural ties.

Here, it should be stressed, hundreds of

thousands of Iranians have been educated in

the United States. The people, although not

the government of Iran, have democratic proclivities.

While real power in Iran is controlled

by the mullahs. Few societies in the world

have if given a chance more potential to move

quickly in a democratic direction than Iran.

And just as it is hard to believe that outside

military intervention would lead to anything except

greater ensconcement of authoritarian

mullah rule, a bettering of U.S. relations with

Iran provide a greater prospect of progressive

change in Iranian society.

There is nothing the new government of

Iran, or for that matter Osama bin Laden and

his al Qaeda movement, benefit more from

than an aggressive, interventionist U.S. policy

toward Iran.

Finally, a note about arms control. If the

U.S. wishes to lead in multilateral restraint, we

might want to consider joining rather than rebuking

the international community in development

of a comprehensive test ban (CTB). All

American administrations from Eisenhower on

favored negotiation of a CTB. This one has

taken the position the Senate took when it irrationally

rejected such a ban seven years

ago. The Senate took its angst against the

strategic leadership of the Clinton Administration

out on the wrong issue. This partisan, ideological

posturing demands reconsideration.

We simply cannot expect others to restrain

themselves when we refuse to put constraints

on ourselves.

We are in a world where use of force can

not be ruled out. But we are also in a world

where alternatives are vastly preferable. They

must be put forthrightly on the table.