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His Excellency François Delattre  
Ambassador of France to the United States

*France's Role on the International Stage*

**Patricia Ellis:** Hello everyone. I'm Patricia Ellis and welcome to the Women's Foreign Policy Group. We support women's leadership and women's voices on major international issues. We're so pleased to be here at the residence of Ambassador François Delattre. Thank you so much Ambassador for your very warm hospitality. This is our last event of the season. We have had an absolutely wonderful year—embassy events, author events, mentoring events, and we look forward to 2012 and hope that you will all join us. And I just wanted to—tonight we have many of our Board Members here—so please raise your hands quickly so we can recognize you. We have many diplomats from many other countries and we're so pleased you could join us—many of our Corporate Advisory Council Members. So tonight we are going to have a conversation on France's role on the international stage and we are very pleased that Ambassador Delattre will be joined by Elaine Sciolino who is a Paris correspondent for *The New York Times*. She was previously the bureau chief for *The New York Times* in Paris, author of a number of books—most recently *La Seduction*. She also received Legion d'Honneur for promoting friendship between the US and France. So I would like to turn it over to Elaine who will introduce the Ambassador. We look forward to a very interesting conversation and thank you so much for coming. [*Applause.*]

**Elaine Sciolino:** Thank you very, very much and thank you François for inviting us over. I think you are not only the busiest ambassador in town but also probably the busiest person in town right now because France is the center of the universe, in case you haven't noticed. [*Laughter.*] France has already led NATO in Libya, France has taken a proactive role in Syria, Iran, and we'll let the Ambassador tell us—fill us full of all sorts of wisdom and maybe even a little bit of propaganda. [*Laughter.*]

**Ambassador Delattre:** Thank you very much for that. Just a few words, because I don't want to be too long and because the day was just crazy. [*Laughter.*] And I want to welcome you as members of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. I want to thank Patricia Ellis, your president and co-founder. I think what you do is absolutely vital, I give you my respect, and I am proud as the French Ambassador to have you all here with us. I am proud to welcome Elaine Sciolino—Elaine is not a woman, she is a concept. [*Laughter.*]

**Ms. Sciolino:** Let's put this on the back of the book. [*Laughter.*]

**Ambassador Delattre:** She is brilliant. She knows France very well. We cannot try to hide anything from her. I think she likes France too and I can tell you that in Paris, everyone knows her and her husband and you were—and you are immensely successful. So just to give you a few words—again I will not be too long—I don't want to read my notes, otherwise it will be a one-hour speech. So a few key words on the situation in France—just to tell you that the fundamentals of the situation in my country are very solid. And I count on Elaine to say a few words in the exchange on the Euro Zone but on the situation in France itself, I just want you to have in mind three things that are very important. The first is that you have one country in Europe—and only one—with a growing population. It's France. Together with Ireland—to be completely honest—we are the only two countries having a birth rate to increase,

really, our population, while every single other country in Europe has a strongly declining population. So think from Beijing, from Shanghai, from Delhi, it counts and I think that other supporters of France should be aware of that. Second point that is, from time to time, underestimated on this side of the Atlantic—entrepreneurship is just booming in my country—a lot here. We founded in France more than 650,000 new businesses, 650,000. It is a spectacular increase—it is projected to continue in Europe. It says a lot that the younger generations in my country, instead of knocking on the government's door, instead of knocking on my door, by the way [*Laughter.*] kids roll up their sleeves, start a business, fail, start again, and at the end of the day, succeed. It's a key change in terms of mentality, and I think a very important one in policy as well. It says a lot also with the boom internationally, about the fact that we were right—with the French government—to cut the red tape. And today in France, you can start a business—a small business—in 15 minutes online, while it was, for those of you who know us well, a bureaucracy, a nightmare ten years ago. In the same vein, today in France one in ten civil servants is not being replaced. So we seriously cut the red tape, reduced the size of our government and I think that was really needed. So first the fundamentals in my country are strong—in many respects we are the exception in Europe and that's why you are right to believe in my country and to believe in the security of my country because I'm sure it's the case. [*Laughter.*]

The second thing I'd like to tell you, and it's not a diplomatic word, is that French-American relations have never been closer than they are today. I've been following them for 15 years at least, in my various positions in New York, in Washington, in Canada and on from there. And the context is that it could not be more preferable than it is today. If you think about it, we fight together in the mountains of Afghanistan and until a few weeks ago, in the skies over Libya, we have, flying together, put an end to 42 years in Libya of a bloody dictatorship—but we did it together, with the British as part of NATO. We are each other's closest allies in the fight against terrorism, not only in Afghanistan but also in Sahel, in the fight against what we call al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, as you say it in English. And there our intelligence, our special forces, our law enforcement are mobilized in these countries to fight against terrorism there. And we, the French, will bring our long-time expertise in the fight against radical Islamist networks. Back in the 80s, you might remember, Paris was under attack from these radical Islamist networks, we have developed, over the years, real expertise to penetrate them, to destroy them, and we spread this expertise in the international cooperation we have with the US and a couple others. In the same vein, France and the United States have taken the lead to—in the combat against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state. We are clearly the two countries in a leadership role. We try to convince society—Russia, the Chinese, a couple of others to follow us. And we think that—President Sarkozy, I heard him say a couple of times—that this is the Iranian nuclear issue—the most, I mean the key strategic threat of our time. I have heard him say it time and again, so we think we cannot accept it. It's simply unacceptable to have an Iran—and I hear Elaine knows a bit about it, she's quite an expert on it—we cannot accept that Iran is becoming a nuclear weapons state because it would mean an immediate threat, potentially existential threat to the situation in Israel, because it would mean a very destructive situation in the region and because it would destroy, overnight, the international nonproliferation regime that we have patiently built over the last decade.

I could go on and on. Our two countries are in the forefront, are enough of experts to support a democratic movement in the Arab world. And here we made, I believe, the only possible choice—that is the choice that is consistent with our core values. Frankly, if the US and France do not support a democratic movement in the Arab world, who will? And we all know it's not easy. We all know that—if you look at the situation in Egypt and other countries—that it's risky. But do we have other choices? I don't think so. And more importantly, President Sarkozy doesn't think so. And so I think we are right, together the US and France, to make a strategy choice to have a policy toward the Arab world that is consistent with our values. We know that in the forefront, that could be complicated and could be against, in some cases, our interests. But we bet that in the longer run the two will align—the values and the interests. In the same vein we, our two countries, are working very closely together under the French mentorship of the G8 and the G20 to tackle the roots of the crisis and restore confidence to promote growth. Also, during the French presidency of the G8 in the Cannes summit, at the end of

May, we put in place together the Deauville Partnership which is a partnership aimed at supporting the democratic movement in the Arab world but also bringing a small—if I may say—Marshall Plan behind the process, we are speaking about \$80 billion USD of public and private money—nothing is really cheap—could be a solid investment, that in the Arab world it's an important effort to weave together as we try to solve the crisis in the Euro Zone—we'll get back to it, I'm sure, because I know Elaine quite well, and also that we make some efforts, specific efforts, to get the Indians, the Chinese, the new powers, the rising powers, on board to try to help settle together the problems of the world. If I may say so, we have to make sure that these rising powers are part of our efforts and are more involved, behaving as responsible powers. I think this is one of the great challenges of our generation. According to my president, President Sarkozy, one of our key goals—especially for the US and the Europeans—is how to make sure that these emerging powers—China, Russia, and in a different case Brazil, India, and a couple of others—how to make sure that these countries are better integrated in the world governance, in the international institutions, so that they feel at ease, so that they don't combat the international order, so that they have a greater stake in the reforms of the governance of the IMF and the World Bank, to have a greater kind of stake in that, come out but also to do so in a way that is consistent with our values and with our interests.

And here I want to tell you that we believe that our relationship is more important than ever for two reasons. First because I believe that our American friends, in the Libyan crisis in particular, discovered or rediscovered that when the chips are down, when the essential is at stake, there is one—not one country but one continent you can count on, and it's Europe. And quite frankly in Europe the military efforts, mostly the French and the British. To give you just an idea, [the French] together with the British account for 50% of the total military spending of the 27 members of the European Union, 50%. And with the British we account for 70% of total spending of the EU, the European Union, because of our defense agenda. So we have two couples in Europe—the Franco-British couple on the defense issues, and the Franco-German couple on the Euro issues, Elaine can go on that in just a little bit [*Laughter.*] In the same vein, we believe the transatlantic link is also changing a good bit, shifting to a relationship that ties us to the emerging powers. Today when President Obama, President Sarkozy, David Cameron, and a couple of others meet, they discuss about media, they discuss about the Middle East, but they also discuss about how do we convince the Chinese, the Indians, the Brazilians to share our vision of the intellectual arena. How do we act together—Europeans and Americans—to make sure that we export to these emerging powers the technology that they need but that won't allow them to beat us tomorrow? And we teach them. They discuss about the way to better fight against fiscal dumping, social dumping, environmental dumping, the monetary dumping. In other words, more and more the transatlantic link will be an even more inward-looking, NATO centered relationship but a much more outward-looking partnership between two series of countries—North America, don't forget Canada, I was an ambassador in Canada before—North America and Europe acting together to make sure that we integrate, the best we can, the Chinese, Indians, and others in the world order while preserving our interests and our values. And it seems to me the most important challenge of our generation.

Two last things as I conclude—the first, certainly important more in these times of uncertainty, the more I live in this country, the more I travel around your great country—coast to coast—the more I believe in your country, and that is a fact. Why? Because it's in your country that you continue to write the future, create the future. Take the digital revolution, it's written here and nowhere else. The US is the core of the digital revolution. But even more importantly, when I go to Detroit, to Cincinnati, to upstate New York—Buffalo.

**Ms. Sciolino:** My hometown.

**Ambassador Delattre:** Which I like. [*Laughter.*] You—the ability that you have to reinvent yourselves, to destroy—it's like the Jupiter Theory in an accelerated way—you destroy many jobs in the traditional industry but in parallel, you create many new jobs in research, in innovation. And so for these two reasons, we – the French – bet on your country, we bet on America. And the other reason why we bet on your country is the values that we share. Of course today when we began to speak about French-

American history, French-American values – you see half of the audience beginning to fall asleep—because it's very important. And again, these values coming from the American and from the French Revolutions, from Lafayette, the values that our parents and grandparents fought for and died for in the two World Wars. This commitment of our American friends the people of France will never forget, for which our gratitude is not only profound but eternal. These values, again in today's troubled times, they are, more than ever, our best tool, and I will say our best moral compact to confront together the current challenge that we face. *Alors, merci beaucoup. [Applause.]*

**Ms. Sciolino:** I'm going to start off very, very gentle. I'm going to say I feel so at home in this room and in this house that I'm going to single out any women who have high heels on, who want to take them off, to feel free to do so. *[Laughter.]* Just the women—you can't take off your tie, no. You know, this is why he's such a brilliant diplomat, because really he knows how to make lemonade out of lemons. We have a challenge, some might even say crisis, when he talks about the continent that is Europe. But then when you go into the details, you lay out very coolly who's doing what. France is the anchor with both Britain and Germany, the military relationship, with Germany the economic relationship. I can't ask you to solve the crisis of the Euro and some of the people in this room obviously are huge experts on the debt crisis but some only know the Euro in terms of when I go to Europe, what's the exchange rate in terms of being able to pay for a hotel so that I can air my scarf. *[Laughter.]* So you can't solve the problems but can you lay out the scenarios that are possible in the next few months so that those of us who are really concerned about our future in the United States vis-à-vis the continent, as you call it, and what are we to think?

**Ambassador Delattre:** It is a great pleasure meeting you. *[Laughter.]*

**Ms. Sciolino:** I'm really not going to get invited back again. It's going to get better.

**Ambassador Delattre:** Now just a few things because it is quite a big issue. I won't be too long on this. Just to put it into perspective in one minute, no more. First, the Euro, it's strange to say today that the Euro has been quite a success story. Think ten years [ago]. Ten years [ago] *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Financial Times*, even *The New York Times* were full of fears—the Europeans are building fortress Europe that will kill international trade. It's exactly the opposite that happened. During these ten years, the creation of the Euro protected us Europeans against the devaluation with plaque—is it a plaque? Plague, whatever, the problem of Europe for many decades. The Euro helped us develop trade investment within Europe. But the Euro also promotes investment and trade from the US to Europe to a degree that was unprecedented. So the Euro has been a great success story. Second, the Euro is a strong currency. We think ah, the Euro is weak, only 1.30 against the Dollar. But 1.30—of Dollars for one Euro is 20% higher for the Euro compared to when the Euro was created ten years ago. So if we have a problem as Europeans, it is not because the Euro is weak, but because it is strong, which is a problem for our exports. Thirdly, when you look today at the crisis—to offer another perspective, why is there a crisis? Because when we founded the Euro ten years ago, it was a wonderful, theoretical, monetary genius, he just forgot one thing, which is the economic leg—so to speak—the economic leg of it. Because we believe at the time—our best experts believe at the time—that the Euro, firstly, would be an efficient machine to trigger the conversion of the economic policies of the Euro Zone countries, which was true, to a certain extent, in the first years in a time of growth—would become untrue in the last two years, in a time of crisis. The Euro is not sufficient to trigger the conversion of our economic policies.

And so today, to make things a bit clearer, we have three challenges in one in the Euro Zone, and that's quite complicated. The first is to manage our present debt and budget. If you look at the figures, Euro Zone debt, in average, is 85% of our GDP, 100% in your country, 200% in Japan, so it's not a tragedy. Except that 85% in average means 100-and-something% in Greece, 40-something% in other countries—there is a strong inequality. So first put our budget in order, the motto is fiscal discipline and it's strongly—most strongly promoted by Germany. Second thing we have to do, also very important, which is to make in Europe the structural reforms we need to cut the red tape, as I said before, to cut

the size of the government, to cut anything unnecessary. We have no choice. And here quite frankly the French have taken the lead in many respects if you think, for example, of innovation. If you ask me what is France's priority today, I would tell you innovation—number one, number two, and number three priority. That's why we established 71 innovative structures all around the country to bring together the private sector, the universities, the research centers—the American way, by the way, and it works. So innovation is the new priority. On to the next objective, structural reform. In order to increase what the economists call potential growth *la croissance potentielle*—potential growth. Second objective, structural growth. Three objective, and the most important one in the short term, which is to establish a governance of the Euro Zone that is lacking. If you think about it, we have no decision-making process at all, at all to make any decision in the Euro Zone countries. So we have to establish from scratch a more formalized decision making process. Who decides what? We have only the European Central Bank, we have no other device to decide within the Euro Zone. Other objective, how to establish a better coordination of economic, social, and fiscal policies. So the challenge of Europe today is not only fiscal discipline, which the press tends to overplay a bit, it's one of the three main challenges—fiscal discipline, structural reforms, and most importantly the creation of the governance of the Euro Zone. And so we have to tackle three problems together, in one, from scratch. That's why it's taking so long, too long.

But again, if we succeed—it will take a few weeks, a few months, there will be *déception*—how do you say—critics from the press. But if we succeed, in the coming months, I believe will succeed because the French and the Germans are really taking a strong leadership role in this and we hope to get the British back on board, by the way. If we succeed, then we will be stronger at the end of the crisis, after every step of the European integration—stronger at the end of the crisis than we've ever been before.

**Ms. Sciolino:** It's very interesting, what you said and I think it's important that you laid it out in a very clear way. At the end of your speech you talked about the importance of leadership, you know there are some things that are out of your control. You can't suddenly create 3% growth and you can't suddenly, magically create a structure that wasn't there from the beginning. But leadership is something that is crucial and if you look at the relationship, historical relationship between Sarkozy and Angela Merkel, it has been uneven—let's just say that—since the beginning. I was there when Sarkozy was elected and Angela Merkel who doesn't like to be touched—Sarkozy is a very touchy president, he's almost American, he likes to touch. But they've gotten over their sort of differences and together said, let's be in lock step and together be grown-ups and move forward. So I don't understand the French attitude towards the British because it seems to me that, you know, everybody knows that your president is extremely strong-willed and also he's officious but he can also be extremely blunt. And in the moment when you need the British and you need to not alienate them, I don't understand why he says this, and I have it, "Cameron behaves like a stern child with only one objective—to protect the city," which is London, "which wants to continue behaving like an off-shore tax haven." I mean, how does this help resolve the crisis?

**Ambassador Delattre:** I like her but she's tough. [*Laughter.*] That's why I like her so much. Let me answer with an example. Until three years ago we the French were members of NATO, departed NATO's military command structure—difficult for a French man all this is but—when in NATO departed of the military structure of NATO. And it was, Sarkozy's conclusion, impossible to manage because we were a part of the political decision but excluded from the military decision while taking part in every major military intervention of NATO. So we reentered the think tank, that's the conclusion that we drew for ourselves in our relations to NATO. And quite frankly for the British and the Euro Zone and the European Union it's the same—you cannot be at the same time within and without, have powers from within and criticizing without. It doesn't work. And quite frankly, I made the parallel—NATO on one side, the European Union on the other side, that it's exactly the same. And so we have respectfully asked our British friends to make their choice. We understand politics in Great Britain, we respect it of course, but we say to the British that they really have to choose. In this time of crisis we need stronger, strong partners and not countries that are within and without. And again we know about it because of our past relation to NATO. Now, the British are immensely important. If you look at Libya, together with the

British we played the leadership role. We have a great alliance, a strong partnership, in many respects with the British. So I make the issue tonight that I don't know what will happen in the coming weeks but we need the British on board one way or another. We need the city of London on board, we need the British talents for so many things with us. And I'm confident that, despite the crisis, this will happen.

**Ms. Sciolino:** You're going to keep your job. [*Laughter.*] There lots of other questions about a lot of parts of the world—Syria, Libya, etc., but before we move to those questions, does anybody else—does somebody here have a question about the Euro or the economic side?

**Isabelle Jasinowski:** Could you prognosticate the Euro Zone problem?

**Ms. Sciolino:** Could you prognosticate—predict?

**Ambassador Delattre:** I'm optimistic. [*Laughter.*] But it will take time. It will take a few weeks to tackle the fiscal problems. It's pretty short confronted with the problems we are confronting—confronted with. But again it's for sure the time of the market, it's not the time of the democracy. We the French are together to determine, we have to convince at least 17 others, probably 26 others—the members of the European Union. We ask them to make sure that they will convince the parliament. It's democracy and the markets they naturally help along—one thing I'd like to add in response to your question is the fact that economies much count on the support of our American friends in the current crisis. Because I've heard—and there are many wrong things in the newspapers of this country, of our country saying that the Americans are shooting from behind—not leading from behind but shooting from behind and they wish failure of the Euro. It's not true. All over the country, every corner of the administration, of the Congress you only find supportive American partners who are willing to help us through the crisis.

**Ms. Ellis:** One quick question on the economic front. I read that Google—it's about technology and American leadership—Google just opened a new headquarters in Paris, a huge building, a huge fanfare. And I'm just wondering if you could talk a bit about the significance of this in France and in Europe because this is something very big.

**Ambassador Delattre:** Sure. I think that's a major question because, as I said before, innovation is a top priority, without a doubt, my country is very clear. Part of the equation, as I said, is that we have reached these 71 innovative clusters, bringing together as I said companies, research centers, and universities. We also put in place a few years ago the highest R&D tax credit in the industrialized world. And this says a lot about our willingness to bet on innovation and to be an attractive country for foreign investment in research and development and it works very, very well. It's just one reason for which foreign companies invest in French R&D. There are many others—the quality of our research, the quality of our engineers, but it's an important one. And I cannot tell you how many such investments are appearing right now. In this country, a lot of times, I see American CEOs who tell me, I want to invest in R&D here and in there France, partly because of the tax credit, partly because of our situation. In this respect, by the way, we are investing 55 Euro—\$50 billion USD of public and private money over a period of two years in research and higher education. This is a national priority in my country—\$50 billion USD in new technology—biotechnology, nanotechnology, life sciences, digital revolution, green tech, I could go on and on. And these \$50 billion USD create many more opportunities in terms of French-American partnership. That's why again, if I close my eyes, think of my country, and think of the most important thing for my country, and I believe for yours, it's innovation. It's all about innovation. I was referring to the way we have to be able to compete with the emerging powers—it's all about innovation. So it's the number one, number two, number three priority in France, innovation. I think it's the same to a large extent in this country and I think we should join efforts.

**Donna Constantinople:** My question goes to the leadership point. Needless to say, I know you're aware of the upcoming election. And I wanted to know, given the struggle you've had in getting this team of leaders working together well, what happens if your president is not reelected?

**Ambassador Delattre:** You're right, it was a lovely night. [*Laughter.*]

**Ms. Constantinople:** How will that impact all that you've built?

**Ambassador Delattre:** I will answer the question. It's a fair question. We have elections in April, the first round and in May the second round. President Sarkozy, you know him, he's a close and longtime friend of this country. He was elected in a landslide in May 2007 on a program that was pro-America, pro-Business, and that was pro-Israel. And he was elected in a landslide. And President Sarkozy you know him a bit. He's quite vocal, he knows what he wants and will not change, so that's one thing. And we don't know yet whether he will be a candidate for his reelection. We don't know for sure yet. The other candidate we know from the Socialist party is François Hollande. François Hollande is also, I believe, a friend of this country. And to give you just one example, he's a former young leader of The French-American Foundation. Every year The French-American Foundation selects some people, some brilliant young people from France and the US and bring them together and François Hollande was one of them. So I hear a lot about French politics but I cannot say too much because I don't know too much, by the way. But I believe that whatever happens, the core of the French foreign policy, the key fundamentals of the French foreign policy, especially vis-à-vis this country—the French view towards the United States—will not change.

**Question:** Susanna Florian, have I heard you correctly that there are \$8 billion USD between the US and France invested in the Arab Awakening. Is that the correct sum?

**Ambassador Delattre:** \$80 billion USD.

**Ms. Florian:** \$80 billion USD? Where will that go?

**Ambassador Delattre:** That's a very good question. \$80 billion USD invested to support the revolutions in the Arab world, to protect our interests. But these \$80 billion USD, first, it's not France and the US. It's the G8 countries, the Arab world itself, and especially the Gulf countries—Qatar, what are the others? The Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman, the large oil countries. And second, they are not speaking about a gift. It's development, they are speaking about investment. So it's a different story, and very reassuring to our taxpayers.

**Ms. Sciolino:** Avis Bohlen, who knows more about France than anyone, probably all of us put together—except for you, of course.

**Ambassador Delattre:** Thank you. So glad to meet you. She's a star, you know. *[Applause.]*

**Question:** Avis Bohlen, Mr. Ambassador you outlined three very important steps toward improving the governance of the Euro and these are important in the long-term. But there's also a short-term problem which is controlling the debt, finding a reserve fund for the Euro. How do you see that progressing in the long-term?

**Ambassador Delattre:** On the debt and public deficit issue, we have two things to do, and easier said than done. The first is to settle the crisis in Ireland—almost done, in Portugal—almost done, and in Greece. And in Greece it's not easy. Even if in Greece we give 2% of the European GDP—it should be zero but it's not, first part. The second part and the key, actually, part of it is to prevent this crisis from spreading to other countries like Spain, Italy, and others in Europe. And here the tool that we have is the backup fund, the bailout fund which is something like \$500 billion USD fund which is aimed at preventing, at being a firewall preventing the crisis from spreading to other countries in Europe. And part of our efforts right now is to try to really increase the bailout fund or to leverage it up to real financial mechanism. And of course it's not easy. We are looking for money, we are looking for the best possible management for the fund. And here it also has to do with the IMF. Discussions are going on with the IMF, with Christine Lagarde and Mario Draghi in order to establish a link between the IMF, the European bailout fund, and the ECB, the European Central Bank, in order to have the real firewall, the

important one, that is efficient in preventing the crisis from spreading in Europe. And again it takes time, that's another problem.

**Ms. Sciolino:** If we could move the discussion from the important and depressing issue of the debt to another important and depressing issue which is Syria. Syria is not Libya. It's a much more complicated society. Geopolitically it's much more important in terms of the future of any sort of revolution, of the Palestinian crisis. It's military is not necessarily one that will be part of a democratic solution. It doesn't have the same pillars of society that you had in Iran with its revolution. Can you layout some of the challenges, not only with the current efforts to work together in the Security Council to forge a joint strategy forward but also your view of where Syria is headed?

**Ambassador Delattre:** I'll try to be short about this. In Syria we're speaking about near 5,000 people killed there under a near-barbarian repression. So we are speaking about a serious situation, that's the first point. The second point is that, contrary to the situation in Libya, there is that there is no consensus among the Security Council to act in a decisive manner. Syria, as we have talked about it, the Chinese, the Russians, a couple of others are opposed to any resolution with peace, to summarize. So we cannot have any action decided, whatever we might wish. We cannot have a military action or potentially a diplomatic action decided by the Security Council. So we have to find other ways to prevent this oppression from going out of control. It's already out of control. So the first thing we do is to support our position. There is a National Syrian Council which is growing stronger and stronger every month in Syria that we try to support, that we try to help get better organized. So that, and we can say openly now, so that they can take the power and stop the numberless terms of President Assad. So that's the first thing. The second thing in terms of human rights, a more difficult process, but we try through the Human Rights Council to raise committees, commissions, experts to send people through humanitarian corridors that we want to put in place to send the message to Assad that he is under the watch of the international community and he cannot continue. And I will tell you the last piece of information we have. We are awaiting anxiously another military attack against Homs or potentially other cities in Syria.

So to go back to my first point, we have to—and we don't give up trying to convince the Russians and the Chinese—I will say more so the Russians than the Chinese—to try to do something to pressure Syria. Now on the policy side, there are two things that were unexpected. The first policy thing is the position of Turkey. Turkey, if you remember, two weeks ago was in favor of the leadership in Syria, openly supporting it. Today, Turkey has begun the process of sanctions—I should have mentioned that also, very tough sanctions that we put in place, the Europeans, the Americans, in Syria. So Turkey joined us in establishing and then tightening the sanctions against Syria. And it played a role because Turkey is like the brother of Syria, historically. The second thing is that you have the Arab League—and this was totally unexpected—probably thanks to Americans, French, and other efforts, the Arab League also decided to engage in sanctions against Syria. So the positive side is that Syria is more and more isolated, which is important to the Syrian people, which is also very important strategically because it means the axis that exists between Syria and Iran—an axis that is so dangerous for our security is weakening. So, we are not there yet, but we are working hand in hand—the Europeans, the French, and the Americans to try to promote the revolution in Syria, domestically and internationally cut the link between Syria and Iran and a few terrorist organizations that we know of.

**Ms. Sciolino:** Yeah I would agree with you about the brutality of Syria, having once been inside of a Syrian prison.

**Question:** I guess I was disturbed by what Putin said about Iran. I was watching the Republican presidential debate with Newt and Mitt competing with one another for who could be the most hawkish on Iran. But moving to Bush's position on invading Iraq and France's involvement there. I was reading and I've had many conversations on the importance of a good friend, is like a good marriage. It's not a rubber stamp. And I thought the press viewed it correctly at the time. I'm disappointed, quite frankly, with the Libya thing. It may just be me. I guess I could understand from the standpoint of the coup with



Qaddafi there. I could see the reasons. But bombing Iran, going to war with Iran, I don't see that as a positive thing. I don't understand why your government or any government would say that we have a military solution to that problem.

**Ambassador Delattre:** I hope that was the last one because it's a big question. One thing on Iraq because it's important. We the French are not particularly known for our modesty. But on Iraq you will never hear me or any other French official having a "we told you so speech," never. Frankly because, as you all know, at the beginning of the war we thought it dangerous, not a good thing to do. But ten years later, in a way the jury is out, nobody knows, history will judge and we are in the same boat. More importantly, we are on the same boat with Iraq. And we want, the situation being what it is, we want the democratic situation in Iraq to be successful. The economic recovery is taking off—this is good English. So we are in the same boat in Iraq, a key position in the Arab world. In Iran we don't favor, things as they are today, a military operation. What we say is that Iran is investing resources year after year to become nuclear. That investment has a military flavor that is quite strong. And that in Iran acquiring nuclear weapons, pardon, is really unacceptable, cannot be accepted for the three reasons I mentioned—security of Israel, the existential threat over that, to the security of Israel and at the minimum to the *liberté de mouvement*, the freedom of Israel. Second situation, Iran becoming nuclear means that many neighboring countries are probably going to do the same. And the third would be the death of the nonproliferation regime that we put in place, so these are all big reasons. It's really unacceptable.

Now short of a military intervention, what can we do? It's not the perfect solution but it seems to help, what we can do is severely tighten the sanctions. We didn't go as far as we could have gone until now. And that's why President Sarkozy proposed last week, I believe, to do or make major steps forward, one to freeze every relationship with the Iranian Central Bank, which is the key of the Iranian funding, the key of the financing of nuclear research and secondly to ban every export of Iranian oil outside of Iran. And if we do this with the sanctions of Iran, which are already tightening a lot, it is going to be really very efficient. Because what does it provoke? It is a split within the Iranian regime, potentially more, but at least a split in the Iranian regime that could force them to renounce their nuclear investment because the price to pay would be too high. And it seems to us that this way can work, which we will not give up. It would add a new step, a new dimension, an unprecedented level of sanctions. And here we are working right now, presently, with our American friends to go this way. We know it's not easy. But if we stick with this, the whole market, if they have no other way and we are really serious, it will stop the Iranians from nuclear spread.

**Ms. Sciolino:** I'm going to liberate you now. This has been one of the most difficult days. Any time a minister comes to town it's extremely difficult. And you were so generous for giving us your time. Thank you for your extraordinarily frank and clear exegesis and explanation of so many weighty issues facing us. And thank you for inviting us all here tonight. I hope that everyone enjoyed it. [*Applause.*]

**Ms. Ellis:** I'd like to thank not only the Ambassador but also Elaine for doing this wonderful program. We really appreciate it. Thank you very much. [*Applause.*]