

# Iran's Readiness To Negotiate Is Not a Sign of Weakness

An Interview with Ambassador Ali Reza Sheikh Attar

*Iran's Ambassador to Germany, Ali Reza Sheikh Attar, gave this interview to Andreas Persson in Germany on Feb. 22, 2012. Sheikh Attar had been ambassador to Berlin in 2008. He was previously National Security Advisor and Deputy Foreign Minister in Tehran. From 1992-1998 he was ambassador to India.*

**EIR:** Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for taking the time to give us this interview.

My first question is: Contrary to the assertions of many politicians in the U.S., Great Britain, and other countries, reliable sources in the U.S. report that in October 2011, the U.S. National Intelligence Board circulated a classified update to the November 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran's nuclear program. That 2011 NIE update extended the finding from 2007, that Iran had ceased working on weaponization in late 2003, and there was no evidence that Iran has resumed that work.

And appearing alongside CIA Director David Petraeus, before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, only last week, James Clapper, the Director of National Intelligence in the U.S., said of Iran, "We do not believe that they actually made the decision to go ahead with nuclear weapons."

Before the hearing, according to James Fallows of *The Atlantic*, Clapper had released his Worldwide Threat Assessment, which said, "We

do not know ... if Iran will eventually decide to build nuclear weapons." With this, Clapper thus reaffirmed the assessment of 16 U.S. intelligence agencies from 2007, that reportedly was also repeated in 2011, that the United States does not believe that Iran has decided to become a nuclear weapons state.

What is your explanation for this contradiction?



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*Iranian Ambassador Ali Reza Sheikh Attar*

## Iran's Policy on Nuclear Weapons

**Sheikh Attar:** In the name of God, apart from those agencies' quotations, there are several forms of evidence which affirm that Iran doesn't intend to have nuclear weapons. One of them I can refer you to, is [former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency Mohammad] ElBaradei's memoirs, which were published recently, with the title *The Age of Deception*. Out of twelve chapters, if I'm not mistaken, four are about Iran. And in various paragraphs of this book, he affirms that they [the IAEA] did not find any evidence that Iran is diverting from peaceful nuclear activity toward weapons. And even he blames the Americans and Europeans, because, although they could not find any evidence for that [nuclear weapons development—ed.], they wanted to make this nuclear issue into a pretext for putting pressure on Iran—for totally other reasons. This is what he says.

Another reason that I can refer you to, is the *fatwa*, or religious decree, of Iranian religious leaders, including Ayatollah Khamenei, as Spiritual Leader.

You should know that Iranian society is religious and the Iranian ruling system is a religious system. We are not a secular country. And in a religious system, religious decrees have a very high value, and I can say that a decree for the Iranian people is much more important than any resolution, including UN Security Council resolutions. Because the obligation set by a decree is a religious obligation, a moral obligation, not only a legal obligation.

Our Spiritual Leader has mentioned several times that producing and use of nuclear or chemical weapons is forbidden, even during the Iran-Iraq War [1980-88], when Saddam Hussein used an extensive dimension of chemical weapons against Iran. Maybe you know that now we have about 100,000 Iranians who were injured by these chemical weapons, and all of them are confronted with cancer! And they are dying, every day.

At that time, Ayatollah Khomeini, then Iran's Spiritual Leader, said that you cannot use chemical weapons



*Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, issued a fatwa, or religious decree, forbidding the use by Iran of nuclear or chemical weapons. This is a religious obligation.*

against Saddam Hussein's army, as a retaliation. This is a religious obligation that we have. We have the same obligation regarding nuclear weapons, which *very, very openly*, and several times and repeatedly, have been mentioned by our [current] Spiritual Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and other leaders.

However, sometimes people say that this is just a tactical gesture. I should tell you that this is the difference between a secular ruling system and a religious one: In a secular ruling system, you can use tactics every day, as they do. But in a religious one, the credibility of a religious leader is not because of his political character, but because of his moral stature. And if

a religious leader wants to change his decree, definitely his moral stature will be damaged tremendously among the people, and he will not have any more credibility. Therefore, a Spiritual Leader, when he issues a decree, will not withdraw it.

The truth is, and all the evidence supports it, that Iran does not want to have a nuclear weapon. But, you ask, why are there so many disputes? My analysis is that particularly the United States and the British want to use any opportunity for revenge against Iran. There is no doubt that the Iranian Revolution caused big damage to the reputation of the Americans and their, the British. Why? Because the Iranian Revolution disclosed that they are bullying, they are oppressive, they want to be aggressive, and, if people want to confront this aggressiveness or bullying, it is possible, regardless of the fact that the oppressors are superpowers. This damaged them a lot, and they want revenge.

There have been a lot of cases in which they behaved this way. Like in the Iran-Iraq War. It was quite clear to everybody that Saddam Hussein was the invader who started the war, but they *openly*, without any shame, supported him. Saddam Hussein was a dictator. Saddam Hussein was a murderer—not in recent years, but since his beginning in the Ba'ath Party—everybody knows that, what kind of policies they had. But you remember, there was a law where Iraq and Washington

did not have political relations. Yet in '82, Donald Rumsfeld went there, met Saddam Hussein, and the feelings are professed now again, after 25 years, 30 years.

Or take some cases of the behavior of the British or even Europeans: Who supplied chemical weapons and technology, and raw material, and machinery for Saddam Hussein? It is quite clear: German companies! Who supplied the Super-Étendards and Mirage aircraft which bombarded Iranian cities and killed innocent Iranian people? It was France!

So, even Saddam Hussein's invasion, which clearly was a very brutal invasion against Iran, was used by them as a pressure tactic! And there are a million other instances. Nowadays, they are using this nuclear issue as a pretext, as a pressure tactic against Iran. It doesn't matter whether Iran has or intends to have nuclear weapons, or not! The Israelis have! The Indians have, and Pakistanis have, but they are not applying such pressure against them.

My point is that, even if we say, "Okay, we will suspend all of our nuclear activities, peaceful nuclear activities," they will not relinquish the pressure. We had this experience, between 2003-2005. So, the Americans and the British want to have various opportunities for pressure against Iran.

## The Danger of War

**EIR:** As you mentioned, there is strong influence in the U.S. from the British side. And there are also people, as you see in this U.S. Intelligence Estimate, who are against the British policy, who offer some resistance inside the United States, and there are several high-ranking politicians in the U.S. and in Russia who have warned, that if there's a military intervention against Syria or Iran, it would "destroy the region for the next 100 years," or even lead to a thermonuclear war on a global scale, with the U.S., Great Britain, and some NATO countries on the one side, and then Russia, China, and some other countries on the other. The attack on Syria or Iran would be the trigger. And given the destructive power of these nuclear weapons, this could lead to the extinction of human civilization. What is your view on this?

**Sheikh Attar:** My view is somewhat different, because I don't want to make any analogy with the Cold War era. The situation is quite different. Yes, if there is any attack from the United States, or its allies, or Israel,



*An Iranian soldier during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88). Saddam Hussein, who was supported by the West at that time, used chemical weapons during the war.*

definitely there will be reaction from Iran. Experience shows that Iran never has been neutral against invasions. When Saddam Hussein started his invasion against Iran, our situation was very weak. They could come into Iran, they could conquer thousands of square kilometers and many cities. But we did not withdraw. We didn't say, okay, since you have occupied our land, and because we have a weak army, we relinquish our claims to our national sovereignty. We resisted for eight years, we pushed them back, and ultimately, Saddam Hussein was toppled. Definitely, it was our influence.

There are many more instances. No matter who wanted to provoke Iran, or to do something against Iran, Iran was not silent. Definitely this time, we will not be silent. But does it mean that [the Russians] will come to the field? I don't see any reasons for that; we don't need that! Because we feel that Iran has a great deal of influence—moral influence in the region. Actually we have an inspirational power. We have a lot of friends in the region. They are not our mercenaries; they are not groups that we organized. But they believe that we are right, and they believe that if we are invaded, their values will be invaded! This is one thing that should be understood well. They respect the values that we respect: Invasion against us is invasion against the values that they believe in. And definitely, they will show resistance. This will not be only Iran.

And, yes, this is correct, that if such an invasion happens against Iran, the whole region will be influenced. But it doesn't mean, at least in our opinion, that the Rus-

sians will start a nuclear war, and there's no need for that. Rather, it will be a reaction in the whole region, from the whole Muslim world against the invaders.

**EIR:** Do you think that there is a connection between the accelerating systemic collapse of the [trans-Atlantic] financial system and the war danger, this war drive from the British side? Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said recently, that he does not rule out that "fundamental economic processes are shifting the axis of development to another region, namely the Asia-Pacific region, where there are new powerful centers of economic growth, with the inclusion of China, India, and Brazil. Probably some people in the West consider this a negative tendency....

And maybe the present events in the Middle East are an attempt to compensate for the loss of influence in the global economy by reckless and provocative actions." With the collapse of the trans-Atlantic economies, the imperialists here have no other means of exercising control over, for example, the Middle East. Economic sanctions, for example, don't have any effect if you don't have economic power yourself. And then, the only thing left would be raw military power. And the fact that the Russians see it like this, that could be dangerous even if, from your standpoint, the Russian reaction is not primary—this is the view expressed by the Russians.

And the other thing with the collapse of the trans-Atlantic region: The focal point of power is moving away from the trans-Atlantic to a Pacific orientation, and this may cause some people, of the British view in the U.S., and some people in London, to want a very big, global confrontation, as you saw with the buildup to World War I, for example, that when they don't have any means economically to control things, they simply went for war, and hoped that after the war they would land on top and have a determined influence. This was the policy of the British at that time.

Do you think there is a connection between the war drive from the NATO countries and the collapse of our economies in Europe and the United States?

**Sheikh Attar:** ...Maybe this could be true in the last decades, but nowadays, the United States and European economies are in a very serious crisis, so starting a new war would be a kind of disaster for them. This is the reason that they are thinking about changing their military strategy, as it has been published very recently: They want to decrease the manpower; they want to shift

some of their centers for various countries, and they may do something like that. But the economic crisis creates problems for them.

There is another social phenomenon, that in the United States, patriotism now is quite different from what it was three, four decades back, even during the Vietnam War. Who is in the Army of the United States [today]? Many of them are immigrants, Latin American immigrants and others, because of the incentives, like university support, or whatever it is. This type of army is not a warrior army. As they claim, U.S. casualties in Iraq were about 4,000. For just 4,000 casualties, they withdrew totally from Iraq! So, it shows that that the U.S. Army is not a warrior army! Why do they want to be dependent more and more on high tech? High tech cannot substitute for an army.

So the social, economic, and even cultural situation in the United States is not such that they can manage a war. This is the reason that they are talking about small-scale special operations, like what they did with this al-Qaeda leader in Pakistan. But even that cannot be a war. They cannot do such a thing with Iran, because Iran's quite different.

Therefore, I believe that neither the Americans, nor the British, nor even the Israelis, believe in the deep parts of their mind, that they can have a war with Iran. They know what the consequences will be. In my opinion, this is like a scenario. They say, "Okay, we have to impose sanctions, because if we do not, the Israelis will attack Iran." How can the Israelis attack Iran?

**EIR:** Good question!

**Sheikh Attar:** The maximum range of attack of the Israelis against Iran, are surgical attacks. You know what a surgical attack is: bombarding of some nuclear facilities, like the Bushehr power plant, those centers which have peaceful nuclear research activities. What will be deemed the impact of that? First of all, the Iranian reaction, or Iran's friends' reactions. But more important than that, the Israelis have so far lost a lot of their positive reputation in the world, and everybody is blaming them. After an attack on the Iranian peaceful nuclear centers, what will be the reaction all over the world, even in Europe? Europe is not only the parties who are ruling the countries. Britain is not only Gordon Brown and those ruling figures; there are ordinary people on the street, who every day organize anti-war demonstrations, even in London!

Or in the United States: What will be the reaction,

the reaction of public opinion? Yes, they have a lot of control over the media; even the Zionists do. But this generation is not fooled like previous generations were by the mass media. The dimension of various media, particularly the Internet and the visual media, is causing the monopoly of the formal official media to go down and down and down! You can go to web-blogs, you can read what is happening at various sites and the web-blogs, and what are their opinions, which are quite different from the official and formal opinions which are published in *Spiegel* or the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, or the *New York Times* or the *Guardian*.

Therefore, I think the professional military people, even professional politicians, know that war is impossible, or if it does happen, they cannot control the consequences. So they want to use leverage of phobia of war! Either in Iran or outside of Iran.

**EIR:** I think it's very true that this type of warfare, this new doctrine [of Obama], cannot work. Because of that, I think there is a danger that the only option is uncontrollable, this unleashing of chaos. And these attacks—in order to win—they would have to be nuclear attacks, and that's very dangerous. There are, of course, other things they're doing as well. There are also people who see the danger of that type of warfare, as you said, spinning out control.

I wanted to ask about other methods than direct warfare that they are using in Southwest Asia. The Russian ambassador to the UN recently pointed to the role of al-Qaeda in the armed opposition against President Assad's government in Syria. Is it not strange, that the same people who talk about how "all options are on the table" against Iran—namely people in the U.S. and Britain—don't think it's a problem to be on the same side as al-Qaeda, now?

**Sheikh Attar:** This is not the only strange thing. There are some other strange phenomena, and one of them is this: Nowadays, countries which do not have parliaments, do not have Constitutions, do not have elections, are defending democracy! It's silly! Can you imagine, that a country like Saudi Arabia, is concerned about "democracy"?

**EIR:** No!

### Who Supported al-Qaeda?

**Sheikh Attar:** Secondly, go to the background of al-Qaeda. Who is al-Qaeda, who was bin Laden? Go back to the '80s, the late '80s; who supported them,

who organized them? This was the United States and the CIA. Now it is disclosed! Who organized the Taliban in Afghanistan? Go to the mid-'90s, or early '90s, when the communist regime collapsed in Afghanistan, the mujahideen came to power; they had an internal war with each other. At that time, the United States came to the conclusion, that in this case, in Afghanistan, Iran may have some influence, and may use the situation in Afghanistan, because of the cultural-historical relations and the support of Iranians for the mujahideen who were fighting against Russia, also internally at that time. So they decided, for the containment of Iran, to create a government or a ruling system in Afghanistan, which has fundamental differences with Iran, and fundamental problems with Iran, ideological problems.

If you go to the historical documents of that time, the Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs was a lady whose name was Robin Raphel. Her husband was U.S. ambassador during the rule of Zia ul-Haq in Pakistan, and he was killed in that air crash, when Zia ul-Haq was killed. She was appointed as Assistant Secretary of State; at that time, I was ambassador in India, and I was monitoring what was happening. Almost every month or two months, she came to Islamabad, and she conferred with then-Minister of Home Affairs in Pakistan, retired Gen. [Naseerullah Khan] Babar. General Babar was an extreme Sunni, and he and Robin Raphel cooked up this recipe for organizing those extremist religious students who were studying in Pakistani religious schools. They thought: We can organize them, we can supply them, and they can contain Iran. You can find these documents easily.

There was an oil company, which was supposed to establish a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan, via Afghanistan, to Pakistan, in order to sideline an Iranian project. They took about 200 Taliban to Texas and they trained them as guards for this pipeline. This is the story of the Taliban, which usually and deliberately is ignored.

So, it is not strange that they are not worried about al-Qaeda in Syria, because al-Qaeda is their baby. However, sometimes this was a nasty baby, and had to be punished. They killed Osama bin Laden, because Osama bin Laden had a lot of information on intelligence from the past and their relationship with the CIA. They even threw his body into the sea! They didn't want to have a tomb.

Go to this operation: bin Laden was living in a very safe area in Islamabad, an area of diplomats, army generals, politicians, in a very good house. Then, he



was attacked by a special task force! It is good story for the films! But what was behind that? In our opinion, if you go to the standard positions of al-Qaeda leaders, like Zarqawi, who was in Iraq, and was killed—he was killing a lot of Shi’as and ordinary people; or like Ayman Zawahiri, who is now leading al-Qaeda; their main problem is not the United States. Their major problem is the type of thinking of Iranians, who want to propagate a democratic and free Islam. This is their main concern, not the United States. So, it is not strange, now, that al-Qaeda is involved in Syria, because they [the U.S. and Britain] feel that Syria is vulnerable, and they are not concerned about al-Qaeda; they are not concerned about terrorists in Syria; they are not concerned about civil war in Syria. However, the civil war, of course, will damage all neighboring countries: Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, even Israel! But they don’t care.

### The Sykes-Picot Policy

**EIR:** Exactly. This remark by the Russian UN ambassador was said in the context of discussing a UN resolution against Syria that could be used as a pretext for war. And in the same context, the Syrian ambassador to the UN made another interesting remark. He said, “The wild tendency of some Western countries to interfere into our internal and external affairs is not accidental or new, but has been a systematic and continued approach since the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916.” So, I would like to ask you if you see a continuation of these old colonial policies, and the old colonial powers—in that case, it was France and Great Britain—in the present situation?

**Sheikh Attar:** Yes. This question is a long historical discussion. I will answer briefly. I would like to point out that although the Ottoman Empire, at the beginning of the 20th Century, was called the “sick man of Europe,” the colonial powers were still concerned about a Muslim empire.

Secondly, these Europeans were very eager to take revenge on Muslims, for two reasons: the Crusades and the Ottoman invasions toward Europe, and the con-

FIGURE 1

### The Sykes-Picot Division of the Mideast (1916)



EIRNS

quest of part of the European continent near Vienna. Historically, they wanted revenge. Even nowadays, you can find a trace of this desire for revenge in the minds of many politicians, journalists, scholars. You can find how angry they are against the Muslim-born, or Muslim minority, or Turk minority who are living here.

Therefore, at the beginning of 20th Century, and in the middle of First World War, when it was quite clear that the Ottoman Empire would be defeated, the Sykes-Picot agreement was started. However, it was implemented in the early '20s. They had two plans at that time: the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, as an umbrella—although it was very weak system, it functioned as an umbrella for the Muslim world; secondly, the creation of Israel as a good base for the West in the Middle East. Because at that time, it was quite clear that the Middle East possessed large reserves of oil, and oil was very much wanted for industrial life and the survival of West, and even for war; with the First World War at that time, access to gasoline and benzene was a very vital factor.

So, they decided simultaneously to dismember the Ottoman Empire and to create Israel as a base for the West’s presence in the Middle East. This was the reason that the Sykes-Picot agreement was prepared, then signed, and implemented, drawing the borders in the

Middle East. Even nowadays there are a lot of problems that came about as a consequence of the Sykes-Picot Treaty.

For instance, dividing the Kurds between Turkey and Iraq; or the creation of Turkey, as what it is now. They were all consequences of that. Or, the creation of some countries, like Jordan, and others. Historically, this is strange.

So, this was the main reason for the Sykes-Picot agreement, which still is valid. Creating Israel, as an important base for a Western presence in Middle East, and avoiding the formation of any power, even a middle-sized power, in the Middle East. . . .

What is happening in Syria—of course, Syria is not a power, or middle-sized power, but what is happening in Syria is to cause problems for the potential powers in the Middle East, including Iran and Turkey, and to some extent Iraq. Of course, Iran and Turkey have different policies in this area; but if this chaos in Syria intensified, if there is a civil war, if there is any ethnic war, who will lose out? Even Turkey. Of course, Iran will not be a loser, because we do not have common borders with Syria.

So, they want to cause all these headaches for regional countries, in order to prevent the formation of potential powers and development. This was the philosophy behind the Sykes-Picot agreement, which still is valid.

## Jews in Iran

**EIR:** You mentioned that after the time of Sykes-Picot, Israel was founded; it was previously a British territory under the League of Nations mandate. And you also mentioned the role of Zionism. I would like to ask you, what is the role of the Jewish minority in Iran? Because I think the perception may be that Iran, in its criticism of some of the policies of Israel, has something against Jewish people per se; but I understand there is quite a minority of Jewish people in Iran. What is the relationship between the Islamic Republic and this Jewish minority?

**Sheikh Attar:** First of all, you should make a bold distinction between Judaism and Zionism. . . . Judaism,



<http://windowsoniran.wordpress.com>

*"You should make a bold distinction between Judaism and Zionism," said Ambassador Attar. There is a small, but thriving Jewish community in Iran. Shown is a Jewish wedding in Tehran, 2008.*

and the Jewish community in Iran, have always coexisted in secure life, not only today. Even before Islam, Cyrus the Great was a king who rescued the Jews who were living as slaves under the Babylonian emperor. This is the reason that they respect the Iranians, and that there are some Jewish saints who are buried in Iran, and Jews go for pilgrimages there.

If you go through two thousand years of the history of Iran, even Islamic history, about 14 centuries, you can't find even one incident of Muslim-Jewish war confrontation, unlike here in Europe. You cannot find any ghetto in Islamic countries, particularly Iran, unlike here in Europe. You cannot find any isolated places or regions, where Jews or Christians were excluded. On the contrary, if you go through Iranian history, there have been Jewish scientists, 1,000 years back, in the Dark Age of Europe: Jewish scientists, Jewish doctors, were very much respected by Iranians.

Nowadays, although the community is not a big one—there are about 20,000—they have one member of parliament in Iran. For your information, in Iran, almost every 200-250,000 Iranians have one member of parliament, but 20,000 Jews have one member of parliament. You can compare.

I can tell you a very, very new story: Maybe you have heard the name of Oliver Stone. His son recently converted to Islam—why? He went to Iran. This is

what he has said in his interview: I saw the Jewish synagogue, Christian church, and Muslim mosque near to each other in Isfahan, and how people respect each other, and even how government is supporting all that, too. This was the reason he converted.

The Jewish member of the Iranian parliament is a doctor. He manages a Jewish charity which has a hospital in the southern part of Tehran, and the absolute majority of the patients who go to that hospital are Muslims. He's a very respected man. Many German parliamentarians who have gone to Tehran have met him. He is one of the objectors and protesters against Zionism; he's an intellectual.

Members of the Jewish community in Iran are in the universities, they are in business, their synagogues are active, and their charities are active. So, they have a normal life, they are friends with other Iranians. And as I told you, if you go through our history, we have *never, never, never* had any confrontation between Muslims and Jews, or Muslims and Christians—compare that with Europe.

## British Colonialism

**EIR:** I read in an interview with the *Financial Times Deutschland*, that you pointed out the specific role of the British in Iran, going back to their involvement in the coup in 1953, against the elected government of [Mohammad] Mossadegh at that time. Can you comment on that?

**Sheikh Attar:** Well, of course it was a manifestation of the old intentions of British in Iran since the 19th Century, because when the British were present in India, they wanted to control Iran, because their rival was Russia. But even after that, the British felt that because they had a big network of their agents inside Iran, they could utilize the United States as a new superpower after World War II. Well, in Iran, the elected government of Mossadegh said: Now the age is changing; why should you British monopolize our oil, and give us five or six cents per barrel? And he nationalized the oil.

The British were very angry about that, not only because of the profit that they lost, but because they felt that the action would inspire other countries, which it did inspire—after all, [Egyptian President Gamal Abdel] Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal after that; and it inspired all. The nationalization of oil was a phenomenon generalized in all countries after that! The British were very angry; they wanted to take revenge. Of course, they needed the Americans at that time.



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*U.S. President Truman and Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, Oct. 23, 1951. The ambassador reports that the British convinced Truman's successor, President Eisenhower, to topple Mossadegh two years later.*

When Truman was in power, he did not believe that they should topple Mossadegh. He wanted to deal with Mossadegh, somehow. And of course, this was the mistake of Mossadegh. But after Truman, when Eisenhower came to power, as a Republican, the British easily convinced him that, “we should topple Mossadegh, and we should have a military coup, and bring back the Shah,” who was hated by the people! So, what was the consequence of that? What else? Immediately, the Shah came back to power, and Iran became a good agent of the British and Americans.

But people did not forget. Exactly 25 years later, the Revolution happened in Iran. Why did this Revolution happen? Why did people, millions and millions, come into the streets and support the late Imam Khomeini's ideas? It was in memory of that coup, and of that betrayal.

I am from the generation which was born in 1952, and I remember always, in the house, my parents—they were not political people, they were ordinary people—but they were always talking about how the Shah came



to power by the support of foreigners, and how the foreigners betrayed us, of our votes which we gave to Mossadegh. Millions of Iranians thought like this. And this was the impact of that military coup.

The British always felt that they have a lot of agents in Iran, and they could control Iran, and this was how they misled Americans! They told the Americans, “Don’t worry, we will collect enough intelligence from Iran.” But they couldn’t collect enough intelligence; otherwise the Revolution could not have happened.

**EIR:** I think it’s interesting, what you said about what happened when Eisenhower came in, because I think Truman was probably a worse President than Eisenhower, but it shows also that there is a difference between who is officially in charge, the President, and who is really running the show. Because as Eisenhower was leaving, he warned against the military-industrial complex in the United States. And he supported the nationalization of the Suez Canal. When Kennedy came in, he was very much against these policies of aggression. He opposed an escalation in Vietnam, that was probably why he was killed. And in this time, when there’s a transition from one President to the next, both in the case of Iran in ’53, and in the case of the Bay of Pigs [1961], they took the opportunity when the new President came in, and said: By the way, we’re going to invade Cuba tomorrow.

I think that shows that there are people in the United States—contrary to these 16 intelligence agencies that say, “Iran is not making a nuclear weapon”—there are other people in the U.S. institutions who actually don’t look to the fundamental security interests of the United States, or Israel for that matter; they have a different agenda. You really see that, in these shifts. I think these people are traitors to the United States, and you can even see a similarity between how the British have dealt with Iran and how they treat the U.S. The United States is also a former colony of the British.

**Sheikh Attar:** Yes, the reason these people have this idea, is to get revenge against Iran. As I said, Iran showed that it is possible to resist the oppressive system of the whole West. Imam Khomeini showed this. They wanted, and still want to take revenge, in order to teach a lesson to others, that whoever, like Iran, wants to stand up, and wants to diverge from our line, will be punished. And they think that this is in the national interest of the United States, having control over the world is in their national interest. They say there should

not be some bad guys who change their lines. Iran was one of them, they say, so Iran should be punished.

But we believe that they cannot be successful, because nowadays, in the young generation, people are thinking in other ways.

## Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy

**EIR:** Despite the large oil reserves that Iran possesses, Iran has insisted that it is absolutely necessary to develop peaceful nuclear energy for the country. That could be because the continued development of human civilization depends on achieving higher energy-flux density in the production process, more and more energy-dense sources. And it could also be said that fossil fuels are too precious to be simply burned up and used as fuel. Can you say something about that?

**Sheikh Attar:** First of all, regarding the new technology, you know the converting of oil and gas into petrochemical products is very important, and the additional value of these products is extremely high, sometimes 1,000 times more than the value of oil. So, it is very prudent and wise, to convert gas and oil to petrochemicals. Even today, there are some new technologies which are being developed by using viruses and bacteria, so that you can convert oil into petrochemicals. It’s very high-tech, and it is actually a kind of biotechnology. This is one of the convincing reasons that we should keep our oil, instead of selling it for burning.

Secondly, compare the price of energy that stems from the nuclear power process, with the energy that is a product of diesel power stations. When the price of one barrel of oil is more than \$65-70, it is feasible, very feasible, to use nuclear energy instead. And when, like nowadays, the price for a barrel of oil is more than \$110, that shows how much of that cost is fiscally beneficial. When we had very low-priced oil, maybe it was not fiscally beneficial to go to nuclear. But there was a big question from our side to the Westerners, even a short time ago, 30 years ago, when the oil price was about \$10. At that time, the Americans insisted that Iran should establish 20,000 MW of electricity from nuclear stations. How was it that at that time, it was safe and good, and recommended to the Iranians, while the price of oil was about \$10 per barrel, but nowadays, when it’s \$110, they ask us, “Why are you using nuclear energy?”

There are also environmental reasons. We Iranians, in some big cities, have a great problem with pollution, and we want to shift as much as possible from fossil energy to clean energy, and nuclear energy is one of

them. Nuclear energy is not the only phenomenon that we are concentrating on. We are even looking eagerly toward wind energy and solar energy—which, unfortunately, according to the orders of German government, is forbidden to us! Why? I'm telling you that, because here in the West, the Americans and Europeans believe that shifting to new types of energies, either nuclear or other energies, or even biotechnology, means that Iran will have tremendous development in science and technology! And this is intolerable for them. They think that science and technology should be a monopoly of the West! And they're angry about that. They're even angry about genetic engineering developments which are happening in Iran; we are now among ten countries that are developing genetic engineering. Or, nanotechnology: We are among the top ten countries that are developing nanotechnologies. They're really angry about it!

The other reason that they raise this issue—that we have fossil energy, “so why you are going to nuclear energy?”—is the consequence of shifting from traditional ways of supplying energy to modern ways, which will cause technological capacity.

### A Turning Point

**EIR:** I wanted to ask, in closing, if you would share the view that mankind as a whole is now at a branching point, in an existential crisis, if you will; and that the only alternative which is in accord with the dignity of man, is to finally establish a political and economic order for the whole world that focusses on the common aims of mankind: such as the elimination of hunger and poverty; energy and raw material security that you talked about, that you get through scientific and technological progress; and also a better understanding of the laws of the universe? Is this a view that you share?

**Sheikh Attar:** I very much share that. I should add to this that the global mismanagement is a product of the Second World War, the winners of the Second World



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*Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant. The ambassador outlines the numerous reasons that Iran, even though it has oil reserves, thinks it is essential to develop the peaceful use of nuclear power.*

War. They felt that they should manage the whole world, with their own ideas, put their thumbs on the scale in economics, with the IMF, or with the UN Security Council in politics, NATO in security. So, after more than 60 years, now it is quite clear that this basis of global management was false, was a mistake: Poverty, famine, pollution, crimes, social crimes, and a lot of problems that human beings are confronted with daily, are exactly a consequence of mismanagement of the global system, which is monopolized under the hand of very few countries, under the leadership of United States. This doesn't work—this cannot work.

You see, that even inside United States, there are problems regarding this—the ordinary people you see in demonstrations. Or in Europe.

You are right: We are at the threshold of a turning point in the history of human beings. High-tech, IT, genetics, biotechnology, these are all the means and ways that we can change the destiny of human being in the proper way, provided that these sciences and technologies are not monopolized in the hands of a few countries, or a few communities, or a few companies.

The human being is talented. Almighty God has bestowed these talents upon human beings. These talents should not be abused! We should give the opportunity to all human beings for the blossoming of their talents!

You see now, the young generation in Third World countries, in what miserable situations they live! What is the difference between that Black or Muslim, or a

Chinese youth, and that American youth who is studying in the best university, at Harvard or MIT? Why are we not creating opportunities for them, as we are creating opportunities for the others? This new technology, fortunately, is quite different from previous technologies. Mechanical technology could be monopolized in the hands of a few companies, while these high-tech and new technologies are widespread: IT cannot be monopolized in the advanced countries. Even in Africa, you can have the Internet, and if you are talented, you can create a program; you can even be a hacker! Hackers are not restricted to the United States; even in Africa, you can become a hacker!

No, this is a turning point for human civilization. This mismanagement should be banished, this monopoly should be banished, and this is what we say: that nowadays colonialism or the neo-colonialist age is over. Otherwise, there will be uprisings. You see what is happening in the Arab countries. They are complaining against Mubarak or Ben Ali, but who was the creator of Mubarak and Ben Ali? The major protests were a revolt against monopoly and mismanagement.

**EIR:** Do you have a message that you want to

convey, in respect to these P5+1 [the five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany] talks? The reason I'm asking, is that you were one of the first people who talked about resuming the talks after the new escalation of the danger of an attack from Israel [after the leaked Cabinet discussion in November last year].

**Sheikh Attar:** My suggestion to the 5+1 members is that, as we have shown before, we prefer diplomatic ways to any other way. And the recent letter of the chief negotiator to [EU foreign policy chief Catherine] Ashton has the same message. But keep in mind, if you want to misinterpret this as a sign of weakness of Iran, due to the so-called double-talk policy, it would be a big mistake. They want to say, "The sanctions caused this. It will cause backlashes and policy actions in Iran." The sanctions did not cause anything. [Secretary, Supreme National Security Council, Saeed] Jalili's letter to Ashton has the same literature and the same soul as former letters and former negotiations. So, the 5+1 should strictly avoid propagating the idea that Iran is withdrawing because of sanctions.

**EIR:** Thank you.

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