

**CENTER FOR  
STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**“THE UNITED STATES, FRANCE, AND EUROPE IN AN  
UNCERTAIN WORLD”**

**FEATURING  
HIS EXCELLENCY BERNARD KOUCHNER, FOREIGN MINISTER  
OF FRANCE**

**INTRODUCTION:  
DR. JOHN HAMRE,  
CSIS PRESIDENT AND CEO**

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JOHN HAMRE: Okay, ladies and gentlemen, can I ask that you find your seats. For an American audience, you quiet down real good. This is great.

MINISTER BERNARD KOUCHNER: For an American audience, but you have some French there.

MR. HAMRE: This is why I'm surprised. Okay, ladies and gentlemen. May I ask you to join me here in just a second for a word of introduction. Actually it's foolish to be introducing Foreign Minister Kouchner. As you can see by all of the television – well, you can't see because the lights are too bright. You can see from all the televisions, this is the kind of crowd we get for – and cameras we get either for Madonna or Bill Gates. So this is a huge crowd that's interested in hearing you today. And I think that is testimony to your remarkable energy and personality which you bring to this position, Foreign Minister.

This is a doctor who has had international experience from the very ground up, having been a medical technician initially and then a doctor, forming the organization – remarkable organization Doctors Without Borders, having committed his life to trying to deal with the suffering and the trauma and the difficulties that average humans have in the world, and now brings that level of passion and dedication and energy to his position as the foreign minister in France.

It was a brilliant stroke when President Sarkozy appointed you foreign minister. Everyone in Washington said that. And you can tell by the size of this audience that people want to hear you. We know that you are an important voice, not just for France but as a committed international citizen of the world that wants to see better things in this world. We know that you're going to bring that passion in this new position now in government.

So without delaying further, I introduce to you with a great deal of pleasure his excellency the honorable foreign minister of France, Bernard Kouchner. (Applause.)

MIN. KOUCHNER: Thank you very much. Well, you're fine looking.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends. It's of course a pleasure for me to address such a distinguished audience. I would like to thank CSIS, and especially your president, John Hamre, for this kind invitation. The quality of your analysis and the prestige of your research have made your committee as a benchmark player in the active debate that drives Washington in foreign policy matters. Here, as in France and worldwide, your reputation precedes you – as, it would seem, does mine.

So at the risk of reinforcing the stereotypes, I suggest today that we each remain faithful to our reputation, you in terms of the quality of what you say, and I in terms of my plain speaking. And I would suggest –

(Interruption from protester.)

MIN. KOUCHNER: But they are right, no war in Iran. Let them come. Ask them to come and sit, please.

So I suggest today that we reach – (shouting from the back of the room, “No war with Iran!). But I agree, stupid. (Laughter, applause.)

Mr. President, ask them to come and listen to me. I’m not in favor of a war in Iran. I want to prevent the war. So they were right.

So you in terms of the quality of what you say and I in terms of my plain speaking, but apparently they were not in agreement with that. And I would also suggest that we both make an effort to meet each other halfway, with me aiming for quality and you for plain speaking, since plain speaking is needed today between our two countries, as it was in the past.

We know the situation. We know that France, Europe and the United States have recently gone through one of the most strained periods in the history of their relations. I am obviously referring to the Iraq crisis. Harsh, often hurtful words were spoken. Friendship was often forgotten. We have put this behind us. It is therefore a good time for all of us here and now to really take stock, to take a fresh look at the issues high on the global agenda with this friendship and sincerity in mind, with one simple question – to what use will we put this renewed friendship?

This is what I would like us to speak to one another about today. I know there are expectations of France in this regard. I know hopes are high, but I would like to say, since friendship means being able to speak plainly, I would like to say that the future inevitably calls for the disagreement between us, since that is the healthiest way to work together to accept that allies can have different views in their own interests. When our policies diverge, this is too often called, in the United States, anti-Americanism. When our policies converge, it is too often called, in France, alignment.

Let us be adult. We define our position on issues according to our interests and our analysis. Yesterday, as today, and no doubt tomorrow, this interest and analysis will be most often closed, but sometimes they will differ or even be opposite. These potential differences should be fully discussed and not sink into belligerent rhetoric. And this should be done by comparing ideas, not slogans; well thought-out positions, not reactive stands.

This is why -- over and above the somewhat pathological inward looking questions about our relationship -- we absolutely must strengthen our common capacity

to act together deliver more peace and stability in the world. The shock wave from the Iraq crisis is strong and probably lasting: as regards the balances in the Middle East and other regions; as regards the image of the United States and the West in general everywhere in the world; as regards our capacity to tackle crises together legitimately and effectively.

Whether we like it or not, there are those in Europe and France who find this hard to accept. Your problem is also ours. It would therefore be mistaken for the European to ignore it, just as it would be dangerous for the United States to be oblivious to the repercussions of its choices on Europeans.

To be re-energized, our dialogue will draw on the strength of the bonds that unite us. It will draw on everything that France, Europe and the United States have in common – the shared history since the revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, common values rooted in individual freedom and universalism, and considerable exchange, whether commercial or financial, cultural or scientific.

Our dialogue will also draw on those intense moments that brought us together during the two world wars, when our very existence was in the balance, and then during the Cold War -- not to mention the American support right from the outset for the European endeavor which was the driving force for peace and rebirth on our continent after 1945.

Ladies and gentlemen, the wealth that underpins our dialogue also explains why our problems are felt so acutely when they arise, the importance placed on misunderstandings and the sensitivity that accompanies them. I believe that, rather than our differences, it has long been precisely our similarity that has irritated us. Let's bear in mind also that, despite some spats, we have never really parted ways. At the height of the Iraq crisis, when we were at complete odds, we cooperated with efficiency and discretion in the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In the Balkans as well we have always shown great unity, despite highs and lows of our relationship. I could mention many other examples, starting with our defense of a world that respects the differences between culture, religion and beliefs, a world in which we are open to the other, since we are sure of the values of human rights and democracy. On both sides of the Atlantic we have always believed in the supremacy of human dignity.

So after this observation of a relationship that has never actually been broken, after this reminder of a friendship rooted in the history and deep-seated values of too often-twin peoples, after this affirmation of a constant need for plain speaking, how are we going to embody this much-expected revival of our relations? If we are to remain plain-spoken, including when disagreeing, and if we have never ceased to be friends, what will the future be made of?

The worst crisis of the transatlantic relationship in general and of Franco-American relationship in particular have never been about transatlantic relations, but

about the rest of the world. The same can be said about the challenges that face us today. I would therefore suggest that we look up and away from Atlantic. I will start with the most immediate crisis before going on later to talk about the more global challenge we have to face.

In terms of crises, I think first of all of the Middle East. As you know, French diplomacy is actively engaged in this region. I myself went to Baghdad last month on a first visit by a French foreign minister in 20 years, and a first visit by a French official since Saddam Hussein was removed from power. And last week I was in Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. These issues are obviously on the agenda of all my meetings with Condoleezza Rice, who I will see tomorrow.

The landscape in the Middle East is now one of increasingly interdependent crises. Tensions have heightened, if not spread out in an arc of crisis extending from Iran and Afghanistan to Lebanon, through Iraq, Syria and the Palestinian territories. In addition to this phenomenon, I see several common factors in these seeds of tension and conflict. They represent the challenge we face.

The most striking one is the erosion of military power, as shown by the situation in Iraq today, the uncertain outcome of Israel's war on southern Lebanon in the summer of 2006, and NATO's difficulties in Afghanistan. These problems stem from the predominance of asymmetric conflict and, above all I believe, from the difficulty of adequately incorporating the military tool into a political strategy.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying that military power is no longer necessary or effective sometimes. But I do know that without a political dimension, the expression of power is paradoxically fragile. More than ever, the diplomat and the soldier, the two symbolic figures of international relations, identified by the French philosopher Raymond Aron, must work together. Winning peace after war is now the major challenge which forces us to devise a new approach to power. Hard power and soft power, to use Joe Nye's distinctions must be adequately combined during a conflict and after the conflict to help countries rebuild and establish sound institutions and governance: states to reconstruct, such as in Iraq; to strengthen, such as in Lebanon; to construct such as in Afghanistan; or piece together such as in Palestine -- with often, let's face it, limit to our effectiveness.

To untangle this web of crisis, we have to address each one with lucidity and determination. I would first of all like to raise Iran.

Unfortunately the ladies are gone. Ah, very good. Thank you. I'm very sorry, but you will listen to me. Thank you for coming back.

I would like to raise Iran, not so much because this is a subject of fierce debate in Washington, Paris and elsewhere, but it is -- but because this is the crisis most pregnant with threat for the future. Without exaggeration, I would say that our responses to this situation today will shape the world in which we live tomorrow, far beyond the bounds of

the region itself. But inside the region, this is very important to notice and to perceive tensions -- and tensions and threat.

President Sarkozy clearly stated his opinion to French ambassadors meeting in Paris at the end of August. His firmness and determination have not escaped you. I have long shared them. An Iran with a military nuclear capability is for us unacceptable for the security of the region, including but not only that of Israel, for our security as Europeans, for credibility of the non-proliferation regime, and for the credibility of the U.N. Security Council; in other words, the future of the multilateral order, and we are in favor of multilateral order. We cannot accept this prospect.

And don't forget the risk that the nuclear armed Iran will create in terms of regional proliferation. That's the most important. And I had the opportunity -- in question/answer at the end I will tell you what the Saudi Arabian and Jordan and other people has to say about that.

So we'll start a sort of regional proliferation. Its neighbor will be tempted to follow the same path. This is why the Europeans, through the action of Germany, France and Great Britain, with my good friend Javier Solana, first supported and then, joined by the United States as well as China and Russia, have launched a process to find a political solution. And we are still on this path -- a political solution.

The three Europeans spared no effort to negotiate after the October 2003 Tehran agreement. They did it so wholeheartedly -- some words are a bit too long in this language, eh? (Laughter.) They did so wholeheartedly. In response, what did Iran do? Iran resumed conversion, then enrichment. Despite this, the six presented an ambitious and substantive offer in June 2006 -- with American support, the six and the American. I know that that required a brave move by American diplomacy, which agreed to change a policy of nearly three decades. Despite this, the Iranian authorities have been playing for time, refusing any compromise and rejecting our offers.

After three Security Council resolutions, including two sanctioned resolutions, after increasingly ambitious and generous proposals, Iran has chosen to stick with its policy of *fait accompli* and continue with uranium enrichment. In other words, Tehran has chosen to confront the international community by ignoring the central demand of the international community: suspend your enrichment-related activities and reprocessing activities. This choice forced us to increase the pressure.

To those who say that we should handle Iran with kid gloves since it could destabilize the region, I say this. Look at its adventurism today and imagine what it will be like if Tehran saw itself one day protected by a nuclear umbrella. In a region that is already so tense, so fraught with danger, allowing a country to move forward on the path to a nuclear weapon would be irresponsible, without forgetting that, while the whole world concentrates on nuclear issues, its missile programs are moving forward in leaps and bounds.

With its European partners -- the United States, Russia and China -- France is therefore determined to explore all avenues to prevent the worst. That was my sentence.

I've been asked, what should be the worst? And I say, the worst would be war. But I was not looking for war. I wanted to prevent war, but the worst is war, and this is not my choice. On the contrary, my choice is peace, but let's consider without being hidden behind your little finger what's going on? Tension, tension and danger. So we have to adopt a real position of calming, decreasing the tensions in the region.

So we're determined to explore all avenues to prevent the worst. Dialogue, dialogue and dialogue again, therefore despite rebuffs what's keeping our head cool as far as we do, as far as we can go? Dialogue. I was just talking with a very famous minister in Tehran right now, and we have an appointment. We are always day by day, weeks after weeks talking to the Iranian bearing in mind that in this case, if sanction without dialogue can only lead to confrontation, dialogue without sanction is unfortunately tantamount to weakness. So we have to propose both.

Needless to say my priority, my greatest hope would be to obtain robust sanctions in the United Nations Security Council, a force resolution. We'll meet with my colleague -- okay, okay --

AUDIENCE MEMBER: (Off mike) -- kill children.

MR. KOUCHNER: Okay. So what do you propose to do?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Dialogue without sanctions. (Laughter.)

MR. KOUCHNER: Dialogue without sanctions. We are talking and talking and talking, and all the international community offered some, let's say non-efficient sanctions (into ?) resolution. We just asked them to stop -- I think -- (unintelligible) -- on the enrichment of uranium, a very let's say strong position, just stop and we talk. We asked them several times and they did not accept that.

Okay. Where am I? So I will meet with my colleagues of the 3-plus-3 in New York next week. We'll see, but the clock is ticking and we cannot afford given the risk to exclude other avenues, including that of further European Union sanctions. Okay? At the national level, the French government has asked French firms to show the greatest restraint in their investment in Iran, especially in the oil and gas sector. That's not so hard, no? It is important here to maintain as much of shared approach as possible. Bear in mind that Iran would come out triumphant for a transatlantic rift. This is why the bills in preparation in Congress seem to be particularly unhelpful. Their effect will be exactly the opposite of what we jointly seek.

Yet for all that, we have absolutely no intention to giving up in the dialogue. The door remains open. We must, time after time explain to the Iranian regime that its current policy can only lead to isolation -- its isolation, sorry -- on security and economic

stagnation, that if it can seize the opportunity that it represent to it by the international community, Iran and its people will have a chance to find a place that they deserve in the region and the international community, given their great history, their unique civilization and their potential, and that in this case, Iran youth will enjoy the future it deserves.

To sum up, we will do everything in our power to avoid the dreadful alternative laid out by President Sarkozy: the Iranian bomb or the bombing of Iran. We will do our outmost effort for that.

Following the matter of Iran, I would like to turn to the Israeli-Palestine peace process. I was in the region last week. I was able to appreciate on the ground the urgency of opening up a political perspective along with the determination of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the President Abu Mazan to move forward despite the fragile political situation, or perhaps I should say because of this fragile situation, such is their awareness of the abyss that will open up under their feet if the situation remains blocked.

We know that a consensus is now possible over the aim based under two-state formula with identified parameters; that is to say, in essence, the Clinton parameters. So there is a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. What remains to be seen is how to rebuild a tunnel, to quote my good friend Shimon Perez. Indeed, the peace process constantly runs the risk of being held hostage to violence and radicals. With the Palestinian – (unintelligible) – pursuit the ends of external manipulation in Gaza, Hamas has taken the place of Fatah by force. If we want to avoid Hamas being one they replace by an even more radical movement such as al Qaeda, let's help Israel and the Palestinian Authority to seize the moment and move forward. It is therefore urgent to isolate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the whirlpool of regional crisis, to cut the bonds that have formed between Tehran and Gaza in recent months. This is not just a justice imperative for people, but also a security imperative for all the peoples who reject violence and extremism. The international conference planned for November here in the U.S. will mark, I hope, a decisive step with (a binding ?) timetable.

France is prepared to fully assist this American initiative with hope rekindled in Palestine, the entire camp working for peace in monarchies of the Gulf, in Jordan and Egypt will be bolstered. I would like to raise also – and that is not to say that we have to abandon the Gaza population – not at all. We are following the support (of ?) France and the European Union, because this is a very difficult situation in Gaza today and we must not leave them alone and without any relief and any hope.

I would like to raise Lebanon where our two countries share the same aim and are working together to achieve it. Presidential elections and the respect of the constitution where our two countries will not allow themselves to deviate from this objective by deadly violence, which such yesterday was responsible of the disappearance of yet another political figure who has chosen the path of the dialogue and whom I had personally welcomed in Paris in le Saint-Cloud. This Antoine Ghanem died with four other Lebanese in an attempt in the night before yesterday and the day before. Such is the way to undermine the peace process. Five crimes like that have been committed.

I could also talk to you about Iraq, where I spent three days last month, and I could talk to you about Afghanistan where our two countries are working together on the ground. Yet, I prefer to keep this subject for our discussion and make the most of the time have left to take a broader look at my first point, the fruitful and complex relationship that unites our countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I said at the beginning, we have a tendency to discuss the transatlantic relationship as if we were cut off from the rest of the world, but the world is bubbling around us. Emerging powers are flexing their muscles and revisionist views are challenging the current orders. Surely, what is really at stake is to join effort in order to exert influence in the world in the way that is consistent with our interest and values. Surely that is where we should be seeking sign of the renewed friendship I referred to earlier.

It is appropriate to introduce the European dimension here. France is back in Europe. We intend to commit fully to European integration. That is France's vocation and horizon, particularly looking ahead to the French presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2008. Making the European Union a global actor of the international scene will be central to our priorities. You may as well know it right now. This means developing the European security and defense policy. More broadly, it means reviewing the European strategy approved by the European Council in December 2003, a task we wish to embark on, if our partners – European partners agree.

Of course, this European security strategy cannot be compared to the security strategy of a nation like the United States or France, but it represents the beginning of a doctrine for European Union external action and will help forge a common security culture. Do I need to say it again, a stronger Europe is absolutely not incompatible with the transatlantic relation. On the contrary, the two reinforce and complement each other. As much as Europe itself, Americans need – nobody questions this here – a strong Europe. It is only natural, you understand, that Europe reinforces its politic and military unity.

First economic power in the world, its strategic weight remains weak. To defend our values and our interests, we need to build a credible European defense. What is at stake is simply a certain idea of Europe. We will not stop some quarters here and in Europe from believing that this undertaking is in opposition to American power. This would make no sense. As for the Common Market 15 years ago and a Euro less than a decade ago, on European defense, America has moved from hostility to skepticism and from skepticism to acceptance. Next step must be support.

As a result, we Europeans are now your only allies with the capability to project stability externally through a combination of financial or economic incentive, development, assistance to the third world, economic assistance, or disincentives, sanctions – sorry – and of course, diplomatic and military tools. And this very moment, we are preparing an autonomous European military mission to Eastern Chad in response

to the united appeal to deal with all the aspects of the Darfur crisis. Among the levers Europe at his disposal, let's not forget its influence and attraction toward its neighborhood. Thanks to the success of European integration and to a common political will, we are in a better position now than a decade ago to act openly in our immediate environment. And I would like to say some words on Kosovo. Is it possible, chairman?

MR. HAMRE: It is. I hope you will.

MR. KOUCHNER: Thank you. Here again, Kosovo, our views converge even if our focus is naturally sharper because Kosovo is in Europe, and nowhere else both geographically and more importantly politically Kosovo is in Europe. The European perspective for the Balkans was reaffirmed at the Zagreb Summit in 2000 under the French presidency and subsequently at the Thessaloniki European Council. It is for these two reasons, geographical and political, that Kosovo is first and foremost a European issue.

There were risks in maintaining the status quo. There were also risks in acting. Together, by supporting the conclusion of the Ahtisari report and the principle of supervised independence for Kosovo, we considered that the former were greater than the latter. On our initiative, the Contact Group and the troika are currently pursuing efforts to rekindle dialogue between Serbs and Kosovars. I would like to stress how much we are relying on the United States support for a European solution. At stake is Europe's credibility to stabilize their environment and our identity in the Union open to the Balkans. It is therefore essential that we remain united if we want to avoid a recurrence of the tragedies of the past.

The European Union foreign policy was born in the Balkans. It must not fail in the Balkans. You Americans have everything to gain from the development of the European security and defense policy. We are well aware that you cannot and do not wish to intervene everywhere in the world every time a crisis breaks out. It is therefore in your interest for us to be able to do so, if we have to do so. We are not war addicted. I don't see any situation where we would act contrary to your interests or those of NATO.

NATO will remain a pillar of our defense policy, at the heart of the transatlantic relationship. It is true that NATO is being discussed in France in terms of our relationship with the organization and our place inside the organization. Let us not exaggerate the practical implication of those discussions. Much ground has already been covered. We already honor our place in NATO and our role at the service of alliance common goal through our financial and operational contributions. We have always been present as the biggest European contributor to the air operation in Kosovo in '99, then in K4, which we now command, and in Afghanistan since ISAP was set up.

But make no mistake about it. It is only in the framework of the strengthening of European defense that we will consider our role in NATO might change. Two papers are currently being drafted in France: one on defense and security, the other on foreign and European policy. The debate on NATO will be conducted calmly, seriously and

thoroughly, without taboo or precipitation and involve members of parliament and French public opinion.

In this spirit, it is also important to enhance the strategic content of the bilateral relationship between European Union and the United States. With the threat of terrorism and proliferation before us, we see the very *raison d'être* of this relationship. CSIS was right on target when it launch in 2004 a transatlantic dialogue on terrorism, of high calibre. Let us reinforce and broaden this dialogue thereby anchoring our day-to-day, operational cooperation in a broader strategic approach. Such a dialogue will enrich the transatlantic relationship and complement what we do at NATO without of course replacing it. This is a win/win proposal.

Ladies and gentlemen, after that brief overview of some of the crisis threatening our world and after those thoughts on the European Union and our ties with the United States, in conclusion, I would like to talk to you about global challenge affecting the world order because there are also factors that will determine the nature and the scope of transatlantic relations. I will focus on the issue on which we want to engage the United States. As you know, global warming is an issue that Europeans and many nations around the world feel very strongly about.

President Sarkozy referred to it on the very night he was elected. A great nation like United States has the duty not to impede efforts to combat global warming, one of the major challenges of this century. On the contrary, a great nation like the United States has a duty to take the lead in those efforts because the fate of whole humankind depends on them. We therefore wish to remind you your responsibilities and stress the reducing greenhouse gas emission, investing in renewable energy source will not happen without Washington. The conference that my colleague Condi Rice will host next week in Washington is a welcome first step. The entire international community is calling for your commitment in this struggle, which is one of the most crucial of our times. The world needs you. As often in the past I have no doubt that you will come to realize this.

Ladies and gentlemen, this musing brings us back to principles that must guide the world order which the United States and Europe wish to renew. The international environment is shaped by two sets of forces today. On one side, there is globalization with its networks that create interdependence and pools opportunities, risk, and crisis. New actors are emerging and a transnational, transnational political conscience is forming with the commitment potential for war or peace. On the other side, there is geopolitics and return of power politics in recent years. Every week, it seems that Russia announces a new weapons system, and we have yet to draw all the implication for our collective security on the anti-satellite test performed by China on January 11<sup>th</sup> of this year.

Which ground rules should be laid down to meet these challenges? After World War II, we succeeded together in configuring the world in roughly a decade between 1945 and 1955. That was the implementation of the multilateral system around the United Nations, the creation of blocs, the beginning of European integration, and

alliances such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The upheavals of '89-90 challenged most of those structures. But we have not managed, as we did after '45, to create a new world order or even to adapt the previous one satisfactorily. The enormous responsibility that befalls us is to ensure that today de facto, multi-polar world fosters stability. That is far from won.

To achieve that goal, we must transform multipolarity into effective multilateralism in which our major partners, Russia, China and the large emerging countries like Brazil, India and South Africa also play a responsible role. Attempting to give meaning to today's world means looking ahead to tomorrow's world. Will we be able to develop a common vision and turn it into reality? I'm sure we will. This is one of the keys to peace. The United States and the European Union are today the two global actors working together for a better, fairer, safer world, a world in which our children and grandchildren will be happy to grow up.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. HAMRE: Foreign minister, we are very short of time, and I know there are people here that want to ask questions, but I do want to ask you a question first, because you gave us a marvelous view of the world, but there is this place that I know is important to you you didn't speak to, and I would like to hear thoughts about Africa. You have reenergized France's initiatives in the Horn of Africa. I know that there's an important review that's underway. I think you should share with us your thinking about this. Would you take a minute to do that, and if we do have time, I'll open up, but I – we're short of time. I would like to hear your thoughts.

MR. KOUCHNER: On Africa?

MR. HAMRE: On Africa, please. I'd like you to speak – (unintelligible).

MR. KOUCHNER: Well, Africa it's a large continent. So let me tell you some few experiences and projects. First, Africa is not a lost continent. Compared to us, Africa grows is at an average level of five persons, sometimes seven to eight. Of course, it depends, and this is not the same growth between South Africa or Mali or Niger, I understand. But there is hope and there are getting better. Second, democracy is on its way. This is difficult. In some places, it doesn't work, but in some other places, not only it works, but it is the normal practice with (multipartism ?) and very transparent elections. Last election in – (unintelligible) – last election in Mali, last – of course in South Africa, et cetera. So the representation of Africa must change in our mind. Not only this is the country of the future because of the resources, natural resources, because of the dimension, the magnitude of the places, et cetera. So I'm not pessimist at all. We have a need of Africa.

We have to work with our African brothers, but second point. It remains a lot of crisis on this continent, less than before, and there is a positive attitude of the African unity process, and I give you two examples: Darfur and Chad. Darfur; it was the long

story of war, starvation, killings, massacres, et cetera. But don't forget that it came after 30 years of fight in between the Southern part and the Northern part, and at the end of that 30 years, it has been decided that a joint government – and they former the joint government in between the leaders of the South and the North. This is part of a good solution, and you know they will organize a referendum in the South, in 2011 in order to give a final status to the Southern part, confronted with the participation of the Northern part. In the middle, Darfur.

Darfur was really a shock when we discovered that not only a lot of refugees, two million people were absolutely expelled from the villages and their lands inside Sudan but also in Chad on the other side of the border, but they were attacked by militia called Janjaweed. Of course, more or less was the complicity of some authorities. We were very slow to react. Only activists, and thank you for them, and thank you for the activists generally speaking. (Applause.) They attract our attention, but we were not taking it seriously. This is so far, this is the hugest country in Africa, et cetera, et cetera. They were right as usual, and we have to do something. It has taken two years enough to start a mission.

But because also of the involvement of African Unity, and they were right. The problem was located in Africa and they were in charge of their own problem. It was a good reaction, but because the lack of money, lack of military people, et cetera, it was difficult to set more than a force of 6,000 people. Six thousand soldiers without any salary. We didn't pay the salaries of these poor people. So in the middle of a country more important – larger than France. Darfur is a huge place, 6,000 soldiers, but nothing, so we insisted and I'm very proud to say that my first movement when I've been by chance appointed as minister of foreign affairs, we organized the first meeting in the Quai d'Orsay, on Darfur and we decided to offer a conference of enlarging the contact group in Paris in June. Okay.

But we did something better. We convinced the minister – the Chinese minister of foreign affairs, a new freshly appointed – like I was – minister to be part of. And you remember the Chinese have been accused to be part of the persecutor, and they were backing the government of Khartoum. But he decided to join the conference, this minister, and step by step, they decided to join the effort of the international community. So now, there is a resolution, unanimously voted by the Security Council, and a hybrid force, led by UN and African Unity, African Unity and UN system to be sent at the beginning of October with 26,000 soldiers, mainly African, and it was. It's good. Africans for Africa. We'll see for the result, but there is a little money. We are supposed to meet in New York next week on the Darfur – the same group that in Paris under the supervision, under the chairman, co-chair of Ban Ki Moon, the secretary general and Alpha Oumar Konare, the president of the Commission of African Unity. So this is a huge progress, not only because we are sending relief and we are sending people, NGOs, et cetera, but because it has been taken in account by the African Unity. We'll see. I don't know.

And I have to tell you that we didn't convince – we didn't succeed in convincing the last leader of the rebels, the rebels who started the fight in Darfur against militias, Abdul Wahid al-Nur. He's staying in (France ?) two years enough, he doesn't want to leave. Sorry, I understand, but as he's a real representative of the main tribe called the Fur, this is very damageable, because he doesn't want to be part of the peace talks because it's okay to send soldiers to ensure security, it's okay, if it is possible, to get an order, but we need the political solution. Without political solution, without a real talk between the rebels and the government of Khartoum, we'll stay for years and years. So this is exactly the momentum now. Troops, hybrid troops are arriving in the beginning of October, UN flag and African Union, and we are still looking for a real dialogue in between the protagonists, the rebels, the Darfuris and the Sudanese authority. (Applause.) Well, this it is not up to me – (laughs) – but we did our best and it has restarted the process.

On the other hand, on the other side of the border, and it was easier because you know that the refugees are – they have to be registered by UNCR, United Nations Commission for Refugees, otherwise they are not refugees. They must come and cross the border. If you are not crossing the border, you are not a refugee. You can lie on the floor and starve but not being a refugee. So as the Janjaweed attacked the people in Darfur, but also on the other side of the border in Chad, around 200,000 persons, mainly women and children, mainly, and in an awful situation. We visited the place and it was vomiting, that way – they were not assisted at all and the ladies were unable to leave from the camp to go just to take some woods for the fire, and they were arrested, raped, tortured, et cetera. It was impossible to support. So we decided to set up with some French soldiers and to ask for other soldiers to come in from European Union, and to set up a mission under European flag asking the UN to reinforce and to take in account with a resolution all the mission. It has not been done. The drafted resolution is circulating right now. I hope it will be voted in the coming days.

So on one side, we have to rebuild the houses, because why the displaced persons are sleeping without – (unintelligible) – nothing. They are not refugees. They are Chadians in Chad, and so we want to let them rebuild their own villages and not to do them in the state of the people of this country. So we'll give them money, but we have to secure the whole area because the Janjaweed are still coming and attacking. So to secure the area, to have some architects and some NGOs to control – not to control, to help the work, it will be done I hope as soon as possible after the raining season, and the raining season is ending at the end of October. We'll do it for six months, then another six months, and after, the whole mission will be placed under the umbrella and the blue helmets and the blue flag of the United Nations.

Well, of course I can talk a lot about what happened with the Tuareg in Niger and Mali and other place but I have not time, but believe me, and help me. We need to be supported in Chad and Darfur missions. Yes. Thank you.

MR. HAMRE: Robert Hunter. Can I get a microphone here?

Q: Thank you, minister, for your vision and for your leadership and for this real fresh air I think we're going to find in the Franco-American relationship. Two quick points: one, building on what you just said, I hope you will be able to go to the Community of Democracies meeting in Bamako, Mali in November and continue the leadership. One issue that is of vital importance right now, which you touched upon, is Afghanistan. The – (unintelligible) – says that NATO has bet the alliance on it. There are some problems on the NATO side, but there are tremendous problems on the non-military side as you yourself emphasized. I was wondering whether under your leadership, the European Union, France and others will be able to take a much more active role in order that we can have success in Afghanistan in the very human dimension which is the determinative factor. Thank you.

MR. HAMRE: I'll take one more question just to see – Barbara, down here. Right in the front, please. Barbara? Yes. Just stand up please so that – (off mike).

Q: Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Barbara Slavin from USA Today. I wanted to get you to speak a little bit more about Iran, because the strategy is not working. The Iranians are continuing to enrich, they're ignoring these UN resolutions. Would you suggest that you drop your precondition about suspending enrichment? Would it help to drop that precondition, would it help if the United States joined talks? It's a great idea to have these preconditions and to have these resolutions, but it's simply not working. So how might you change the mix in order to entice the Iranians into real negotiations? Thanks.

Q: May we call for a nuclear free zone in the whole Middle East?

MR. HAMRE: We have only four minutes, so I'm left with four minutes, so we're going to limit it here. Thank you very much, foreign minister.

MR. KOUCHNER: I'm sorry, but the first question you asked me was it Mali?

Q: (Off mike.) Condoleezza Rice will most likely be there.

MR. HAMRE: I think he's just advocating you do something. We'll talk about that later.

MR. KOUCHNER: Okay.

MR. HAMRE: Let's talk about Afghanistan. Don't worry about that.

MR. KOUCHNER: Thank you very much for the suggestion. I don't know what you're talking about –

MR. HAMRE: Yes. Don't worry.

MR. KOUCHNER: – so that's why. So Afghanistan. Afghanistan, to be brief, it's impossible. Afghanistan is such a huge country. Kabul is not Afghanistan and everywhere we're facing problems with warlords, with – okay. We were supposed to get rid of Taliban and we started doing so. The result is that Mr. Karzai, a really decent and articulated man is in charge. So we have a lot of soldiers coming from Europe, from your country, from Canada, from et cetera. It is very difficult, and the coming back of Taliban behavior and Taliban ideology is obvious. So we don't have to withdraw. We have to be closer to the Afghan population, because for them it was difficult to understand, to consider that these people coming from so far we're not occupation force, and this was the case.

So to be very brief, we need to improve the level of our intervention, but human intervention, and that was the answer of France, and we were talking with the Canadian friends, with also the German and the Dutch. We have to involve, we must involve the Afghans in their own problem. I give you a good example. We set up in Kabul a hospital for women and children and we offered to work with the Afghan, not only the Afghan – (unintelligible) – nurses, no, including the direction, and step by step, they accepted to defend this huge building and this hospital as if it was their hospital, and it is their hospital, and this is a good model. Are we able to do so all over the places? I don't know, but this is the way. Otherwise, fight and war it's impossible.

The defeat of the defeat is certainly an option – (inaudible) – and the culture. You know, we triple the volume or by four, by five, by six and the rentability is absolutely tremendous, and we want to replace this culture by what? Tomatoes? Yes, I know that we have to do so, but it's a bit childish. We have to work with the people along their behavior, their culture and this is not ours, so it will take years and years. It is not desperate at all. We have to do so but closer to the Afghan and without any illusion. You know, war is sometimes necessary because of oppression to suppress the oppression of the people, but after, nation building is very difficult. We are not at home, we are not with – we are in their home, in their places. We have to be close to them, but in a way under their supervisions, and this is very difficult, and I know that because in Kosovo it was exactly the same and I was working years and years in Afghanistan and we knew that. When they decided that we were occupation force and we were doctors, we had to withdraw. So let's be very calm in Afghanistan. This is a difficult situation. We don't have to give up, never give up, never complain.

On Iran. I'm sorry. I don't have a recipe for miracle. I told you this is a very dangerous situation. I told our activist friends that the war is not a solution, that I perceived and I'm still perceiving that there is a temptation for force and it would be a defeat and a very difficult – it is already very difficult. This place is absolutely difficult for the people living there. Not for us. We are very far. So I think another time that on one hand we have to offer negotiation, negotiation, negotiation, and I was in the – (unintelligible) – we stay in right now. But this is not the example of negotiation. We are talking with them, talking with them regularly.

On the second hand, we have to – sorry, ladies – to work on sanctions, because it was not so bad and you were certainly not against when we sanctioned South Africa and it has worked. Sometimes it's working. So this is not targeting the people of Iran, not at all. This is not targeting day by day the Iranian themselves. Sanctions in my views are only referring and targeting the big business and the big money around the world coming out from oil and some smuggling affairs. That's the sanction for me. So you can leave them as you like, but okay, after what? This is a very dangerous situation. We have to prevent a war, not to go to war. The worst as I told you, but it has been completely misunderstood, to avoid a war, we have no possibilities but UN system, multilateralism and working on particular sanctions. We did another time in South Africa and it has worked, and ask Nelson Mandela if it was useful, he would say, yes. Yes, please.

MR. HAMRE: I'm sorry. I've been by his security. I have to have him go. Can I just say you've demonstrated this afternoon –

MS. : (Off mike.)

MR. KOUCHNER: Yes. I know they have nuclear weapons.

MS. : (Off mike.)

MR. KOUCHNER: No. But I understand your question. Let me answer. First, you said they have nuclear weapons. They said, no. We know – okay. But they didn't sign the Treaty of Nonproliferation like Pakistan and like India. Okay. Iran was one of the first in '72 to sign the Nonproliferation Treaty, and obviously, if you want me to disarm all the planet, I agree with you. It would be better, but you have no solution. What's your solution? I don't want a war in addition to all the wars of the area – I don't want. We never – we never have been in favor of a big explosion in the middle of a permanent explosion. So what? You are talking about Israel, but Israel has been threatened by Mr. Ahmadinejad to be just eradicated from the earth. So there is a real danger. You said so and you repeated two days or three days ago.

So there is a threat, madam. We have to react. We have to defend our views and our certitude. We have to defend democracy. We are not in favor of having war every time, but we must react, not in going to war, not at all, believe me. It was a very important misunderstanding. I said the worst is war. Let's work on peace, together. That's all. But don't maintain any illusion. There are really very clever, very tough people, they have a real strategy and they are coming back to the place they used to get in history, a very large place in Asia and Middle East, they are a very old and very effective civilization, the Persian civilization, and I know, and they have the right to take their place, but not in threatening the people with an atomic bomb. This is over. I know. Look at Korea, Northern Korea. It was a threat and we organized step-by-step negotiation and we solved the problem. Let's hope that we can solve the problem in Iran too. (Applause.)

MR. HAMRE: Foreign minister, thank you. We're grateful for your – (off mike).  
Everyone, please stay seated so we can get the foreign minister out. Everyone please  
remain so we can get the foreign minister out.

(END)