

CAA FALL CONFERENCE ON THE IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT

The Council of American Ambassadors held its **Fall Conference** in **Washington, DC** on **November 9-10**. The program **focused on the historic Nuclear Agreement** between Iran and the P5+1—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Germany, along with the European Union. Former U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia CAA member **James B. Smith** chaired the program. The Conference presenters addressed questions surrounding the Iran Nuclear Agreement and its implementation, as well as Iran's role in the region and outstanding issues between the United States and Iran.

On **November 9**, the Council's **Board of Directors Meeting** was held in the Anderson Room of the **Metropolitan Club**. Ambassadors **Donald Bliss** and **Brenda LaGrange Johnson** were elected to the Board, and Ambassador **Sue M. Cobb** was elected a Vice President of the Council. A no-host **dinner** with political commentator Steve Wagner at the **Army & Navy Club** followed.

On **November 10**, the Conference convened in the Choate Room at the **Carnegie Endowment Conference Center**.



Dr. **Aaron David Miller**, Vice President for New Initiatives at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and former U.S. Middle East negotiator, opened the program by providing an overview of the current challenges facing the United States in the Middle East and the impact of the Iran Nuclear Agreement on U.S. foreign policy.



Mr. **Alex Vatanka**, Senior Fellow at the Middle East Institute and the U.S. Air Force Special Operations School, analyzed the Agreement's impact on Iran's foreign policy and domestic politics. He stressed that power networks in Iran are more important than individual leaders. Moderate Iranians view the Agreement as a stride toward Iran's return to the global mainstream; hardliners, for example those in Iran's Revolutionary Guard, are concerned that the normalization of relations with the West will decrease their political and economic influence in Iran.



Dr. **David Ottaway**, Senior Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and former *Washington Post* foreign correspondent, examined the Gulf states' views of the Iran Nuclear Agreement, with a particular focus on Saudi Arabia. That country, which regards Iran as its arch rival in the Gulf, has voiced lukewarm support for the Agreement. Instead, Saudi Arabia is focused on countering Iranian influence in the region, most notably by confronting Iranian proxy forces in Yemen.



Ambassador **W. Robert Pearson**, Scholar at the Middle East Institute and former U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, discussed Turkey's perspective on the Iran Nuclear Agreement, as well as Turkey's critical role in Syria. Ambassador Pearson noted that Turkey is concerned about the United States' resolve in the Middle East, as well as Iran's efforts to shape events in the region.



Ambassador **Jeffrey Feltman**, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs at the United Nations and former Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, highlighted the United Nations' role in the Iran Nuclear Agreement implementation process and the importance of adequately maintaining the "snap-back" system, which would trigger reinstatement of the sanctions in the event of Iranian non-compliance.



Dr. **Colin Kahl**, Deputy Assistant to the President and National Security Adviser to the Vice President, outlined the Administration's perspective on the Agreement, arguing that the negotiated settlement with Iran makes the U.S. and the region safer by significantly reducing Tehran's enrichment capacity. Although the Agreement does not solve every problem with Iran, taking nuclear arms off the table allows the U.S. to increase pressure on Iran to cease destabilizing activities throughout the region.

Ambassadors **Brenda LaGrange Johnson**, **Aldona Z. Wos**, **James B. Smith**, **Donald P. Gregg** and **Donald Bliss** served as moderators.



The program culminated in a luncheon at the **Cosmos Club**. Ambassador **G. Philip Hughes** introduced the featured speaker, Ambassador **John Bolton**. Ambassador Bolton, Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, former U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and former Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs, presented his views on the Agreement and what he sees as its pitfalls. He expressed concern that the Agreement would lead to a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

To view additional photos, please visit the Council's website.

<https://www.americanambassadors.org/news/photo-galleries/fall-2015-conference>