

BROOKINGS

QUALITY. INDEPENDENCE. IMPACT.

EVALUATING OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY ONE YEAR ON: THE VIEW FROM DOHA AND WASHINGTON

Doha, Qatar
Wednesday, January 20, 2010

PARTICIPANTS:

Moderator:

HADY AMR
Director, Brookings Doha Center
Fellow, Saban Center for Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institution

Panelists:

IBRAHIM HELAL
Director, Editorial Development
Al Jazeera Network

MARTIN INDYK
Vice President and Director, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

AHMAD MOUSSALLI
Professor, Political Science
American University of Beirut

KENNETH POLLACK
Director, Saban Center for Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institution

* * * * *

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. AMR: I am the Director of Brookings Doha Center and a fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy in Washington, managed by my colleagues. I'm especially pleased to welcome today not one, not two, but four very distinguished speakers to -- who are going to be evaluating the one year of the Obama Administration's foreign policy, particularly towards the Middle East, and today.

We have four very distinguished speakers on the screen in Washington. Ambassador Martin Indyk, who is now the vice president of foreign policy studies at the Brookings Institution. And to his right, to your left on the screen, Ken Pollack, the director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy.

Ambassador Indyk previously served in the Clinton Administration as special assistant to President Clinton, as well as assistant secretary for Near East policy and twice as Ambassador to Israel.

Ken Pollack, now the director of the Saban Center -- many of you will know Martin Indyk was formerly the director of the Saban Center. Ken, now the director of the Saban Center, previously served as the director for Persian Gulf affairs at the National Security Council, and senior research professor at National Defense University.

Here in Doha, to my left, we have Ibrahim Helal, and Dr. Ahmad Moussalli. Mr. Helal is the -- is also in a new role. Many were -- it's a new year, and many of us are in new roles. Ibrahim

has taken on a new role at Al Jazeera as the director, I believe, for editorial development, and we were just talking about his new job.

Previously, he was deputy managing director for news and programming, Al Jazeera English, and Ibrahim is a veteran journalist with 20 years of experience.

And to my far left, Dr. Ahmad Moussalli, professor of political science and Islamic studies at the American University of Beirut. And Dr. Moussalli has his Ph.D. from University of Maryland, and, if I'm correct, you have your undergraduate degree from Al (inaudible) in Egypt, so quite a diverse educational background. Why don't we turn those off just for a second?

Anyhow, many of you are veterans of our events at the Brookings Doha Center, but, for those of you who are not, I'll remind you that the purpose of our -- of the events at the Brookings Doha Center and the Saban Center for Middle East policy at Brookings and the larger Brookings Institution is to bring together members of civil society, the media, government, academia to discuss and debate pressing policy issues of the day.

And like Brookings Washington, Brookings Doha is also open to a broad range of views. We encourage debate. And the tradition at the Brookings Institution is that our scholars develop their own views, so in speaking, my colleagues -- my boss, Ken Pollack, and his boss, Martin Indyk, will be addressing and presenting their own views, not speaking specifically on behalf of the Brookings

It is 6:15 p.m. Doha time, and we'd like to conclude in about 90 minutes, and I'll each ask each of our speakers to talk for 9 minutes, maybe maximum 10 minutes -- 9-1/2 minutes, 9-1/2, 9 minutes and 59 seconds, and then we'll turn it over for a debate and dialogue.

Today is January 20th. And a year ago today, Martin and I at least were standing out in the freezing cold watching President Obama -- my wife was also there with me -- take the Oath of Office. It was a freezing cold day, but it was also a hopeful day.

And I remember thinking at that time and within the first few weeks of the Obama presidency how hopeful I felt on a range of issues. President Obama had declared that he would be -- intended to close the Guantanamo Bay facility within a year; that America would cease torture; that America would begin to withdraw from Iraq. I remember on his first few days in office, he called heads of state in the Middle East and appointed George Mitchell, an Arab-American, to engage on the Middle East peace process.

I remember I believe, I guess Mr. Helal will won't me to remind you of this, but he did his first interview, TV interview, with the Al Jazeera competitor, Al Arabya. It was his first TV interview before even an American network.

And then we watched during the course of the year as President Obama, relating to this part of the world at least, traveled to Turkey, where he spoke about his Muslim heritage and his

Muslim family heritage and addressing the region.

He traveled to Cairo, where he gave an historic speech, and, you know, I also remember even back to the Inauguration, where he took the Oath of Office using his full name, Barack Hussein Obama.

These were all things that inspired, I think, a lot of hope for someone like me, who has spent his career, you know, working on the divide between the U.S. and the Arab and the broader Muslim world.

But things haven't gone to plan perhaps. And whether it's Iran or Iraq or Afghanistan, Guantanamo, things haven't gone according to plan I think in Obama's foreign policy.

And as recently as yesterday, you know, there was a special U.S. Senate election, where President Obama, his party, the Democratic Party, had a setback and he has less support now in the United States Senate.

So take all of this together, I'd like to ask our speakers to address how they would rate U.S. foreign policy in this first year of the Obama Administration, and, if it's okay, I'd like to -- a gentleman we didn't a chance to fully discuss is turn to Martin first to speak for 9 or 10 minutes; then Ibrahim Helal in Doha, and then Ken Pollack, and then Dr. Moussalli.

If that's okay, Martin, I'd like to turn the floor over to you.

MR. INDYK: Thank you very much, Hady, and I'm delighted

to be with you all in Doha, virtually, from Washington.

If I had to put a title on my remarks it would be "Mugged by Reality." And that is no more true than today in Washington.

When President Obama and his Administration and the Democratic (inaudible) in Congress woke up to a new world, in which the defeat of the Democratic candidate in Massachusetts to take Senator Kennedy's seat, traditionally a liberal Democratic seat, was lost to the Republicans in a move which showed the deep unhappiness of independent voters and sent a signal to the Administration that they better find a way to address those concerns, particularly in two regards: one which may already be evident to you, which is that the American public is deeply concerned about the economy and the lack of recovery in employment, with unemployment still at the level of 10 percent.

But a second reality that this campaign exposed summed up in the words of the successful candidate, Scott Brown, when he said in his victory speech that the American taxpayers paid -- put up money to defend the country, not to provide legal defenses for terrorists.

And that, I think, reflects a sentiment in the American heartland that we would do well to take notice of.

But the mugging by reality that I want to focus on in my opening remarks has more to do with Middle East realities rather than American realities. President Obama I think got off to a very good start, which was welcomed by many in the Middle East,

particularly in the Arab world, encapsulated in his Cairo speech and his outreach to the Arab and Muslim worlds.

The emphasis in that speech on his understanding of the centrality of the Palestinian issue to the relationship between the United States and the Arab and Muslim worlds. He started on day two to address that issue by the appointment of George Mitchell as his Special Middle East envoy, and by his clear intent to give the issue -- the effort to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict one of his highest priorities.

The President wanted to fly high and fast. He thought that it should be possible to achieve some kind of quick breakthrough, but he was, I think, quite humbled by the initial experiences, first of all dealing with a newly elected right-wing coalition government, led by Prime Minister Netanyahu in Israel, which questioned the whole premise of the peace process at the outset; that is to say he questioned the establishment of an independent Palestinian state; but also discovered along the way, as he tried to fly high and fast, two other Middle Eastern realities.

One was a deeply divided Palestinian polity with a weak leadership, and the second was an Arab world -- or Arab leaders that talked a good game, but actually were, as we've come to expect, not really willing to step up to the plate and partner with President Obama in the efforts to make real the Arab League Peace Initiative, to convert it from a declaration of intent into a mechanism for actually making peace.

And that reality was driven home to him -- those realities were driven home to him I think first with Netanyahu's visit to Washington, in which Obama made it clear that he expected a settlements freeze, including natural growth, and Netanyahu said that would be hard, meaning no. And then when Obama went to Saudi Arabia the day before his speech in Cairo and discovered that King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia was not willing to be his active partner; in fact, wanted to take his distance from the effort to engage the Israelis and Palestinians in new negotiations.

So, as a consequence, a different approach was pursued by George Mitchell, what we can call the long and slow approach. Mitchell, on his first trip to the region, recognized just how much damage had been done to the process by the Bush Administration's neglect, by the violence of the Intifadah and Israel's Army's response, and that it would take some time to try to rebuild confidence on both sides in a negotiating process.

As a result, he got sucked down in the details of a settlements moratorium with the Israeli government and that (inaudible) leaving the Arab states and the Palestinians on the sidelines waiting to see what the United States would produce, when it inevitably produce less than the settlements freeze, including natural growth that the President has said is his objective in public, that (inaudible) produced not only disappointment, but also in a sense let the Arabs off the hook in terms of what they would have to do in response.

And so, here we are, a year later, with no final status negotiations, with a real apparent stalemate in terms of the overall objective of trying to achieve a breakthrough to a settlement that would establish an independent Palestinian state, with Abu Mazen up in a high tree and George Mitchell trying to construct a letter with Arab and Israeli extensions to it to try to get him down.

And, therefore, the high ambitions seem to have been dragged down into the mud of the Israeli-Palestinian morass.

But I'm always a glass half full rather than a glass half empty kind of guy and, therefore, I think that we should not be too pessimistic about this. First of all, I think that the Administration, in its first year, like all Administrations, faces a steep learning curve. And much has been learned.

Secondly, progress has been made, although it's not evident yet. B.B. Netanyahu has endorsed the objective of an independent Palestinian state. Terms of reference for the negotiations, the final status negotiations, have been all but agreed to by both sides.

And those terms of reference, if you look carefully at statements by Hillary Clinton and George Mitchell and other senior Administration officials include -- those terms of references include a two-year timeline for completing the final status negotiations, a negotiation that seeks to reconcile Palestinian -- the Palestinian objective of an independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 lines with agreed swaps of territory and on the Israeli

side a Jewish -- secure a Jewish state that would reflect subsequent developments. That refers to the Israeli settlement blocks.

And so, the issue that remains to be overcome at the moment is Abu Mazen's insistence on a settlements freeze in Jerusalem, but much else has been agreed between Israel, the PLO, and the Arab states in terms of the basic terms of reference for the negotiations.

And something else important has happened. In terms of the bottom up process that the Administration also sought to pursue in the West Bank, working with the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, significant progress has been made in terms of removing roadblocks, building up the security capabilities of the Palestinian forces that have progressively taken over control of A areas and soon to be, I think, taking control of B areas that -- and, of course, the growth of the Palestinian economy in the West Bank (inaudible) to grow at some double-digit rate this quarter.

In other words, even though the results are disappointing so far, I think that the ground work has been readied. It is too early to dismiss the effort.

Indeed, the fact that George Mitchell is now back in the Middle East heading to Damascus as well to try to jump start those negotiations is a manifestation that President Obama does not intend to give up, and that if you try sometimes in the Middle East, you just might get what you need to quote Mick Jagger.

Thank you, Hady.

MR. AMR: Thanks, Martin, and thanks for the great talk, and also keeping to the agreed upon timeframe.

Ibrahim Helal, I'll turn to you for 10 minutes.

MR. HELAL: Thank you very much, Hady, and thank you for everybody.

I'm talking as an Arab member of this society living in the Middle East region. I'm not talking now as a journalist or as Al Jazeera. I'm trying my best not to be academic or trying to be journalistically accurate. I'm just trying to be a normal person who's giving impressions, impressions based on media reports, based on texts and what happened during the last 12 months.

I believe and many others believe that Arabs were divided 1 year ago between 50-50. Fifty were (inaudible) enough to hope that Obama will bring something different to Arabs and Muslims, and 50 were not (inaudible), but were actually smart enough not to hope.

We ended up after one year with the first part disappointed and the second part less disappointed because they were not expecting anything.

I believe and many others also believe that in the very beginning of -- it's a conspiracy -- that Obama's Administration managed successfully to change something. Let's be fair and let's start with the facts.

The linguistic, as a media person, I can figure out the linguistic of using the war against terrorism started to be slightly

changed to the war against terrorists, because the definition of terrorism was a bit vague for long year -- the years of Bush Administration.

So now, it's the war against terrorists. The war against Al Qaeda. And I think that the Administration has stopped using the war against Islamic radicals. Stopped putting Hamas, Hezbollah in the same basket with Al Qaeda. These are the impressions, which are great.

I believe also there was initial hope to bridge with Iran to bridge with Syria, which was great. That's why. The promise to close Guantanamo, which was not yet happened, but I believe it will happen. The commitment from Obama himself to put the American values before the American interests. We received that very positively in the Arab world.

But I believe also that America started to redo the same thing of Bush Administration. The system is the same, and the failure of distinguish between or finding -- the failure of finding a middle point between the enemy and the client.

Anyone supported by America is now losing credibility. You cannot talk about Abu Mazen as an ally. You talk about Abu Mazen as a client, and I'm really surprised with Mr. Indyk comment about Abu Mazen failure to get down from the tree and Arabs need to help him getting down from the tree.

I think he's not even on any tree. He is -- he's nowhere -- he's in nowhere, thanks to the American support, not thanks to

OBAMA-2010/01/20
anything else.

DR. MOUSSALLI: He is jumping from the tree, no?

MR. HELAL: Yeah. And if we try to look at it from the Arab and Muslim perspective, there are two main things, two main pillars of the impressions about Obama. The military impression, with all these hopes, with all the (inaudible) of the City of Hope, there is an escalation of the war against Muslims. The (inaudible) strategy was clear even before the election. Actually, we were not able to believe during the debate between McCain and Obama when McCain challenged Obama that how come you promised to do more drones and attacks on a sovereign country like Pakistan. Actually, we thought, as naïve Arabs and Muslims, that it's for technic reasons, for the debate.

But actually, it happened. During this last year, the more drones, more attacks on a sovereign country like Pakistan, which led the Pakistani authorities, the Pakistani military to change the alliance, and actually I believe personally that it didn't help anyway the American interests in Pakistan. And I think -- and my analysis is that the Pakistani military, because of that, I think you'd -- is pushing back the so-called terrorism back to -- into Afghanistan.

Instead of helping American strategy in Pakistan, they are pushing back. They are helping more attacks inside Afghanistan. And this is a question.

The other pillar is the deadlock in the peace process.

And I remember one of the American ambassadors we met in Al Jazeera and it was immediately after the famous speech in Cairo, and we asked him about -- there were rumors at that time that Washington is trying to put more pressure on Israel, threatening to stop some military deals, to stop supporting Israel in the United Nations Security Council, and what kind of other tools you are going to use to oblige Netanyahu for a settlement freeze.

And by the way, the settlement freeze is not Abu Mazen's request. It came initially from Obama's Administration initially, talking about I don't want to see any bulldozers in the West Bank. I remember this phrase. Correct me if I'm wrong -- something like that.

I don't want to see any new bulldozers and or any buildings in the West Bank. So, it's not Abu Mazen who is insisting on the freeze. And the idea of settlement freeze came as part of the audacity of hope, and suddenly and the ambassador at that time told us let's wait until October. And he was very optimistic that by October, it's not easy, but it's not difficult to carry on this kind of (inaudible) pressure on Obama between Obama and Netanyahu to reach some way of freeze of settlement.

But the deadlock of the peace process after eight visits of George Mitchell is choking, and if you compare between Bush Administration and Obama and even Clinton Administration -- let's be more general -- as Arabs as well we can say Republicans are more fruitful when it comes to the peace process. Ironically, during

Bush Administration we got admission of our talking about a Palestinian state for the first time.

During Clinton and now during Obama Administration who do nothing. Last question I'd like to raise to Mr. -- commenting on Mr. Indyk note that how come he is trying to describe the Arabs' attitude toward Obama strategy in the Middle East that we -- that Arab leaders, with all respect or disrespect of the Arab policies, moderates are not -- or not moderates. There is no credibility left to be given up. Actually, trying to convince King Abdullah of Saudi to help, to be the partner of peace is -- means there is no one left to mediate between Palestinians.

If you put King Abdullah in this position, who is going to have more -- any credibility in the Arab world? Thank you very much.

MR. AMR: Thanks, Ibrahim. Ken, I'll give you the floor now.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Hady. Thanks to all of you for coming out this evening, and I want to tell you what a pleasure it is to be joining you this evening. It's very interesting for us here to hear firsthand some of the views of the region, their perspective on the Obama Administration's first year. And I hope it's useful to all of you to hear the view from Washington and our perspective on the same matter.

It has fallen to me to cover the Obama Administration's policies toward the Arabian Gulf, in particular toward Iran and

Iraq, but I thought I would also say a quick word about Yemen and what that may mean to the Obama Administration.

On Iran, our perspective here is that -- and this goes back to a comment that Ibrahim Helal started his remarks with -- that it is worth giving the Obama Administration credit for the change in tone that it has engineered. There is a very important change in tone in the Obama Administration's policies. It has changed the perception of the United States in a variety of different quarters, and I think that this has been in many ways of greatest importance with regard to Iran, where it is no longer the case as it was under the Bush Administration that the U.S. is the bad guy in the U.S.-Iranian relationship and that the rest of the world is looking first to blame the United States.

By coming forward, by making an honest offer of engagement to the Iranians, of demonstrating a willingness to put all issues on the table, by repeatedly giving the Iranians a chance to solve their problems through negotiations and having the Iranians repeatedly turned down those opportunities I think that throughout the international community there is a very different sense of who the bad guy is right now.

And I think that this has paid some dividends. Add to that the strategic reset that the Administration has engineered with Russia, kind of going back to first principles and trying to work out a better relationship with them, the amount of work that they've put in with China, working with the Chinese to talk about what it

means to be a stakeholder in the system and recognizing China's interests and America's interests in different areas -- all of this has created a very different international environment and has generated a great deal more international support for the Three Plus Three effort against Iran and ultimately I think for the proposition to use sanctions against Iran if, as seems likely, the Iranians continue to be utterly recalcitrant when it comes to negotiations over their nuclear program.

And I think that that is worth something. I think that it is also the good and I think that we do need to recognize that and give the Administration credit.

That said, I think here in Washington there is a growing sense of concern about whether or not this change in tone and this greater international support for the Administration's policies on Iran is actually going to bear meaningful fruit.

Simply put, the Russians and the Chinese are saying much nicer things about the United States, and they're being much harder on Iran, but it's not yet clear that that's going to translate into a willingness to put meaningful sanctions against Iran.

I think there is an expectation that there's likely to be a set of new U.N. sanctions against Iran. There's quite likely to be new EU sanctions against Iran. But at least as far as the U.N. is concerned, there's a great deal of skepticism that whatever the Security Council passes, with Russian support and perhaps Chinese abstention or even support, that any of that is going to be enough

to convince a very hard-line regime in Tehran that it should change course.

In addition, there's real concern here that the Administration has sacrificed support for the Iranian opposition, the opposition that emerged spontaneously in Iran after the disputed June 2009 elections, and has failed to take advantage of the new horror across the international community at Iran's violations of human rights to put more meaningful pressure on the regime and to show some degree of solidarity and support with this incredible domestic opposition.

I think that there is a real fear here in Washington that, at this point in time, the Administration is trying to go for the nuclear deal; that is it sacrificing whatever support the United States might be able to reasonably offer to the Iranian opposition; and that the United States might be able to help lead an international effort that would put much more meaningful pressure on the regime in the hopes of a nuclear deal, which ultimately seems very chimerical at the moment, because you have an Iranian regime which seems to have very little interest in making concessions to the international community and that believes that it can withstand whatever sanctions are out there.

And so I think that there's a real fear here in Washington that while the Administration has made some real progress on Iran that by placing this hope of a nuclear negotiation with Tehran ahead of Iran's human rights abuses, of support to the Iranian opposition

that in the end the Administration may get neither. It may not help the opposition in any way, shape, or form and, what's more, it may ultimately not get any kind of a meaningful deal with the Iranians that would actually stop the Iranian nuclear program.

On Iraq, again, I think that the view here in Washington is very much a mixed bag in terms of the Obama Administration's approach to Iraq.

On the one hand, the President did articulate a responsible plan for drawing down American military forces in Iraq and transitioning those that remain from a combat role to a purely advisory and training role.

Now you can like that. You can dislike it. But the simple fact is that's where American politics were, and the plan that the President outlined back in February of last year was both realistic and also responsible in terms of setting up a timeline that would accord with Iraqi political needs and security needs; that wouldn't simply walk away from Iraq, but that, nevertheless, made clear that the United States was getting out.

Since then, they've also had some victories. I believe that quashing the move for a referendum was a very important victory. That was something that Iran and its allies were very much hoping for, and I think that the move, along with the Iraqis to quash that, was a very important step forward.

In addition, getting the election law passed and getting open list elections was also a very important step forward, and,

again, I give the Administration credit.

But obviously, there's a lot of work to be done in Iraq, and the Administration's approach toward Iraq has been very helter skelter. It's been very kind of on and off again.

At periods of time, the Administration has seemed to pay very little attention to Iraq. It has allowed Iraqi politics to simply move in different directions, many of them very dangerous and unhelpful. And it's only really stepped in when there's been a crisis, and we're seeing that again now.

The Administration effectively was allowing things to churn along, and then all of a sudden we get this outrageous ban on 500 leading Sunni Iraqi politicians, coming out of nowhere, seemingly basically generated by Ahmed Chalabi, and by many reports also engineered with a great deal of Iranian assistance, certainly would play into their hands.

It's exactly the kind of thing that could badly derail Iraqi politics that will revive all of the fears of Iraq's Sunni communities, and it's the kind of step that could lead down the road to a resumption of civil war at its most extreme.

And again, the Administration has jumped in with both feet. That's positive. And I think that there is a reason to be hopeful that this move will get derailed.

But it would be much better for the Administration rather than kind of suddenly stepping on the gas pedal whenever there is a crisis to rather to keep a more steady foot on the pedal and a

slower, steadier pace all along, paying greater attention to Iraq, helping the Iraqis on a more regular basis, not simply turning away.

And I think there are two fears in this kind of herky-jerky approach to this. The first, again, is that if you don't keep your hand on the -- or your foot on the pedal constantly, it becomes much harder to suddenly intervene when there is a crisis. It looks like a very heavy handed American approach, which, of course, alienates a great many Iraqis, and what's more, we wind up losing leverage in the interim.

Second, it also generates a fear among Iraqis when the United States isn't playing a better, more helpful, more constructive, and more active role during those periods of time when the U.S. is allowing Iraq to go its own way. It creates a very deep fear among Iraqi leaders across the political spectrum that if the United States is simply walking away from Iraq and its problems; that we are not going to enforce the rules of the road; that we're not going to help Iraq in case of crisis; and it convinces many Iraqis, including many Iraqi leaders that they simply need to find their own way.

And too often, that is done through graft, through violence, through intimidation, through other factors, which simply generate fears among other Iraqi leaders and causes them to move in the same direction and the expectation that that's the only way to win this game in the absence of some larger power enforcing the rules of the road.

And again, it's a very dangerous situation, which, in my frequent trips to Iraq, I hear again and again from Iraqis -- this concern they have about the Obama Administration.

And then just a quick last point on Yemen. I think the issue for the United States with Yemen is as follows: First, the Obama Administration again has done a very good job of making clear that it is not going to handle the problem of terrorists in the region the same way that the Bush Administration did. It is not simply going to intervene to invade countries in the region to try to root out the terrorists, ignoring what internal problems there are in the country that in many cases created the space for the terrorists, to just kind of sweep them all away in one vast military adventure and reconstruction program.

But what the Administration has not yet done is articulate and then demonstrate a different strategy, one that can address the problem, but do so in a way better than the Bush Administration did.

I think that's what a lot of Americans are looking to the Obama Administration for when it comes to Yemen. They're looking at Yemen and saying, all right, this is another country with very complex internal problems. Those complex internal problems have created a space in which some of these terrorist groups have been able to take root and are now starting to export terrorism abroad. That's obviously a threat to the United States. It is also a concern for America's allies in the region. How is the Obama Administration going to handle a problem like that if it isn't going

to do what Bush did, and, again, I think there's widespread sympathy here in the United States that nobody wants to do it the way that Bush did, but we don't yet know how to do it in a way that will be effective, but that won't create as many problems as it solves. Thank you very much.

MR. AMR: Thank you, Ken. And without further ado, I'll just turn the (inaudible) to Dr. Moussalli from AUB.

DR. MOUSSALLI: Yeah. I need to expand the discussion a little bit. I -- you know, most people in the world are (inaudible), of course, the Americans who are very happy to at least see President Bush, and for that matter, they were very happy to have Obama. And Obama, of course, I mean, I think his intentions are, at least I think, he is genuine and he has good intentions.

But his problems are structural rather than personal or whether he likes this policy or that policy. I think the speech he gave in Cairo or in Turkey and before and after carried with him the vision for change, but, in fact, the U.S. structure at the current phase, whether it is the banking system, the military industry, the lobbies, the interest groups, corporate America is still controlling America.

And before he can face any problems of the world, I think that President Obama had -- or has to face the very basic and important problem within the United States that will allow him to go out and change policies.

I mean the momentum that he has created is gone. It is

not here anymore. And it seems to -- if you look at the world today, we are not in a better state than when it was Bush. In fact, what President Obama is doing he is continuing or finalizing the things that President Bush would have done and continued to do during that.

So, what I'm saying President Obama has the good intention to change and he came on this big motto -- dramatic changes in the U.S., in the world, in the Islamic world, and all over -- relations with Iran, relations with Russia, relations with Europe, empowering the U.N., empowering European Union and so forth.

But nothing happened, and I don't think the problem is, again, is individual. Keep it in mind it's structural. There are interest groups that are not easily going to give up their interests. The military industry also is not going to give up its profits from the trillions of dollars. I mean this I just read or (inaudible) that actually that this month the government law deficit is 1.2 trillion, most of it spent on wars and so on and so forth.

And, in fact, the examples mentioned by Dr. Pollack and before by Ambassador Indyk and our colleague here it is very clear that the structural solutions are not there, neither for the U.S. nor for the Arab world and its problem, nor with Iran, nor with Russia.

And this requires a new grand design. For instance, I mean what I said -- what I -- if I am Obama, I would not send George Mitchell to say freeze the expansion of the settlement. I would go

there with a group (inaudible) for a solution and work on it. And this settlement has been going on -- I think we started off on the wrong foot, not on the right foot.

In terms of the Palestinian issue, we see it becoming more militarized. Iraq also I don't think the problem is finished. I mean Ken mentioned that the U.S. is leaving Iraq. I don't think you are leaving completely. You are going to be in garrisons, and they will allow the Iraqis to slaughter each other.

It's not a matter of -- I mean they want to reduce the slaughters of -- or the body counts of American, but, as you see, in terms of the tribal problems, religious problem, sectarian problem, Iraq is not going to go into a peaceful phase.

In fact, what we see is the expansion of this military mentality is going into Yemen. And importing -- I mean Yemen is going to be the next door. It's going to be most likely divided.

There they don't need (inaudible). They have the president of (inaudible). They don't have to work very much on that. He is there, and he can be used.

I think that's very smart. I mean he said they are going to (inaudible). That's true. Now instead of bringing the U.S. troops, they will pay money for the Yemeni Army to kill other Yemenis whatever the difference is.

Now the war on Al Qaeda, in fact, as (inaudible) it has been a failure, and it is go -- continue to be a failure in terms if what has been going on is as follows: There are no new policies how

to deal with the terrorist groups. There are not vision or policies to try to uproot these groups wherever they are in the country. If you look today, in Afghanistan, whether it's Al Qaeda and Taliban, they are expanding.

What they did yesterday or the day -- yesterday of attacking the presidential palace is very symbolic and (inaudible) 30 people they were not going to (inaudible) the capital. As a lot of media said, they could not, you know, occupy the capital. They were planning suicide or bomber. You know, they wanted to kill themselves, and drive a point.

The same is going to happen in Pakistan. There are also in Pakistan to help in Afghanistan. I think the Afghanization of Pakistan is coming also very soon. And, in fact, the problems of the world are increasing rather than decreasing.

And if you look at the economy in the world, we are, again, moving backward. The U.S. now is at a crossroads. It had to go into a positive gear, and I think so far the driver is not yet President Obama.

I mean he has to control his car and drive it the way he wants to drive it. And so far, he is sitting by the driver for other reasons. It's nice sometimes to -- not to drive -- a driver, but in terms of planning and really implementing his vision for the U.S. and the world, which was in almost total approval in the world, with the exceptions, of course, that is evaporating as a plan, as a promise for change, as a new way of dealing with each other in the

The continuation of the old structure is not possible. And we are now going into the vacuum, whether it's in Palestine and Israel, whether it's in Lebanon, whether it's in Yemen, whether it's in Iraq, and it goes everywhere. I mean in Sudan -- you can expand it to include so many countries.

My time is not over. And consequently, I think somebody turned off my micro -- probably Martin from Washington.

So what I say is that really I think -- however, we don't have to be very harsh on Pres. Obama. He is in his first year. He's still a freshman. I think he will learn a lot, but he needs to get a different kind of policymakers and those who execute the policy and (inaudible) specific countries on what should be done, but I think an overall vision should take place. He needs to change some in his Administration, especially the defense minister, I guess, to bring somebody who's not going to continue Bush's policy, but will be able to design a way of interacting with what is considered to be the enemy of the whole.

Iran is not going to give up whatever they have for the sake of having coffee somewhere in Europe with some Americans. Iran is now a regional power and well, that basic question asked by all of the people in the area, whether they are Arab, Muslims, or none of the above, they would ask a question about this and I know it's not very popular in Washington: Why Israel is allowed to have, let's say, 200 nuclear bombs, and Iran cannot have a civilian, you

know, capability to create.

I mean these questions may seem very idealistic in Washington, but on the ground here they turn into movements. They turn into groups. They turn into (inaudible), and they are not, you know, academic questions -- I'm not arguing against academia; I'm an academic -- but it is not a question of, you know, there can be (inaudible).

The area now is going to go through Islamicization. The opposition in the area largely is the Islamic movement, and given the situation, I think the opening to Iran was also the wrong way that (inaudible) come and say we'll give up everything, we'll see what to do with you.

But first come say you will give it up. Again, giving up I think is not helping to the Palestinians are suffering for decades and decades and they have not given up, and they will not give up.

And, therefore, I think the -- you know, President Obama and his team need to redesign the problems in the area and support the people rather than repressive regimes, and, in that sense, will be able to deal more positively with the issue. Thank you very much.

MR. AMR: Thank you, Dr. Moussalli. We've not -- I'm not surprised that we've heard some different views from Washington and here -- and actually here in Doha we've just heard contrasting views where I think Ibrahim Helal was saying, you know, even be different in -- a difference in language was -- if I'm not mischaracterizing

you -- not really important as a big difference, but I'll let you respond.

And Dr. Moussalli is saying, you know, let -- give Obama a chance

Let me turn to the audience, and you've all been very patient. Ibrahim, you can, in the course of your answers, correct my characterization.

And as you're asking your question, predicted for the benefit -- for all of our benefits are particularly for the benefit of our co-panelists in Washington, please state your name and your affiliation. There's two familiar hands up in the front row. Well, let's see a show of hands of who would like to -- who's got questions. Okay. Let's go to the front row, and then we'll move on.

And also, please, because there -- and it is a big group, I'd like to ask you to try and keep your questions to under two minutes.

SPEAKER: Now, thank you, Hady. I thank Brookings Institute for giving us a chance for the (inaudible). And I'd like to mention three points.

MR. AMR: State your name and your affiliation, although Martin will recognize you. But mention your name and your affiliation.

SPEAKER: So, in the end. I speak about -- my talk will be about what the speakers didn't speak about. So you escape. You

shrug off the problem of (inaudible) and corruption. When President Obama visited Egypt, he went through empty streets. Egyptians were locked and he spoke to representatives of a totalitarian regime. He is supporting (inaudible) was hosted by president of 83 and is going to renew 46 tenure.

What I speak now the main problem for us and for the foreign policy of America is supporting these regimes, supporting totalitarian and corrupted regimes. Let me speak frankly, we have no free formation of parties. We have -- 30 years in Egypt emergency law. No free media. I mean one point civil police on the basis that a soldier for every citizen.

You are supporting this. You are losing hearts and minds of people and in the long run you are going to lose your (inaudible).

Secondly, about Iran. You spoke the nuclear project of Iran. I -- I support inspecting Iran facilities, nuclear facilities, but Israel must unveil its nuclear capabilities and subject its installations to (inaudible) ADA.

The third point deals with also always you speak -- I'm fed up with talk about terrorists. Let me give a proposal or a suggestion: Why don't you adopt an exact timetable under international umbrella like to find out who finances terrorism, who supports the terrorist groups who trained these people (inaudible) them, and then give a definition for terrorism. We want to reach to the end of this road. Thank you very much.

MR. AMR: And your name and affiliation?

SPEAKER: Dr. (inaudible). I know (inaudible). He's my friend.

MR. AMR: I know.

SPEAKER: He talked to me.

MR. AMR: I know. And we'll take -- and why don't we take another question and then we'll go to the panel.

MR. MASRI: Okay. My name is Nabil Masri . I'm a freelancer. I have no affiliation on anyone.

Hamdallah . My comment is -- and my question is about Pres. Obama. He is a very sweet lips; you know, he talks very nice and his story is very good. You can't help but admire him, and love to -- I love to listen to him exactly like I love to listen to Tony Blair, most have just the charisma on the talk.

But talk is not good enough. He has good intentions, I'm quite sure. But he missed -- he made a boo-boo when Netanyahu -- when the President of the United States ask for something, he should reply and he should obey to be honest with you. All the Arab leaders you do that. When we ask for freeze on the settlement, when Netanyahu said, no. He should punish him; okay? And to my surprise, you know, we are affinity with -- or feeling good feeling for any Democratic president, but the two presidents of the United States in the case of Israel who took real action against Israel and Israel was mad at them was Eisenhower and George Bush the father.

George Bush the father, during the Kuwait War, first Gulf

War, he froze the aid, the aid to Israel. He freeze it, because he refused to do -- to stop the settlements. Same issue.

So I think President Obama is (inaudible) with that. He should have said that well, either you do it or no more aid. But what happened is Ms. Hillary Clinton goes and embarrasses Abu Mazen, which is not on the high tree, by the way, like you said. He's not. The man is in the ground here. He's even six under, to be honest; okay?

Embarrass him and tell him no, you cannot negotiate without anything. The man turned back and he said, I'm not an (inaudible) anymore for (inaudible), because he lose confidence in them.

But Iran, okay, I agree with my colleague here. Inspect - - but at the same time I'm not worried about Israel because it's never going to happen that Israel can disclose anything. It's not going to happen even if they stop aid to Israel. Okay? But at least give the people a chance and helping the opposition of Ahmadinejad is not really -- it's embarrassing to the opposition, because don't ever think that the opposition is against a nuclear program. They are for it, also. The opposition is for the freedom within Iran and for the internal policy with Iran, but they are supporting everything for the foreign policy of Iran. Thank you.

MR. AMR: Thank you, gentlemen. Why don't I allow my colleagues in Washington to offer their thoughts, should they so desire.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Hady. I will start by taking the first questioner's questions.

First, the point of political reform I think is one that we in Washington -- those of us outside the Administration -- take very seriously. The President did mention democratization and political reform and economic reform in the Cairo speech, but it certainly wasn't a highlight of the speech.

And as you're pointing out, he chose to give the speech in a venue that seemed to undercut those very words. And I think that here in Washington there is a real concern as well. We recognize that the region desperately needs reform, political, economic, social.

I think the fear that we have here is that a great deal of the Obama Administration's policies seem to be driven in very typical American fashion by a reaction to their predecessor. So, anything that George Bush endorsed this is automatically wrong. It's automatically the worst thing that the United States can do.

And since the Bush Administration embraced democratization and pushed for political reform, there is a strong sense among some in the Obama Administration that the United States should have nothing to do with it. I will say to that I, and I think most of America's Middle East community, believe that that is a very serious mistake; that while the Bush Administration may not have always pushed for political reform in the right way, that it is still a necessary component of what has to happen in the region and again

the key is going to be convincing the Obama Administration that it does need to take up this cause. It just needs to do it in a smarter way than the Bush Administration did.

And the one piece of good news I can give you -- and I said I'm very concerned about this, because I think it would be a terrible mistake if United States simply gave up on political reform in the Middle East -- but the one good piece of advice that I can give or good piece of news that I can give you is that the Obama Administration recently brought in our former colleague, Tamar Petus, who was the leading advocate of democratization and political reform here at the Brookings Institution, who has written a wonderful book called Freedom's Unsteady March, about how to do it better, and they just brought Tamar in to be their Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Political and Economic Reform in the Middle East.

So, hopefully, Tammy is going to help them to figure out how to better, and hopefully the fact that they brought Tammy in is a sign that they are serious about doing it even if they have not done it near as staunchly as I would like to have seen them so far.

With regard to your point about nuclear disarmament, just a few things to say, and I don't want to annoy that, because I do think it's an important issue. I know that it's very important to people out there in the region.

The first point I'd make is we have to recognize that Iran -- sorry -- Israel is not the only nuclear state in the region; that

The second point: We have to recognize that both of these countries have nuclear weapons because they face very significant security threats. And you can't simply wish away the nuclear arsenal without dealing with the security threats.

And the third point I'd make is that the history of nuclear disarmament over the years has been that nuclear disarmament, to the extent it happens at all, only happens after resolving those underlying security problems. Look at the Cold War. Until the fall of the Soviet Union, until the end of the Soviet threat toward Western Europe, there was no actual nuclear disarmament.

There was capping of nuclear arsenals. At times, there was a slowing of the nuclear buildup, but the nuclear buildup continued to levels of 30,000 and 40,000 warheads on both sides.

Now we have had dramatic changes since the fall of the Soviet Union, since the end of that threat to Europe, but that's the point: until we deal with the underlying security problems faced by Israel, by Pakistan, and to certain extent by Iran as well -- although I'll say I don't believe that while you can say that Iran does have security issues, I don't think that's the major force driving their nuclear program -- but, nevertheless, without dealing with the security problems, it is simply a fantasy to think that you're going to deal with the weapons themselves.

Martin, I know, has had painful experience with this in

the 1990s, when you'll remember the United States and the Quartet tried to organize the ACRS process that was designed to do exactly this. But the ACRS process floundered because the peace process floundered.

If there is no resolution of the underlying problems, it is simply impossible to get any state to even consider nuclear disarmament.

MR. INDYK: I guess I should address the question of a settlements freeze and the example of George H.W. Bush, or as we call him Bush 41 and Yitzhak Shamir.

It's true that Bush 41 did condition American loan guarantees, not actual aid that the United States gives Israel, but the loan guarantees that made it cheaper for Israel to borrow money to absorb refugees in those days from the former Soviet Union.

But the fact of the matter is that he did not achieve any settlements freeze as a result of doing that. In fact, settlement activity continued and even expanded under Shamir's government.

So, it's a nice proposition in theory, but, in practice, it didn't produce. In the Obama Administration's case, it has produced a restriction on settlement activity. There are no bulldozers now building new settlements or new -- even new buildings in the West Bank. The existing bulldozers that are out there completing housing are continuing their activities, but there's no new activity.

You can say that that's not much of an achievement, and I

would basically agree with you, but, nevertheless, they did succeed in putting some constraints on settlement activity. And that's more than any previous administration has managed to do with a right-wing government, like the Shamir government or the Netanyahu government. Even with left of center governments, you saw continued settlement activity.

Rabin stopped all the activity in the West Bank, but he increased the building around Jerusalem, and Barak, of course, Ehud Barak, when he was Prime Minister in the late 1990s, accelerated settlement activity.

So, it's a very big challenge, and it's, I think, it's necessary to recognize that, short of reaching an agreement that deals with settlements, it's very hard to get meaningful restrictions on it, which is why the Administration pivoted -- they like this word -- they pivoted from focusing on a settlements freeze to focusing on getting the negotiations going, setting a short time limit for them, and trying to resolve it in that context.

MR. AMR: Thanks, Martin. Gentlemen, unless you want to respond, I'll -- why don't we take a few more questions, and you can get your responses in there. Okay. So there is a gentleman next to Nadeen, a gentleman next to you, and then I have these two gentlemen right up here. And I'll go on this side.

SPEAKER: Sorry. (inaudible)

MR. AMR: If you can stand up, it will be better, so that the camera can get on you since you're further back.

MR. FATIQ: Al (inaudible) Fatiq, (inaudible) Newspaper in Doha. Once Chairman Mao Zedong of China was asked about the French Revolution, and he said, it is too early to tell. And I do agree with Martin Indyk. It is one of the first year is a short time to (inaudible). And it is first year syndrome for all the administrations. I remember vividly when President Clinton when, in his first 100 days, one commentator was asked about his performance at that time, and she replied -- and he replied she was doing great, meaning his wife, Hillary Clinton, who was thought at that time she is engineering everything at the White House.

And he came to be a good president at the time for his eight years, despite his personal and political mishaps. For the Obama Administration the changing of words created a lot of relief in the region here. And people are waiting beyond the first year for the meaning, changing of meaning of the U.S. policies in the region here, because, for long years, U.S. lacks serious credibility, and it cannot -- and it would not -- push for any real reform or timely reform unless it tackles the tangible issues that it is party to, which is the peace in the Middle East and other outstanding issues like Iraq and Pakistan and Afghanistan and many others.

So it has a serious credibility gap in the region, and unless it tackles or narrows the gap, it won't be a positive factor in the region.

Thank you.

MR. AMR: Thank you very much. Why don't we go with these two gentlemen here, and then we'll go to some responses, and then back to the audience. And why don't you stand up since you're not in the front row.

SPEAKER: Yeah. Sure.

MR. AMR: And identify yourself.

MR. TILAN: My name is Ahmed Tilan and I work for the Qatar National Food Security Program. My question is about human rights. And I want to tie what Mr. Helal was saying about the audacity of hoping that the Administration would place its -- the American values at least on par with its strategic objectives, with what Mr. Pollack was saying about human rights abuses in Iran.

But my question is actually about China, because equally egregious abuses were committed in China this year, most recently, you know, the beatings in the Uighur Provinces against protesters and jailing political dissidents who rally for openness and freedom.

And I wanted to ask of the Administration -- if it's (inaudible) the Administration is going to speak up about this, because the -- China-American relations are probably the most important bilateral relations in the 21st century.

So I was wondering how that's going to pan out?

MR. AMR: Thanks very much, and then one more question here -- Mr. Ambassador, we'll get you next in the next round.

MR. ALABADY: (inaudible) Alabady, from (inaudible) Newspaper.

There is grand number of suicide cases in the American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. How will Obama deal with this growing challenge? Thank you.

MR. AMR: So the last two questions were on ground forces in Afghanistan and on U.S. China relations, just to sum those last two up. And then, of course, we had the first questions. Gentlemen in Washington, if you want to respond. Hello, and we're not hearing you for some reason.

Martin, I think you need to turn on the mike.

MR. INDYK: Sorry, Hady. We could not hear the question on Afghanistan. Could you repeat that one, please?

MR. AMR: The question on Afghanistan, if I summarize it, is how will the U.S., you know, the U.S. forces are growing Afghanistan. What do you think the outcome will be? I think, was that a fair summary of the question?

MR. ALABADY: Oh, thank you. There is a growing number of suicide cases in the American army in Iraq and Afghanistan. How will Obama deal with this challenge?

MR. AMR: Okay. You got it?

MR. INDYK: We got that one. And the first questioner also we had trouble hearing whether there was a question there.

SPEAKER: We don't ask (inaudible).

MR. AMR: No, on the first questioner.

SPEAKER: (inaudible)

MR. AMR: No, no. The first questioner. You were the second questioner. Why don't we get the microphone back to the first questioner?

MR. INDYK: Is not the question on human rights in China.

SPEAKER: It was more of a comment than a question, but --

MR. INDYK: Okay.

SPEAKER: -- you can response to the concerns of reform -- U.S. pushing for reform in the Middle East, while lacking serious credibility here, because of other issues that it is engaged in -- it is party to -- (inaudible) of the conflict of the Middle East -- it is not an Israeli-Arab issue. It is American-Israeli-Arab conflict, and this is the way it is understood here.

So you cannot be an objective missionary to reform in the Middle East while you are engaged in all these wars in the region, and supporting the enemy of the region here.

MR. AMR: Gentlemen.

MR. INDYK: First of all, on the human rights in China. This is a very delicate issue which needs to be understood in the context of the broader issues in the relationship between the United States and China.

The Obama Administration came into office facing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, and it had to act very quickly to try to deal with that. And China was a very important element in its calculations, because of the huge amount of American debt that the Chinese government is holding.

And the Administration moved very quickly to engage with China and make sure that that relationship was a constructive one, to reassure the Chinese about what we were going to be doing on -- to right the economic crisis, and to enlist their support and their confidence in that process.

I think that the Obama Administration made a judgment that the well-being of the United States and the well-being of the world depended on that, and that, therefore, raising issues that could create problems in the relationship was not appropriate at that time.

You also saw a similar decision not to meet the Dalai Lama before President Obama went to Beijing. But I think as the situation stabilizes itself, and the United States and China move beyond the immediate crisis, you will see a reassertion of the traditional American concern for human rights in China.

Just as Ken Pollack pointed out that the Administration is very careful in its use of rhetoric, in contrast to the Bush Administration on these kinds of issues, so too I think you will see a toning down of the rhetoric, but nevertheless, continued expression of concern.

And that brings me back to another point that I want to make about the reform agenda in the Arab world. One thing that Ken didn't mention was that the Obama Administration has actually increased the request for funding for activities in support of strengthening civil society and democratic institutions in the Arab

world, something which the Bush Administration began.

And many thought because of the downplaying of the Obama Administration's interest in reform in the Arab world that it would cut funding for those programs, but, in fact, it's asked for an increase of something like 20 percent from the Congress, manifesting a continued interest in supporting the growth of civil society and other democratic institutions in the Arab world, but a very different way of approaching it, with less rhetoric and more action.

MR. POLLACK: Let me pick up on Martin's last points to just the initial comments about political reform and the tension between American support for political reform and our desire for regional assistance on other issues.

You know, I think that the lessons of the Bush Administration are clear ones. The Bush Administration wanted political change in the Middle East, and it wanted it fast, and it demanded that Arab regimes do this, that, and the other thing, at the same time, though, as it was pursuing very dangerous and ultimately very destructive policies across the board elsewhere.

Now let's be very honest: it made an absolute mess in Iraq. It squandered opportunity after opportunity with Iran. It did nothing to deal with the problems of the Israeli-Palestinian issue until it was much too late to do so, and it created all kinds of problems for itself so that it ultimately and very quickly had to make the decision do we keep pushing the Arab regimes on reform or do we get their support to help fix these many problems that we

ourselves have ultimately created in the region?

And, of course, in the end, they opted for the latter, and you can make a case that they really got neither.

So I think the lesson from that is a clear one, and I think that it's one that, again, as Martin suggested earlier, it's one that the Obama Administration understands, has internalized, and talks about, but what we haven't yet seen is them actually being able to put it into process and really deliver on it, which is that if you do better at handling the regional issues, if you pay attention to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, if you push for peace, if you try to get a peace process going, if you do better with Iran, if you build an international coalition to support you on Iran rather than trying to go it alone and threatening regime change, if you stabilize Iraq, and, again help the Iraqis to move forward rather than creating civil war in there, all of these issues will become lesser concerns. It will not require the same degree of support to deal with the messes in the region, and that will give the regimes this space to push forward on reform, and will give the United States the standing to try to help the different governments of the region move forward on reform.

So I think that the solution or the way to get out of the trap that the Bush Administration created for itself is an obvious one, but what we haven't yet seen is the Obama Administration actually follow through on its desire to deal with all of these problems that will create the opportunity to both stabilize the

region, and allow for progress on political reform.

Again, that's something that we're looking for here, and then just a point on this question about the suicides. Yes, the suicide rate is increasing in U.S. armed forces. It tends to do so during wars, especially overseas wars. We've seen that periodically. I don't think that the Administration is terribly concerned about that per se, but what it does get to is this larger question of the overall costs of the war in Afghanistan.

And here the Obama Administration does face a real conundrum. The right-wing in the United States is absolutely committed to the war in Afghanistan. It believes it's critically important, and it doesn't really care about the costs that will be required to actually win the war, if you want to call it that.

But quite frankly, the Obama Administration is not terribly interested in the right, because the right didn't elect him, and isn't likely to reelect him.

The problem that the Obama Administration has is that there's a split between the center in the United States and the left. The center also tends to believe that Afghanistan is important, and the center also tends to believe that it's important for the United States to make continuing sacrifices to try to deal with the problems of Afghanistan.

That is not the perspective of the left. The left does not believe in the Afghan War; is not interested in Afghanistan, and believes that any additional costs, whether it is soldiers dying

from suicide, soldiers dying from suicide attacks in Afghanistan, or anything, is too high a price to pay.

So the left very much wants to simply leave Afghanistan. And the problem that the President has moving forward is how does he reconcile these two things or when it comes down to it, which is he going to rely on? Does he need his base? Does he need the Democratic left to get him reelected or does he need the center?

And I think that what you saw in his speech on Afghanistan, his decisions, were an effort to try to bring the two of them together -- and I'm being very kind, because there are a lot of other people in Washington who would use much less kind words to describe the way that the President handled that.

He's trying to find a middle ground between where the center is and where the left is. And we just don't know if that's going to work out for him.

And obviously, moving forward, he's going to get accused of trying to have his cake and eat it, too. And obviously, if there are real problems going forward in Afghanistan, that's going to cause a rift between the left and the center that's going to make it very hard for the President to keep both of them onboard for his Afghan policy.

MR. AMR: Thank you, Ken. Thank you, Ken. Before I turn to the audience, I'd like to turn to the panel here in Doha to respond to some of the questions that have been asked and also, if I may, just enter the conversation thanks, so.

MR. HELAL: Actually, we might add more questions toward the panel in detail rather than responding, because we didn't receive any questions here for the panel in Doha.

I want just to clarify that what I meant by the change of tone is positive and admirable and we have to be fair and respect the change of tone, but actually the change of tone widened the gap of expectations and made more frustration and disappointment at the end, because of the change of tone did not reflect itself into any new actions.

Commenting on the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, actually, I found it very difficult to understand what Mr. Pollack was talking about the missing opportunities by the Bush Administration in Iran. I can say the same situation is repeated again by Obama's Administration actually. Missing opportunities is more critical now, because of the situation in Iran; is more visible in the threatening of attack -- waging an attack on Iran was not as clear as it is now, even during Bush Administration.

The question I'd like to put more effort to answer why Obama's Administration with all the bridges tried to be built between Washington and Muslims, why they didn't put an effort to try to understand why Al Qaeda is winning.

The fact what we are facing now after eight years of war against Al Qaeda, Al Qaeda is winning. Winning on two things clearly. It's a fact. It's not a belief or ideology. Winning in recruiting more fighters. Winning in gaining more fronts. And

winning in trapping the war against terrorism or war against Al Qaeda to be done with Al Qaeda tactics and Al Qaeda rules.

Now Al Qaeda is refueling itself by the security measures in American airports. Al Qaeda is refueling its support -- is given more -- an enthusiasm to supporters by the support, the open support, of American administration now to somebody like El Abdul Assalah or somebody like -- I have to -- my colleague here talked about Mubarak.

And Al Qaeda is winning more support by the U-turn or the contrast between the change of tone, the positive tone, and the actions committed by Obama's Administration.

MR. AMR: So, Ibrahim, does that mean you think he should scrap the positive tone? I mean if the actions can't change?

MR. HELAL: You know, it's very a run, because -- when you have a clear tone that reflects the actions, it sets a clear set of rules of engagement between Muslims and America, and these clear rules of engagement was actually easier to understand (inaudible) and to discuss during Bush Administration.

While now, the rules of engagement are really difficult to understand, which opens more ways for Al Qaeda to criticize -- even they criticized the Muslim Brotherhood, criticize Hamas. There is no rules of engagement in the region. The region is getting lose and lose -- looser and looser because of this contrast between the actions and the tone.

MR. AMR: Dr. Moussalli?

DR. MOUSSALLI: Yes, I think about the issue of human rights, whether it was China or in the Middle East or democratization and development. I mean the problem that every time this issue is brought up with the Arab regimes, they are not ready to do this. And the U.S. goes along with it and scrap it again and again and again.

Usually, they ask democratization of human rights of their opponents, of the U.S. opponents. And they do it probably very softly with their, you know, allies.

I mean I don't want to mention specific names. I don't want to get people here in trouble. You would -- you (inaudible) of the worst regimes in the Arab world -- and very repressive. We are the closest allies to you, and you don't try to democratize.

The U.S. itself is moving backward. They know it. The U.S. is going -- is going backward in terms of human rights. You have the Patriot Act. You can be -- Martin, even you are a very important person there -- one day, for whatever reasons, you can be put in jail without telling you why. Probably it's easier for them to do it with me, but it will be, nonetheless, possible; that the human rights issue is moving backwards throughout the world.

Now, again, as I said, President Obama has a good intention. And I mean while he's getting Nobel Prize, he sends 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan. And so the whole issue of what's right, what's wrong, what he says, what he doesn't say a clear U.S. foreign policy is not there.

I know -- I mean rhetoric is fine (inaudible) use it a lot. But as we were talking before, at this point, a lot of things are being redrawn. Imagine today a collapse of one of these every good regimes you support. What will bring around the Arab and Islamic world? If democratization is going to lead to the rise of Islamic movements, the U.S. stands against democratization. The Palestinians were punished for selecting Hamas. In Lebanon -- yeah, I mean it's -- I don't want to go through all of these stories.

In Algeria, with the support of the U.S., the elections were cancelled. (inaudible) the former Prime Minister, was removed by the military with the approval of the U.S. He wasn't democratically elected.

So, of course, I know the policy doesn't conform to philosophy, but at times when you want to be not too -- I mean that when one wants to be very (inaudible), he has to teach virtue and he has to be virtuous.

MR. AMR: Let's go -- time is running out, and so let's see a show of hands of who wants to ask a question. It's going to be quite a challenge. All right. So, I'm going to take three more questions, and I'm going to take the Ambassador here, and for gender balance there were two women here on this side that had their questions up, one here and one back there.

So, very quickly. And, Mr. Ambassador, since you're a skilled diplomat, I know you can to save time ask the question in --

SPEAKER: Yeah. I'm going to ask very quickly -- a little bit (inaudible) question --

MR. AMR: Okay.

SPEAKER: -- because I'm here to (inaudible) from all Arab community and for the people who talk to us, and I appreciate that very much. I do agree with Mr. Helal when he talked about the huge gap between the words and deeds and that, in fact, (inaudible) the Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority and Mr. Mahmoud Abbas were really disappointed, because when we started to prepare for resuming negotiations, it was in the cases of settlements as Mr. Mitchell told us in the beginning. Then we were shocked when Mr. Obama put for the time in our meeting in Europe without this man stopping any settlement -- any activities in the (inaudible). They are not settlements. They are building new cities in our land, in fact.

Now we have the (inaudible) when Mr. Mahmoud Abbas was very much damaged by that, because it showed to the Palestinians that the Americans are not able to put any pressure on the Israelis and why to say pressure, because it is not -- these are not conditions. There are the rules of the game.

Now to initiate ending occupation to (inaudible), you cannot start or resume negotiations while the other party -- I'm in the Israelis -- don't accept the principle that they are occupying the land of others, in fact.

What are we negotiating about, first of all? Now I understand that the United States do confess that it is occupied land. I mean they don't say it clearly, you know. And when the (inaudible) these (inaudible), they leave us -- the two parties -- I mean the Palestinians and the Israelis to negotiate a solution between themselves, and the United States is ready to support any result that comes out of these negotiations.

They're putting the (inaudible) and the (inaudible) and tell them please negotiate a solution between you. They are not (inaudible) -- they are not taking the role of the partner in the negotiations.

They are not a broker. They are not a complete, honest broker. They are just supervisor, and not allowing any other partner to be, you know, a partner in it -- nothing. Not United Nations, not the Security Council, not the international community, so there is a big mistake and the whole process.

And so we need a third party to be there. You cannot put the occupier and the occupied and tell them go and (inaudible) a solution by yourselves. The (inaudible) doesn't give it, so this is my question here to the American administration: Are they willing to state clearly that Israel is occupying the land of the Palestinians, and the negotiations are concerning ending occupation. In return, Israel can get all the security conditions they need or they ask for their security. This is my question.

If the American position is really to say it aloud and to start -- to ask for the Palestinians to come back on this (inaudible), it will be easy.

Otherwise, the (inaudible) of the Palestinian Authority and Mr. Mahmoud Abbas will be very damaged and nobody will take it serious that the Israelis are really serious with (inaudible) the negotiations, because we've been negotiating with the Israelis for more than 15 years and without any result, because the Israelis (inaudible) or (inaudible) show to the world that this is their land, and they are (inaudible) to concede certain bits here and, therefore, us as a kind of charity.

So here --

MR. AMR: Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador. Okay. I think that question was clear. Let's take two more questions. Clearly, I think in the second or third row here--one.

MS. MANDEL: Okay.

MR. AMR: Identify yourself, please.

MR. MANDEL: Gayle Mandel . I'm an artist and a political junkie.

This past week there was an article in the New York Times by Thomas Friedman, and I'm wondering if any of you read that about his advice to Obama to perhaps be a little bit more isolationist in his thinking, and let all the arguments going on throughout the Middle East and around the world be resolved by the people there, in their own land; that maybe we still as a country in the U.S. offer

humanitarian help, but when it comes to politics, we should take our noses out and solve our own problems at home. As you say, we should set -- we should be the example and lead by example.

So I just was wondering what you thought about a more or less hands-off approach in terms of sticking our noses in other people's politics.

MR. AMR: Okay. Thank you. Let's go for a third question, back here. So first question on Israeli-Palestine; second question on U.S. isolationism, and Naz , go ahead.

ADRY: And Naz Adry, Al Jazeera, English. I'm interested in the panel's view of Obama's reaction to Iran's elections in June. Many people thought that the condemnation of the protests that followed were pretty weak, especially given it came three months after he made a very interesting message to the Iranians, congratulating them on their new year.

Do it was a symbol of the dilemma that Obama's facing in balancing his tone, his interests and values. Perhaps is it a case of putting his interests and pressure from Israel to make a nuclear deal ahead of the values and interests that he goes on about in his speeches?

MR. AMR: I think we're going to have to close the questions there, and so what I'll do is ask the panelists, starting in Washington, to both respond to these three questions -- the first on the Israeli-Palestinian balance, the second on American isolationism, and the third on the U.S. reactions to the Iranian

elections. Ken and Martin, I'll ask you both to maybe to respond or at least one of you and then -- and also this will also be your concluding remarks.

MR. INDYK: Thank you, Hady. Is that working? Can you hear me?

MR. AMR: Yes.

MR. INDYK: First of all, I just want to make a response to Ibrahim's remarks about Al Qaeda gaining. Maybe Ken will also respond on that.

I think he makes a very important point, but I also think that here, as in other areas, like the Palestinian issue, that it's a work in progress, and Al Qaeda may be making some gains, but I could also argue that Al Qaeda is losing more generally.

On -- in particular, in the most important area, which I regard as the war of ideas, the way in which its indiscriminate use of violence and its killing of innocent Muslims is doing a lot to alienate it from the mainstream of Muslim public opinion.

And it may be able to recruit on the fringes. It will always be able to do that. But I think increasingly the way that it is alienating the mainstream is a strategic problem for Al Qaeda.

Of course, we can exacerbate that problem by showing that our way works, and here I agree with both Ahmed and Ibrahim that the credibility of American policy, as judged by results rather than intentions, is critically important. And our credibility is

questionable at the moment, because we don't yet have the results to show.

And that's I think the most important lesson that I would draw from the Obama Administration from its first year's encounter with the Middle East. If we cannot show that our way works better than Al Qaeda and the jihadist way, then we're going to have a much bigger problem on our hands, and Ibrahim will be right about who's winning and who's losing.

But that just leads me to the conclusion that we have to redouble our efforts, learn from our mistakes, and make sure that we have partners who are willing to join us in that effort.

One of the most important partners is Abu Mazen. And, again, I agree with Ibrahim that for what the Obama Administration did in the first year hurt Abu Mazen rather than helped him. And since he's already the weaker player, that is a problem that we need to address in the second year.

Now in response to the Ambassador's argument, I would safely say that there is very important differences between, for example, the Bush Administration's approach, which was so let the parties negotiate and stand back and not get involved and the Obama Administration's approach, if he can succeed in getting final status negotiations going, which is to be actively involved in those negotiations.

Since as far as the Obama Administration is concerned, the problem is not the outcome, which is clearly defined, and generally

accepted by the international community, by Palestinians and by Israelis, that is to say an independent Palestinian state, (inaudible) the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and settlement blocks incorporated into Israel on about three to five percent of the territory, with territorial compensation of the equivalent amount and quality to make up for that so that the 100 percent of the territory comes under Palestinian control in one way or another.

And since the objective is clear, the challenge is to try to get a credible negotiation going and get the parties to that destination. And I would expect to see that once the negotiations start that you will see the Administration playing a far more active role than we've seen in the past in trying to achieve consensus on - - between the two parties on what that final agreement should look like, with bridging proposals and the like.

And that goes to the question about isolationism in the United States conclusion that Tom Friedman draws that maybe it's better just for us to walk away and let the parties stew in their own juices for a while and try to get them to deal with their dysfunctionality rather than take it on as our responsibility.

And there are two points I'd make on this quickly. One is that the isolationism that the questioner referred to is something that we should all be aware of. The United States is now running massive deficits.

The American people -- and this is where I started in my remarks this evening -- are making very clear through the results of the Massachusetts election that they want their government to focus on creating jobs at home rather than spending money on wars or other efforts abroad.

And to the extent it becomes a kind of zero-sum game like that, it's clear that the government will have to focus more at home, and that will have consequences in the Middle East. And so for those who enjoy criticizing the United States, but understand that it is an indispensable partner in everything that people in the region would like to achieve for themselves and their families and their children, it's important to understand that we need partners now to work with us. We cannot do it on our own.

And that includes in the Arab world and with the Palestinians that the era of sitting back and saying the way to solve this problem is for the United States simply to (inaudible) Israel and we'll wait until that happens is an era that is passing.

Regardless of whether you think that it's the right way to do it or not, it's not going to work like that anymore, and the Arab states who have an interest in solving the Palestinian problem need to work actively with an administration that wants to solve this problem to try to help make sure that it happens.

MR. POLLACK: Thanks. I'll pick up on a few of these questions.

MR. AMR: Go ahead, Ken. Ken, I think you need to turn on your microphone. Ken, we can't hear you. You need to turn on the microphone, I believe.

MR. POLLACK: Sorry about that, Hady. Sorry about that, all of you.

Okay. I'll make a few quick points on some of the questions raised. First, let me just second Martin's points about Al Qaeda and its strengthening. First of all, I completely agree with Martin that we should be a little bit careful about declaring who's winning and who's losing.

If you were speaking to a room full of Iraqis, they would no doubt remind you that Al Qaeda just suffered a dramatic defeat in Iraq over the past three years, a tremendous defeat, in a place where they were hoping to establish a foothold in the heart of the Arab world and one of its most important countries, and where they were well on their way toward doing so, it has been summarily convicted from much of Iraqi political life. It's still there, but largely as an irritant.

And I think it's important to understand why that largely was the case. Al Qaeda's defeat in Iraq was not principally a military defeat. It was principally a political defeat, an emotional defeat, a psychological defeat.

It was defeated because the Sunni community of Iraq decided that it didn't want what Al Qaeda had to offer, and because it saw a better alternative. It see a real democracy being born in

Baghdad. And obviously, Iraq is very much a work in progress and there are people like Ahmed Chalabi out there doing everything they can to subvert Iraqi democracy, but Iraq is, by far, the most democratic country in the Arab world, and that was a critical element in why the Sunnis decided to reemerge, to participate in the Iraqi political process, to turn away from violence and Al Qaeda, and to try to find a better, more peaceful way.

And I think that what that speaks to -- and here I think that we are in all agreement -- is this larger that has emerged over the last 20 years. There's been a tremendous amount of wonderful scholarship -- from Arabs, from other Muslims, from Americans, from Europeans -- all about the roots and the sources of extremist violence in the Arab world, and what is consistently demonstrated is that it is born of the frustration of so many people in the Arab world with their lot, with their political, economic, and social circumstances.

And we should keep in mind that all of these movements, of course, were first born as revolutionary movements or record against their own governments.

And they only later focus on the United States, and what that demonstrates, I think -- and I think it's well recognized across the region, here in the United States, at least intellectually -- is that if there is going to be an ultimate solution to the problems -- problem of extremist violence, it is going to have to come from a process of both political, economic,

and social reform in the region that deals with the underlying sources of grievance -- the things that are giving rise to the anger and frustration.

And it's also going to require a more even-handed American approach to the region.

And as we were talking about, I think the Obama Administration does get that, does understand it intellectually. What we haven't seen yet, what we are hoping that they will do much better on is actually putting that into practice. And I think that we all have to be careful, and we all have to keep calling them on the carpet and making sure that they are actually doing what they say they are doing.

But at the very least, there is a recognition, and that's some progress.

A second point, the question about Iran, and whether the Obama Administration's policy of engagement was cynical.

Obviously, none of us knows what lies in Barack Obama's heart of hearts, but as best I could tell from constant conversations with the people in the Obama Administration pursuing that policy, the move was absolutely genuine.

The Obama Administration believed that a peaceful negotiated solution to the international community's differences with Iran would be, by far, the best way to do things, and it genuinely meant it when it reached out to Iran and genuinely wanted that peaceful set of negotiations.

And, in fact, what's been interesting is that it has taken the Obama Administration a great deal of time to give up on that, despite the events of the summer and despite the tremendous protests and the crackdowns in Tehran and all of the evidence that suggests that there has been a very narrowing of the -- a real narrowing of the base of support of this regime; that it has become far more hard-line, and that it is now dominated by people who frankly have no interest in engagement with the United States or the rest of the world.

And then just finally, I'll touch briefly on this issue of isolationism, which one of the questioners raised.

That is a growing idea here in the United States, and this has been suggested before that is very much the new zeitgeist of the political left here in the United States of America; that the U.S. should forget about the rest of the world, concentrate on our problems at home. It stems from a belief that the U.S. is the cause of all the world's problems rather than a solution to it.

And as I said, that's a view that is gaining strength here. I will say that I could not disagree with it more strongly. I think that the history of the United States demonstrates that first, the United States can be a force for positive change in the world, not that we always have, but certainly that we can and have done so in ways that few other great powers in history have done so.

I'll also say the history of the United States and the history of the world over the course of the 20th century

demonstrated that when the United States try to remove itself from regional problems, those problems didn't get better; they got much worse.

And, in fact, in every case, regional players tried to bring us in to try to help (inaudible) with us, and I think that Tom Friedman's bizarre op-ed is the perfect case in point.

First, let's remember that in the period of 2002, 2003, 2004, Tom Friedman was ferociously criticizing the Bush Administration for not getting involved in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and for trying to stand aloof from it, and he pointed out very rightly that this was a tragic mistake, and it was only going to create problems for Israel, for the Palestinians, for the Arabs, and ultimately for the United States.

And he was right about all of that. The answer is not to turn our backs and walk away. It is to find a way to help the region in a positive manner, not simply just wandering in and using our military force to try to fix problems that don't lend themselves to being fixed by just being broken by military force.

It's going to require patience, but I think that the history of the world and the history of the United States is that the U.S. and the regions of the world are better served when the United States does try, but does so in a constructive manner, not a destructive one.

MR. AMR: Thank you, Ken. Thank you, Martin. And we'll turn finally to our two panelists here before wrapping up. Ibrahim?

MR. HELAL: First, I'd like to clarify that I think we believe here in this region that Iraqis who -- were the ones who defeated Al Qaeda, not America in Iraq. And the Iraqis were allowed to defeat Al Qaeda only when Americans stopped fighting the Iraqi Sunnis, so allowed them to do their job of defeating Al Qaeda.

And I believe also that Iraqi Sunnis in Iraq were allowed to defeat Al Qaeda because of the -- maybe the Washington's realization of the links between Iran and some other Shi'ite groups in Iraq, not because of anything else. I could be wrong.

I want to summarize everything I said by we were told that the foreign policy is gain new allies, to maintain the current ones, to neutralize enemies, and eliminate some of them. But a foreign policy we saw and witnessed so far, unfortunately, is gaining more enemies, maintaining the current ones, losing more and more allies.

Please do not isolate yourself. Please do not isolate yourself before fixing all these problems. And I'd like to finalize that -- to finish with, we really, sincerely, not cynically, we sincerely love America. We sincerely want to love America. We sincerely would love to trust America.

But it is a two-way process. Thank you very much.

MR. AMR: Dr. Moussalli?

DR. MOUSSALLI: Yes, you know, I -- I think the remark on Friedman is correct. I mean he believed that, you know, globalization is taking over and slowly and gradually we will be integrated into different processes anyway.

But I don't think isolation is an option, and even if it's an option, it's not practical. The U.S. now is alone in the world. It has economic interests and markets and actually it's all over the world. Its military occupies half of the world, and will occupy the other half probably soon.

I think (inaudible) better we can have a world government that rules over everything. I mean, just joking. I don't mean it.

But at the same time, I think in so far as possibilities for the future, I completely agree with Martin. I think the Arab-Israeli conflict is almost finished, but you really need somebody who comes down on everyone very harsh, once and for all, and resolve the problem.

I mean it has gone too long, and the suffering and the killing, and not only that, but a consequence, regional consequences, the religious, you know, conflicts that have been created out of this is very damaging. And we are still at least -- at least I am still optimistic that President Obama will get his act together -- I mean probably start moving in the direction he has promised us to move to. Thank you.

MR. AMR: Thanks to the gentlemen in Washington, the gentlemen here in Doha. I thank the audience for being so patient. I think this was a record-breaking audience in size and in patience for our longest event yet. So, I'll invite you all to enjoy the refreshments, which I believe are still left, and I'll thank my

colleagues again in Washington. I know you both have meetings to get on to.

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

/s/Carleton J. Anderson, III

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2012