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VIEWS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST:  
PUBLIC OPINION IN THE ARAB WORLD

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**Welcome and Introduction:**

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**Panel Presentations:**

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Saban Center for Middle East Policy;  
Anwar Sadat Professor  
University of Maryland

DAVID IGNATIUS  
The Washington Post

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK: (In progress) -- because we now have a series of results, it becomes more and more interesting with each year. I don't want to spend a lot of time on the introductions because Shibley has a presentation to make that may take a little time. I do want to give just a little background to Shibley himself. He is the Anwar Sadat Professor at the University of Maryland. He is also a Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Saban Center at Brookings. And his area of specialization beyond public opinion in the Arab and Muslim world is also related to the Arab-Israeli conflict and of course U.S. policy toward the Middle East. His most recent book "The Stakes" was very popular a couple of years ago and he is about to bring out, or we're about to bring out an analysis piece that he has done on applying the polling results to U.S. policy in the region.

We are very glad also to have David Ignatius joining us on the panel this afternoon. David I'm sure is known to you all as the foreign affairs

columnist for "The Washington Post." Before that of course he worked for the "International Herald Tribune" and before that for "The Wall Street Journal" where some of you will recall what a great job as he did as "The Wall Street Journal" 's Middle East correspondent. Along the way he became also a great novelist and his book "Body of Lies" which I'm just reading now and I highly recommend to you is being made into a movie, a Hollywood special, which will be coming to theaters near you soon, so buy the book and see the movie too. Shibley, please.

MR. TELHAMI: Thanks so much, Martin, for hosting this, and the Saban Center, and thanks, David, for sharing this podium with me today for the analysis.

Let me just put this public opinion poll in some perspective. This is an academic poll. I've been doing polling in the Arab world for about 10 years. This is not intended really so much for any political purposes. Initially this project started before 9/11 and it was intended to look at the new

media phenomenon, the information revolution in the mid-1990s, that emerged and to see whether it's having any impact on the way people perceive the world, their opinions, but also notions of identity. And so we started doing some polling particularly to trace what people watch on television, how often they watch it, and to examine what has been termed the Al Jazeera phenomenon, but really all the stations that have come out since particularly satellite television, and in recent years we started also measuring Internet use. So now this year for example we have probably the most significant segment of the public using the Internet that is going to enable us to do statistical analysis. The whole idea behind the project was to have -- we know that really the most interesting part of public opinion is the demographic analysis and also analysis of change over time that allows you ultimately to look back and make an evaluation, so any shortcut is interesting in and of itself, but really the big analysis is when you look back and try to analyze this data over time which is what we're doing.

We're actually going to make the data to all scholars including the raw data for statistical analysis. We're in the process of putting an archive together and scholars would be able to use it for their own statistical analysis. This is the sixth year of replication. Every year in order to do this kind of analysis over time we have to repeat some of the core questions particularly related to the media but also some of the opinion and identity questions that we repeat every year and that's why we keep it in the same six countries that we thought were reasonably representative of the Arab world because we need to have this study over time, so we have that. What I'm going to show today is only part of this year's poll. We have a lot of other questions on identity, role of religion, role of women, social issues that are going to be analyzed and published later on. There is no funding from governments or political groups. This is funded by the Sadat Chair and I'm grateful to some funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, a foundation that funds scholarly projects. So there is

no real hidden political agenda here. It is an entirely straightforward academic project.

In terms of methodology, for this particular survey, we've surveyed over four-thousand, actually 4,046, roughly 800 in Egypt, 750 in Saudi Arabia, 500 in the UAE, 750 in Morocco, 600 in Lebanon, 600 in Jordan. In Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, there were door-to-door kinds of surveys based on a sampling methodology that we're posting on the website. There will be four pages of specific sampling methodology for you to review. For those of you who are really interested in methodology, you can see exactly how we do this.

Let me go over some of this year's results issue by issue. Let me start with the issue of Iraq. The first question is about whether Iraqis are better off or worse off than they were before the Iraq war. Eighty-one percent of the Arab public thinks that Iraqis are worse off today than they were before the war. Remember though this is outside of Iraq. We know that Iraqis have differing kinds of views and

they're divided according to sects, so remember this is in those six countries. The next question, ["Which of the following is your biggest concern about the consequences of the Iraq war?[" and this is a question we've also been repeating every single year. You can see we give them those choices, that Iraq will remain unstable and spread instability in the region, continuing trouble, Iraq will divert attention from other issues such as the Palestinian question, the U.S. will continue to dominate Iraq, Iraq may be divided, Iran is now a more powerful state.

The fascinating thing about this is that this is roughly the breakdown we've been getting although this year there's a little bit more weight on the instability part. But if you look at the remarkable end here, the lowest thing in the total, the top bar is the total, only 8 percent are worried about Iran getting powerful. That is stunning actually given the focus particularly over the past year. It's stunning because you look at everything



else getting at least 40 percent. They can name two issues. And this is clearly only 8 percent are saying Iran. It varies obviously from country to country. People in the UAE not surprisingly worry about Iran more. You get 37 percent saying they worry about Iran<sub>7</sub> and in Jordan as well. But even in Saudi Arabia only 10 percent say they're worried about Iran. So Jordan and Lebanon interestingly worry more about Iran. But overall it is really quite remarkable that only 8 percent worry about Iran. And by the way, that's not true about governments. We have to keep that in mind. This is public opinion. Governments in the region have different worries and there's no question that many governments in the region are worried about Iran more than their public, but it is interesting that this is the outcome after a year of focus on Iran.

Which of the following is your biggest concern about the consequences of the war in Iraq comparing 2008 with 2006? We've repeated this question before. Again when you look at the two most

interesting things, Iran even declined in importance. It was 15 percent last year who thought Iran was important, now it's only 8 percent, and 59 percent worry about Iran remaining unstable and spreading instability to the rest of the region.

What do Arabs think about the surge policy? Do they think that the surge has worked or do they think that the surge has not worked? Or do they not believe reports that violence actually declined? If you look at those two ends of the scale, only 6 percent think that the surge has worked and the drop in violence is related to it. And a plurality, 36 percent, don't even believe that the violence has dropped and is symptomatic of the distrust that you have reflected in much of the opinion on matters related particularly to American policy. Then even those who believe that there is a reduction in violence, the largest percentage, 31 percent, believe that it's not due to the surge policy and it's likely to be reversed.

What do you believe would happen in Iraq if the United States quickly withdrew its forces? This too is interesting because Arab governments are very worried about rapid withdrawal, not all of them but many of them are. Many of them are worried about rapid American withdrawal from Iraq. They worry that there will be instability. They want it coordinated. They worry about civil war. And they worry about the increasing influence of Iran. You hear that from Arab governments when you visit. Their publics have a different view. Sixty-one percent of the public overall think that Iraqis will find a way to come together, only 15 percent think that civil war will actually expand in Iraq, and that's really remarkable. There is variation if you look at it from country to country, and not surprisingly, some of the worry is coming again from the United Arab Emirates which has maybe more to worry about related to the consequences of Iraq, some in Saudi Arabia, but in general it's really quite remarkable that that's the case.

What do you believe in Iraq if the U.S. quickly withdrew its forces comparing 2008 with 2006? Again you see that the number of people who have confidence that Iraqis would come together has actually increased from 44 percent in 2006, to 61 percent this year.

Iran's nuclear program. Do you believe that Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons or do you think its program is for peaceful purposes? A plurality think it's for peaceful purposes, 46 percent to 39 percent who believe they're conducting a weapons program. This actually has changed from 2006. If you look at this, last year more people believed that Iran was actually developing a nuclear weapons program, so Iran's line is actually winning in the region. They are basically more believable. You see that actually throughout many of these results. Fifty-one percent believed last year that they developed nuclear weapons, this year it's only 39 percent.

There is international pressure on Iran to curtail its nuclear program. What is your opinion?

Those who think the international community should not pressure Iran to curtail its nuclear weapons, two-thirds, 67 percent, think that the international community should not pressure Iran to curtail its program. If you break that down by country, again you're going to have variation. The UAE again stands out in having the largest number of people who worry, but still the majority in every country including in the UAE does not want the international community to pressure Iran to stop its nuclear program. It's really rather paradoxical particularly when you take the position of the governments on these issues.

There is International pressure on Iran. Again in 2006 and 2008 it's roughly similar in terms of their position on international pressure with a slight increase in the number of people who say Iran should not be pressured, from 61 percent to 67 percent. If Iran acquires nuclear weapons, which of the following is the likely outcome? It would not matter. The outcome would be more negative. The outcome would be more positive for the Middle East.

And look again at this striking result. A plurality, 44 percent, think it will be more positive, 12 percent say it wouldn't make a difference, so you get 56 percent, a majority, actually saying it would either not make a difference or the Middle East will actually be better off, and only 29 percent believe that it will get worse. Again if you break it down by country, you're going to see variation. In the UAE, 42 percent think it will be negative, and that's the largest. But if you look at those people who worry about Iran nuclear weapons being negative for the region, the largest percentage is in the UAE, and then 35 percent is in Morocco of people who worry, but still they're all below 50 percent of people who worry in every single one of these countries.

Lebanese politics. In the internal crisis in Lebanon, with whom do you sympathize most? We asked this question because you know that there is the debate. Actually Arab media is very much focused on the sectarianism in Lebanon and the government crisis and so we asked whether they sympathize with the

opposition headed by Hizballah or sympathize with the governing coalition headed by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, both to some extent, or neither, and look at the numbers. Thirty-percent, a plurality, sympathize more with Hizballah, only 9 percent sympathize with the government in Lebanon, and 24 percent sympathize with neither, 19 percent sympathize with both to some extent, but it's quite remarkable.

If you divide that by confessional group in Lebanon you can see what the outcome is. Even here, by the way, there is more sympathy for Hizballah than for the governing coalition. In the totals, look at that, 30 percent for Hizballah, 24 percent for the coalition, obviously the others are divided, but look at the sectarian divide. It's interesting. It's not surprising that the overwhelming majority of the Shia favor Hizballah, but it's interesting how divided the Christians are. When you look at the percentages there, 25 percent to 45 percent, it's really quite remarkable how close that division, rather surprising. Sunnis are more in favor of the government for sure

and so are the Druze, but the Christians are far more divided than one might have expected.

I'm putting this question just for comparison and this is not an equivalent question, it is related but not equivalent, so you can't compare it exactly the same. This was whether after the war their attitudes toward Hizballah improved, became more negative, or didn't change, and you can see that after the war, quite a large number of people in the Arab world had a more favorable view of Hizballah after the war in 2006. This is not new that we have more positive views of Hizballah, but clearly this is not the identical question. The same thing if you look at it in the Lebanese arena, we also had a very significant divide along sectarian lines that we had after the war. There was also more support for Hizballah at that point, so that's one thing you can look at as somewhat changing, but they're not identical questions.

Palestinian domestic politics. In the current conflict among Palestinians, with whom do you



sympathize most? Here we gave them Fatah, Hamas, both to some extent. Look at the divide. In the totals, only 8 percent sympathize with Fatah, compared with 18 percent sympathizing with Hamas, and 37 percent sympathizing with both to some extent. That's the total in the Arab world. They obviously also break down differently by country. In Saudi Arabia particularly and the UAE, look at the two. They have strong support for Hizballah. There is a plurality in the case of UAE, and it's even a majority breaking for Hamas. The same thing actually in Lebanon to a great extent. Morocco is more divided. And Egypt is close but still favoring Hamas a little bit more but with a plurality sympathizing with both to some extent. The point here is very clear. If there was an intent to generate resentment against Hamas and diminish their popularity in favor of the Palestinian Authority, it hasn't happened according to this.

Similarly, which of the following is closest to your view on Palestinian politics in 2006? This was again not an identical question, it was a similar

question because it was at the time when the Palestinians were considering a national unity government so we gave them the choice do they prefer Hamas, Fatah, or a national unity government, and clearly the largest plurality preferred a national unity government, but still you had an advantage for Hamas over Fatah at that time.

When you observe the current state of affairs in Gaza, which of the Palestinian parties do you believe is more responsible for it? Remember, I'm not asking them to say whether Israel is responsible or the U.S. because they would win out of course. So I'm just asking them to the extent the Palestinians have responsibility, which one they think is more to blame on this issue. Again look at the breakdown. The top line is the totals. A plurality, 39 percent, say they're equally responsible. But of those who blame one party over the other, they say the government appointed by President Mahmoud Abbas is more responsible, 23 percent versus 15 percent for Hamas. So it's clear again that the blame of the Gaza

trouble isn't falling on Hamas's shoulders on this case, and it's certainly falling a little bit more on President Mahmoud Abbas's shoulders than Hamas's shoulders.

Views of Israel. What do you believe motivates Israeli policy in the region, and American support for these policies? This is the question that we asked for the first time last year, particularly debates about what drivers American foreign policy toward Israel and their relationship with Israel. We gave them U.S. influences, American policy through its policies sort of lobby argument, Israel is a tool of U.S. foreign policy which is an imperialism argument that is often heard, in fact was very much heard last year, or U.S. and Israel have mutual interests most of the time. It's interesting, actually for the last 2 years this response has been consistent. A plurality, 41 percent, believes that they have overlapping interests. Only 24 percent believe it's domestic influence in the U.S., and 26 percent believe that it's an American imperialism argument. Look at the

2006-2008 comparison. It's really very identical almost. It's very little changed from 2006. The previous one, by the way, was held in November and December 2006, so less than a year and a half ago. The one when I say 2006, that's the timing of that particular survey.

Views of Israel. If you look at the recent violence in Lebanon and Gaza, describe your attitude toward Israel's power. This is intended as kind of a measure of deterrence of Israel's power. Israel is very powerful and it is likely to use its power even more to consolidate its position. Israel is weaker than it looks. It's a matter of time before it's defeated. Israel has its strengths and weaknesses and no one can tell whether Israel will be stronger or weaker relative to the Arab world. A plurality in 2008 believes that no one can tell whether Israel is going to be strong or weak. More people think Israel is weaker than they think Israel is stronger, 35 percent to 16 percent. If you look at it in comparison to 2006, you can see that there was a

slight drop in the people who thought that Israel is now weaker. That's the real change from 2006 to 2008, that fewer people believe now Israel is weaker, perhaps because that came at the tail end of the 2006 war in which Israel was seen to have been defeated and now it's more back to normal.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the importance of the Palestinian issue. This is a measure really more intended to measure the importance over time. There are many ways of doing this, but the idea to see how this change has taken over time. Every year I ask them to rank this issue in priorities whether it's the single most important or in the top three. You can see actually over time that there hasn't been a lot of change, that almost three-quarters across the board except for 2005 believe it's either the single most important or among the top three for them, and there has been a spike in the past year. Certainly in 2006 we saw a jump over 2005, but it's back to the level of 2004 right now. I would say you always have to look at events of course, the

spikes. The interesting thing is that you have this trend which is roughly robust over time despite the fact that we had the Iraq war, the talk about the Shia-Sunni divide, the war on terrorism, all of this talk and still people are evaluating this as being extremely important. There are only marginal differences from year to year and those differences with these spikes are a function of immediate events. In this year, this of course took place immediately after the Israeli incursion into Gaza and the Israeli-Palestinian violence that led to the death of over a hundred Palestinians and three Israelis in March and I think the focus on that probably increased that a little bit more. They vary a little bit country by country. You can view that.

Which of the following statements is closest to your view? This is a question intended to test whether in principle people support the idea of a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders or whether they have principled opposition to a two-state solution. Those people who have principled opposition

are a minority in each year. We have 19 percent in 2008, 29 percent in 2006. The other two are prepared to accept a two-state solution, the 21 percent believe that the Arab governments should do more, and 52 percent believe that the Israelis are unlikely to accept such a solution peacefully. So in a way these are the pessimists. The good news is 21 percent plus 52 percent gives you 73 percent of Arabs polled say that they accept in principle the two-state solution, and that's an increase actually over last year because last year you had 61 percent total say they accept a two-state solution. The bad news is there is also more pessimism than in the previous year. If you add the ones who were principally opposed, 19 percent, and you add the 52 percent who now don't believe Israel is going to do it, you have even more pessimism than before.

What do you believe is the likely outcome of the prospects of a two-state solution? That's a direct question about prospects. Actually if you look at it the choices, if the two-state solution

collapses, what is the likely outcome? What is the likely outcome if there is no two-state solution? It will lead to one state in which Israel and the Palestinians are equal. It will lead to a state of intense conflict for years to come. The status quo will continue with little change. And the Palestinians will eventually surrender to Israeli power, and those are the choices. Look at the extremes here. Very few people on each end, a total of 9 percent believe it will lead to a one-state solution. Very few people believe it will lead to a one-state solution, and 7 percent, an even smaller number, believe that Palestinians will give up. The largest segment, 55 percent, believe it will lead to intense conflict for years to come. It's interesting. That was a little bit surprising to me to be honest. I expected a few more people to say it would lead to a one-state solution because many intellectuals are making that argument and I thought that maybe I would expect not a majority but a slightly larger segment of the public that would say that, but you don't see that



in any of the countries really. Maybe the UAE has 27 percent who believe that.

Which of the following statements is closest to your view about the prospects of lasting peace with Israel and the Palestinians? I don't believe it will ever happen. It is inevitable but it will take more time. And it will happen within the next 5 years. Look at that, only 13 percent believe it's going to happen in the next 5 years, 55 percent believe it'll never happen, and 27 percent believe it's inevitable but it'll take time. That really is in many ways very much similar to what we see on the Israeli-Palestinian front where you have people who at the same time say we support in principle the idea of a two-state solution but we don't believe it's going to happen, and that's why they end up in effect acting like they support militancy, and in fact supporting militancy because of that kind of irony in the position, but you see it very clearly in all of these polls.

Views of the U.S. Generally speaking, if your attitude toward the U.S. very favorable, somewhat

favorable, somewhat unfavorable, very unfavorable. This question we've been repeating so in a way that gives us a rough comparison over time whatever you want to make of this question. But you can see that we have 83 percent having an unfavorable opinion of the U.S. In comparison to 2006, this is a larger number of people particularly having a very unfavorable opinion of the U.S., 64 over 57 the year before, but clearly a similar trend, just more intense. How much confidence do you have in the U.S.? Seventy percent have no confidence in the U.S., 25 percent have some confidence, 4 percent a lot of confidence. That's very comparable to 2006. Look at the numbers in 2006, almost identical, a little more less confidence, but that's within the margin of error so it really isn't any change from the year before. In this case, the question is, What two steps by the U.S. would improve your views of the United States most? Again a question that we've been asking, and I can tell you that these choices we gave to them so they're not imagining these. We gave them withdrawal

of U.S. forces from Iraq, withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Arabian Peninsula, brokering a comprehensive Middle East peace based on the 1967 borders, stopping economic and military aid to Israel. We also had by the way stopping economic aid to Arab governments. It didn't show up in the poll and that's the only reason it's not there. Pushing even more to spread democracy in the Middle East. And providing more economic assistance to the region.

Last year as you will see when we compare, a large majority said brokering Arab-Israeli peace. Still that's the number one answer, 50 percent total say brokering Arab-Israeli peace. But what we see is the withdrawal from Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula numbers are growing, and even from the Arabian Peninsula broadly are growing over last year. That's an interesting number and we'll see it broken down a little bit. You don't see many people saying they want more economic aid or they want to spread democracy in the region. These are the 2006 numbers just for comparison. The top line is the totals. You

can see that 62 percent last year the best way to get a better image of the U.S. is to broker Arab-Israeli peace, and you can see that 33 percent was withdrawal from Iraq, and 22 percent was withdrawal from the Arabian Peninsula, so those really increased.

The United States has been actively advocating the spread of democracy since the Iraq war. Do you believe that this is an important objective that is likely to make a difference? It's an important objective but the U.S. is going about it the wrong way. Or I don't believe that democracy is the real objective of the United States. You can see that 65 percent don't believe it's the real objective of the United States, only 8 percent say it makes a difference. Those are the numbers by the way of 2006 compared to 2008. Almost identical.

Would you say your attitudes toward the U.S. are based more on American values or American policy in the Middle East? That question has been relatively consistent over time. The vast majority usually, roughly 80 percent, say its policies not values. This

is the comparison of 2006 to 2008. Again in 2006 it was 70 percent and now it's 80 percent.

The American people are in the midst of choosing their next president. Which of the following candidates do you believe has the best chance of advancing peace in the Middle East? The most striking thing here is that a plurality, 32 percent, say that policy will be the same no matter who becomes the next president. But on the other hand, an almost equal number think that a Democratic president would be better for peace, and it's interesting because you have 18 percent for Obama, 13 percent for Hillary Clinton, and only 4 percent for John McCain. And I have to say in part because McCain in the media, first he seemed to be closer to President Bush who is not popular obviously, but also because he's been talking about islamoterrorism and that framing is worrying people in the Middle East.

Al-Qaeda. A question we've been repeating, When you think about al-Qaeda, what aspect of the organization if any do you sympathize with most?

Actually it's interesting because we have some change here. Still it's the same trend, but the numbers are different. First, the number one answer is that it confronts the U.S. I don't sympathize with any aspect of al-Qaeda. That's actually an increase over last year's as you will see. And about 7 percent say they sympathize with the fact that it seeks a Taliban-like Islamic state. These are the comparisons of 2006 to 2008. There was a drop with those who said I do not sympathize with any aspect of al-Qaeda at all, but the ones about sympathizing with an Islamic state or the method of operation remained roughly the same.

I just want to move very quickly to the last two points I want to make. One is about global powers. One of the questions I'd asked is, I've given then seven countries and you can see those seven countries here, France, Germany, China, the United States, Russia, Britain, and Pakistan. Those are countries I named. A lot of the questions that I asked are open questions, but sometimes I give them choices. Here I limited those choices. If you had to

live in a world where there is only one superpower, which one would you rather have? I added Pakistan because it's the only nuclear Islamic state, so it's not that it's a real viable superpower, but just to see whether it was going to get any numbers. Last year interestingly it did get numbers. This year when you look at this, France is still number one and it's been number one consistently by the way, and Germany and China are up there. Then the United States, Russia, and Britain roughly equal, and Pakistan is in last place. If you compare that to last year, the two striking things are that France somehow increased in its stature, but it seems to mostly come at the expense of Pakistan which I think dropped largely because of the instability and the events surrounding the assassination of Bhutto in the past year, and China's position has been enhanced. It has dropped a little bit from 16 to 13 actually.

If you had to live in one of the following countries, which one would you prefer? This question I asked to differentiate between a country that they

may choose as a power versus a country that they might want to live in or study in, and historically there's been a very big difference between the two. France has actually trumped in all scores and Germany is pretty good, but China of course is not as high, but the surprise is that China over the past few years has increased. Three years ago China didn't even show up as a place where people want to live. Last year it got 7 percent, this year it got 8 percent. It's interesting how people's image of China is changing. You can see here the division, not all that different from 2006 to 2008.

If a member of your family had to study in one of the following countries, which country would you prefer? Again you have France, Germany, Britain, the U.S., and then you have Russia, China, Pakistan at the very bottom. They don't see Pakistan as a prospect there. This is 2006 to 2008, very little change interestingly, not much change.

Name the two countries that you think pose the biggest threat to you. This is again interesting



because Iran doesn't show up very high. It gets 7 percent, Israel is number one, U.S. is number two, then followed by Iran. It doesn't mean by the way that they don't see Iran as a ~~threaten~~ [threat], don't misunderstand, because this is a ranking. So if I asked them for example a question which asked, ["Do you think Iran is a threat to you?["] I'm going to get more than 7 percent I assure you. I don't know how much until I do it empirically. So this doesn't mean they don't see Iran as a threat. It only means that they see Israel and the U.S. as bigger threats. That's what you have to look at this as.

But it's interesting because if you compare 2008 with 2006, what you find here is the U.S. and Israel are seen to be bigger threats than last year, and Iran is seen to be a smaller threat than last year, a decline from 11 percent to 7 percent.

Two countries where you think there is most freedom and democracy for their own people. All the countries are Western and Japan. You don't see China, you don't see Pakistan, you don't see any of these

countries, and the U.S. does pretty well. The U.S. is roughly equal to Switzerland in their view and they separate that from American power and this is the change from 2006 and you can see it there.

Please tell me which world leaders outside your own country you admire most. This is a question we have been asking in the last few years, and it's an open question. I don't give them names. They name any leader they want in the world, and they don't have to name political leaders, and some don't. That's why we end with a lot of names, dozens of names, and that's why no one really gets a huge number because they have to think of someone. In fact, we asked them to think of two and I'll show you the one with two, and they struggled to come up with the second, so it's not easy to answer that question. But the interesting thing about this is that Hassan Nasrallah is still number one and actually increased his popularity from last year despite the fact that I expected to be honest with you perhaps a slight decline because the assumption was that over the past year the focus has

been not on the Lebanon war of 2006 which is one reason for his popularity, but on the factionalism in Lebanon and there's been a lot of pressure he's facing and Hizballah is facing from Arab governments because of the position they've taken in the Lebanese crisis, but clearly he is more popular. And Bashar Assad is a surprise. I think we haven't seen that name come up in that big way particularly given the fact that American policy is intended to isolate those parties and he clearly shows up here. Ahmadinejad showed up last year as well. Sarkozy shows up, but he gets much of the popularity in Morocco and Lebanon as you might expect even despite the political position, and then you ea [can] see the rest. In comparison to last year by the way, look at that, Hassan Nasrallah had 14 percent, he has 26 percent, Bashar Assad had 2 percent and now he has 16 percent, so it's quite a significant change.

However, here's an interesting one. When we asked them to name two leaders, to come up with a second leader and combine the first and second

together, then the whole thing expands a little bit and then you start seeing some interesting names that you otherwise don't see. You still see Nasrallah up there atop number one, Chirac is number two for a lot of people. By the way, just a story on Chirac, from 2003 and the Iraq war until last year he was number one in the Arab world. People were basically rewarding him for what they saw as his standing up to the U.S., and so he was number one until last year and then he dropped second to Nasrallah. This year he is not showing up in the first place, but he is showing up on the second list and so he's there.

Then you have interestingly the emergence of what I call the modernizing Sunni Arab leader of the United Arab Emirates, particularly the Emir of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid. This is new I think. It might be entirely a function of the way we asked that question of adding a new name as a second expanding. We did get a report from the people who were conducting the poll that people were struggling with

the second name when you asked them, so it was not as easy, so they were forced to expand the list of names.

Finally on the media. I told you already part of this project is to document what people watch on television and how media behavior is changing. We have had standard questions. We have had two sets of questions. One is which media outlet they watch as their first choice for news, which media outlet they watch as the second choice. Then we had another standard which is to document for each one of the stations how frequently they watched it, weekly, five to six days a week, three to four days a week, once a week and so forth. So we have excellent documentation. That documentation is being repeated every single year so that at the end of the 10-year period we're going to have probably the best available dataset that can allow us some study of media behavior.

On the number one question, When you watch international news particularly which of the following networks news broadcasts do you watch most? "Al

Jazeera" is still number one. Fifty-three percent say "Al Jazeera" is their first choice. And 17 percent say an Egyptian network. I have to tell you that that's because the Egyptian network is watched a lot in Egypt, but it's not watched much in the rest of the Arab world. In Egypt, these aggregate results are weighted by population and Egypt gets a larger share, so when you look, for example, here's an aggregate result without Egypt, so we group five countries, the other five countries, without Egypt to see what the results would look like, and now we have 49 percent say "Al Jazeera" is their first choice, 13 percent say "Al Arabia" is their first choice, NBC 12 percent, and then you have the rest of the distribution without Egypt. So when you take Egypt out of it, it really breaks down a little bit differently.

When you watch international news, which of the following networks' broadcasts do you watch most often? This is Egypt because we took Egypt out, so you can see that the Egyptian share is 31 percent of the market, but "Al Jazeera" is still number one in

Egypt. So even in Egypt, "Al Jazeera" is number one for news. This is country by country, so Jordan, and "Al Arabia" does well in Jordan. Actually, it's a very strong second to "Al Jazeera" in Jordan. You can see we have them country by country. Morocco, obviously there are also regional ones and you can see that Moroccans watch for example Suzanna TV, and you can go through country by country.

Let me just end with a different measure. Remember that when you look at the result which says, ["]Which one do you watch? Which is your first choice for new[,] it doesn't mean people are not watching some of the other stations. A lot of people watch multiple stations and we have to keep that in mind. So this result is people who say I watched the following station at least five to six times a week. Then you get a different ratio. You get 60 percent "Al Jazeera," 29 percent "Egyptian Network," 25 percent "Al Arabia," and that's of course weighted for Egypt and it would be a little bit different if we took Egypt out.

Over the past year there were reports of some frustration with the media. The Qatari government and the Saudi government are reported to have agreed to mute down criticism of each other and there were people who were suggesting that that has been reflected in the way "Al Jazeera" has been reporting. At least at the elite level there were rumors to that extent. There were political meetings to that extent. And as to "Al Arabia" also people feel maybe it favors the U.S. more and some people are frustrated with it. So you hear those kinds of criticisms of these stations over the past year. So I asked the question, ["]When you compare the content of programs on "Al Jazeera" TV in the past year with previous years, which of the following would be closest to your view?["] There has been no noticeable change. The content of the programs have improved in quality. And programs have declined in quality. Actually only 9 percent think the content has declined, 45 percent say it's improved, and 23 percent think there has been noticeable change. I asked the



same question related to "Al Arabia" and just wanted to repeat the same question for "Al Arabia" to see if it happened there, and only 5 percent say the content and programs of "Al Arabia" have declined, 27 percent say they've actually improved, 25 percent say they haven't changed. So overall the media picture remains roughly similar to what it was last year. And I'll end with that and give it back to my colleague.

MR. INDYK: Shibley, thank you very much. I think it's not just a fascinating poll with its results, but from my own perspective gives real insight into what's going on in the minds of much of the Arab world. I want to turn now to David Ignatius to give us his reaction to what he heard.

MR. IGNATIUS: These results don't need a lot of interpretation or explanation from anybody. They're very powerful and largely speak for themselves, just some observations about the policy implications of these. You'll sometimes hear Bush administration officials ask in effect[,] ["How] ~~how~~

bad is it out there,["] and looking at Shibley's poll the answer is really bad.

It's striking that the fundamental cornerstones of U.S. policy are really called into question by these numbers. U.S. policy over the last several years has been premised on the idea that you can organize and strengthen the moderates in the Arab world, to combat the extremists increasingly supported by Iran, and one by one these numbers call it into question. Hamas, the extremist force among the Palestinians, is more popular than Fatah, the moderates we're trying to help. Hizballah and its allies are more popular in Lebanon than Fouad Siniora and Walid Jumblatt, our allies. The Arabs are not concerned about an Iranian threat, they're not concerned about an Iranian nuclear weapon. Down the line these premises are shown to be not supported by public opinion. They are supported by the governments so you could argue you could continue with those policies and just accept the gap between the elite and

public opinion which has been a fact of life in the Middle East for a long time.

A couple of other brief observations starting with Iraq. I was struck by I don't want to call it optimism exactly, but although these numbers show that Arabs don't believe the U.S. surge of troops is working, they do believe that Iraq is less dangerous, less on the edge of sectarian conflict. Shibley's numbers show that back in 2006, 24 percent predicted civil war and only 44 percent thought that the Iraqis could bridge their differences. Now only 15 percent see civil war as a consequence of U.S. withdrawal and 61 percent think that Iraqis can bridge their differences. That's interesting. That says that the Sunni Awakening, the reduction in sectarian violence from 2006 which was really at the peak when Iraq did seem to everyone to be on the verge of civil war, that in the Arab world there's a perception of change. People don't want to credit the United States, but they do see something is different.

At the same time, these numbers show that Arabs are very worried about the possibility that instability could continue in Iraq, you could say instability could return in Iraq at the level that it was in 2006, and it could expand into the Arab world more broadly. I certainly hear that not simply from elite opinion when I travel in Middle East, but from ordinary folks to the extent that I can talk to them, you feel that walking the streets of Damascus, the sense that we may have it tough here, but at least we're not Iraq, at least our country still holds together and we have a social fabric that still has some integrity. So to me the implication of that to extrapolate quite a lot from these limited numbers would be although Arabs support the idea of the withdrawal of U.S. troops, their anxiety about things coming apart again is such that the next president should be very careful in how troops are withdrawn, that instability doesn't return and spread in a way that the people say they fear.

Then just a final observation is that we really are in a deep hole, and by ["we["] I mean the United States. It's striking how negative public opinion in the Arab world is. Unfortunately that's shared outside the Arab world. We're unpopular pretty much everywhere. And there's also surprisingly to me a high number who don't think things will change much when there's the new president. Eighteen percent say Barack Obama might change things. I guess I would have thought that these other candidates would get little higher numbers. So there's a deep antipathy toward U.S. policy and a feeling that it isn't likely to change so that the next president has his work cut out for him.

To conclude, there's a number that Shibley didn't mention in his review of the slides, but it leapt out at me because I'm an inveterate would-be optimist looking for the little sliver of good news. There was a question about what element of al-Qaeda do you sympathize with and the percentage of people saying I don't sympathize with anything at all about

al-Qaeda increased to 33 percent from 21 percent. I do think that that confirms something that we see in many different ways in the Arab and Muslim world which is that al-Qaeda has badly overplayed its hand, that there is generally a revulsion against some of the tactics that they've used that ordinary folks really don't like what they see. So as weak as we are about our own policies and our friends, this category of enemies isn't doing very well either.

MR. INDYK: Thank you, David. That actually applies I think to Osama bin Laden specifically. Did he go down? He was at 6 percent.

MR. TELHAMI: He's roughly the same. He'd actually gone up a little bit, but just still marginal.

MR. INDYK: I just wanted to ask you a couple of quick questions before we go to the audience. First of all, the poll was done in March 2008, that is, last month?

MR. TELHAMI: Yes.

MR. INDYK: I wonder to what extent the Iran NIE can help to explain why Iran is no longer seen in the same way as a threat to Arab public opinion. And the second question, Chirac I believe was in your last poll and is not in this poll, and it seems Bashar Assad seems to be the beneficiary of Chirac's passing from office. What's the explanation for Assad being there? It's quite unusual. One can understand Hizballah, Nasrallah, even Ahmadinejad, but Ahmadinejad is down quite significantly and Bashar al-Assad is suddenly up quite high. So can you address those two issues?

MR. TELHAMI: First, on Iran, I think of course the NIE report was many months ago, it's not recent, so it's not hot in the news. But I would say that it did get coverage in the Arab media so people were aware of it and it was interpreted to mean that Iran's program is peaceful and certainly I think that that was probably an element of it. But I think you have to look at it more in terms of the general attitudes or frustrations with the U.S. and seeing

almost everything in terms of the Israeli and American prism, so you have 95 percent saying Israel is the number one enemy, almost the same number saying the U.S., and all of the people on the wrong side of the U.S. and the people who are benefiting including Iran, and Arab governments in many ways are not scoring well. You don't see sitting leaders in the Arab world scoring well except of course we saw -- beginning to show up as a second, but we don't usually see. And the remarkable thing over the past 2 years actually is that if you look at the top four vote getters, you haven't seen a Sunni Arab leader in the group. That's been rather remarkable, and this is mostly Sunni populations that I'm polling. So that applies to Assad as well where essentially the very fact that we're putting them together, Hamas, Hizballah, Assad, Iran, we are making them as a bloc as our enemy as the people we're confronting, there must be something right with them then, so I think there's a lot of that.



MR. INDYK: If you'll let me interrupt, he's not only put in that bloc by us, we have the Sunni Arab leaders -- also increasingly upset with him, boycotting the Damascus summit and so on.

MR. TELHAMI: -- reinforcing because I think the truth of the matter is that what this shows is that there is not only little faith in our government, but most of them have little faith in their governments and they see them as working with us. And so that's showing up in all these issues and so it shows up with Hamas. There's been a campaign as you know by Arab governments to criticize Hizballah, to criticize Iran, and as we know from Annapolis until now it's all about Iran is the biggest threat and that's been reflected in many of the statements. But it doesn't show up at the public level, in fact it gets the opposite result. So I think what you're seeing here is people who are close to the U.S. and not doing well and people who are opposed by the U.S. and doing well. And that includes Assad surprisingly because I think people in general have not had this

view of him particularly. His father did a little better but didn't do very well either. So this kind of an emergence--[,] [you] ~~You~~ might call it the coattails of Hassan Nasrallah a little bit and clearly -- it's not surprising that Chirac would go down because he's obviously not a president anymore, so it's the first poll that we do where Chirac is not the sitting president, but people go to him as a second choice still in their thinking.

MR. INDYK: So the correlation is, let me put it this way, if the United States were more popular, they would be less popular. Is that what you're saying?

MR. TELHAMI: That's right. There's no question. In much of the polling, a lot of the popularity is negative popularity. It's not an embrace of an agenda. We know that. We know that with Hamas in the Palestinian areas. It's not an embrace of their agenda, it's not an embrace of an Islamic state, it's not an embrace of violence, it is an embrace of frustration because they don't like the

alternative and they are pessimistic about the path that people are taking and somebody's taking action so they rally behind them. So it isn't an embrace of an agenda, and that's why I asked the question about al-Qaeda which David mentioned I think correctly, if you want to look at something optimistic you find that over the years, every single year, even those people who sympathize a little bit with al-Qaeda are saying they're not embracing their agenda. Very few people say they embrace their agenda. It's more a negative embrace.

Now it's more than that with Hizballah and Hamas because they see them a little bit differently. Many people do sympathize with their agenda. I think we have to make clear that they don't see them in the same way, but there's no question that a lot of the support is just the enemy of my enemy.

MR. IGNATIUS: I have a Syrian friend who likes to say to me, David, Bashar Assad is not popular in spite of the criticism from other Arab regimes, he is popular because of the criticism from other Arab

regimes. In other words, position yourself as the bad boy who's defying the pro-American thrust of the region is a positive.

MR. INDYK: Right. And we come back to that word defiance. Defiance seems to be the critical element here. Is that right?

MR. TELHAMI: Yes. Absolutely, defiance.

MR. INDYK: The United States and Israel.

MR. TELHAMI: Defiance, but also credible defiance. When I say credible defiance I mean if you look at Hizballah, they're seen as having been credible in their defiance because they're seen as having expelled the Israelis from Lebanon, having won the 2006 war, and being strong despite all of the attacks against them in the past years, so that's credible. Even Hamas, they won an election. They're seen as having turned the Israelis out of Gaza. They seem even to have performed reasonably well in previously. So now that's what makes Assad a little bit more surprising because when you look at him, he

hasn't done much. Yes, he has been defiant, but he hasn't waged war. He has not taken any action.

MR. INDYK: Lebanon.

MR. TELHAMI: So in that sense, that's why I say it's maybe more coattails.

MR. INDYK: He's only got (inaudible) percent.

MR. TELHAMI: Right. We have to keep that in mind a little bit.

MR. IGNATIUS: If I could ask Shibley a question that I was puzzling over reading these interesting findings. We sometimes think that when people are asked questions by pollsters they tell a kind of truth but sometimes not all the truth. This question of built-in polling bias comes up when we think about questions of race, the pollee may not want to say something in public, and I was thinking of when I was in Iran in 2006 and I had been to Friday prayers at Tehran University which is so famous where they chant death, death, death to America, et cetera, and there's just this incredible thunderous roar of

thousands of people saying death to America. I walked out and I through my translator pulled somebody aside and I said, "I'm an American. What am I supposed to think when I hear people say death, death, death to America?" He said, "I'm terribly sorry, we don't mean death to Americans. We mean to the death to the idea of America." But you got a sense that there was a difference between the sort of public formal statement and what people really meant by that.

That came back to me as I was reading these results. I guess what I want to ask Shibley is as somebody who really knows polling, is there any amendment or elaboration that needs to be offered about what people are saying here?

MR. TELHAMI: Absolutely. When you design a question, it's not the question, it's what you're trying to get. That's why you brainstorm and you think about it. Most of the time you spend actually is in designing a survey because you have to do it in a way that does not bias the answer. You have to put yourself in the position of making sure that you have

the choices that are laid out right. Sometimes because the answer you're trying to get is indirect, you have to ask multiple questions. For example, the leader question, when I asked the leader question, I do two things. One is I don't ask them about their own leader because I don't want to put them in that position. So I ask outside your own country so people have to say the leaders they admire outside their own country and not their own leader, so not to put them in that position.

But more importantly, the reason I'm asking that question is I could care less actually what leader they love. The main question I'm asking is what is the prism through which they're looking at the world? What's the frame of reference? How are they making the judgments? Because that's the key. If you want to get to understand what's driving them, you have to understand what are the psychological shortcuts that they take when they say I like this person or I like this policy or I like this superpower. And so all of these are indirect

questions and they tell you about the prism. That's why this discussion of why do they like Hizballah, because they're looking at them through the prism of American foreign policy and the Arab-Israelis issue. Those are the two prisms that they're defining everything that they frame, so, yes. And you have to ask multiple questions of this sort and not just one because one question isn't going to be enough.

But let's put it this way. In general if you look at all the polls, there are variations across the board and there are different methodologies, and most of these issues have been roughly consistent, ones that we've done, ones that Pew has done, Gallup has done, Pipa has done, [and] they've been roughly consistent. You're never going to get a perfect answer. Like in our polls we see that opinion shifts. We all understand that. We know the limits of public opinion. But by God, it's a hell of a lot better than having armchair analysis or listening to Ahmed Chalabi about people welcome you with rice when you come in.



And that's the truth that we have to keep in mind when we're doing this kind of analysis.

MR. INDYK: Let's go to the audience, please.

MS. MAHLE: Melissa Mahle, C&O Resources. I'd like to follow-up on the question that Martin asked on the Iranian nuclear polling. The question was there's international pressure on Iran, if they like that, and maybe you can't answer this, but is the reaction to what the responders thinking pressure means, war, instability, or is it reflecting instead as you had mentioned earlier in response to the question feeling that it was a peaceful program?

MR. TELHAMI: I say I could give you my interpretation because I've looked at other similar questions and not only the ones that I've asked but others have asked and I could tell you my instinct on this. They're looking at it through two prisms. One is the Islamic issue where they worry that we're focused more on Islamic countries even countries they don't like but they're still Islamic, but it's part of

the worry that comes up in terms of why the international community is doing X, Y, and Z since 9/11, particularly American foreign policy, they see it more or less as specifically focused on Islamic countries. The second is the double-standards issue vis-à-vis Israel. That's always in the back of their minds and that biases their answers, whether they're really worried about Iran or not, they're going to defy that. It's [another kind] ~~kind of another~~ defiance, talking about defiance, it's another defiance issue. And it is interesting by the way because when you look at the polling among Palestinians, they also think that a nuclear Iran would be positive.

If you think about that for a minute, that's true by way of Arab citizens of Israel, and the poll showed a significant difference between Arab citizens of Israel and Jewish citizens of Israel on the issue of Iran's nuclear capability. What's interesting about that is of course the Israelis are worried that Iran is going to use it against them and you can

imagine what would happen to the Arab citizens and the Palestinians of Israel, they'll all be equally destroyed. So clearly this is not an objective analysis either on the Israeli side or on the Arab side. Something else is driving it which is the particular prism of fear and sense of threat and sense of injustice all coming together and that's where when you're trying to interpret these results you have to look at them again through what is the prism through which they're looking at the world and that is the prism through which they're looking at the world.

MR. INDYK: David Pollack?

MR. POLLACK: Thank you very much.

MR. INDYK: Do you want to identify yourself?

MR. POLLACK: Dave Pollack. I'm with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. One of the concluding comments, Shibley, that you made[,] was that polls are fairly consistent across many different polls.

MR. TELHAMI: On some of the issues, yes.

MR. POLLACK: Right. So I wanted to ask about some issues where from what I've seen there are actually some differences and see if we can try to explain that.

One of them has to do with Iran and Ahmadinejad and Hizballah and Nasrallah and that whole combination viewed through Arab eyes. I think in the Pew and even in some of the Zogby polls from the last 6 months or so that actually attitudes in some of the same countries that you're polling were unfavorable on balance to of those, Iran, Hizballah, Nasrallah, Ahmadinejad. So although you didn't ask exactly the same questions, that seems to be somewhat at variance with the thrust of what you're coming up with.

Similarly, on the question of whether Arabs dislike the United States so much because of our values of our policy, you had an 80-20 split saying it's because of our policies and not because of our values, but the Gallup poll that was just printed up in this big book from the same countries shows that across the Arab world when you ask, ["]What do you

most resent about the outside world or the West or the United States?["] [The] ~~the~~ plurality says, it's surprising, but this is what Gallup published, moral corruption and sexual promiscuity, nothing about Israel or anything, Iraq or any of these other issues, at least that's not at the top of the list.

Finally, if I may, and I'm sorry for going on like this, on the question about which aspect of al-Qaeda do you sympathize most if any, I'm not sure, but the numbers that I have in front of me are contrary to what was said by David Ignatius, show that actually fewer people today than 2 years ago say they don't sympathize with anything about al-Qaeda, and that by 12 points, from 33 percent to 21 percent. So that again seems at variance as David Ignatius said with all of the other polls that showed declining support for al-Qaeda and for bin Laden and for terrorism in general. So basically my question is how do these results compare with other polls? There do seem to be some big differences.

MR. TELHAMI: Sure, no, it's a good question. Two things that you have to look at. Number one is what countries they're polling, first of all. We're the only ones that are polling in those countries and then weighting the aggregate results over time. In fact, very few of them, in fact I think no one recently has done it in Saudi Arabia where I think we're the only one. So many of the Pew ones that are being done, they're more global and they are doing more Muslim and Arab and so they do Pakistan, Indonesia, they might do Egypt as well. So you have to look at it country by country and when you do the country by country division, the results also vary. For example, compare the totals with the individual countries and you can see dramatic variation. So some of it is really country by country so you have to look at that which clearly is important.

The second is obviously the way you ask the question matters. For example, How important is the policy question to you in your priorities? I don't expect that to mean that it's more important than

their food or more important than their livelihood or their jobs even when they say it's the single most important issue. And it's a measure to be tested over time and variation to see how important it is roughly psychologically, first of all, and, two, how it's changing over time, whether it's holding or changing. That's why the over time analysis is extremely important for me. The fact that we're doing this 10 year is core part where you repeat the same question.

Third, the way we ask questions is intended to answer particular broader questions, not really about values. For example, when you ask them the question, ["What's the value? Would you like the West or not?"] [They] ~~they~~ may not like the West. The question isn't whether they like the West. The question is what is driving their attitudes toward America and American foreign policy because that's the question. Just like I said about Iran, when I'm asking the question, Name the two biggest threats to you and 7 percent say Iran in those two, it doesn't mean that Iran is not seen as a threat because if I

ask a question, Do you believe that Iran is a threat? I might even get 50 percent who think Iran is a threat, but the question for that purpose, and I'm very careful when stating that's not the intent of it, the question is to see it in relative terms because that's the issue.

So obviously there's always the analysis and believe me, in times of writing a question I struggle more with writing the right question because I go back and forth, we have multiple eyes. I have an assistant sitting here, Shana Marshall who contributes a lot. I have two other colleagues who work with me on polling separate from what I send to Zogby. Every time I ask myself as I asking the right way, do I need another option to be fair, am I biasing the respondent, my aim is not at all to get any political -- I don't have a political intent in any of this. In fact, some of these results surprise me. So the aim of it is not that. I'm mostly interested in finding out what really is going on in the Arab world through my analysis and so that's why I have a great deal of



confidence in it and I see that in the way we ask the questions we have very much consistency that seems to hold up. It [holds] ~~hold~~ up from region to region. It holds up from year to year across the board. And I supplement that. I go to the region almost every month. I just came back from Saudi Arabia the same time in March when we were doing the survey and I was there for 8 days. I went to all three regions in which we were polling. I met with people, I went to forums, and all in Arabic by the way, so I'm doing this all in Arabic, my own information, my own exchanges, my own discussion. When I do the surveys I go through the Arabic language questionnaires thoroughly. I modify it according to the language. Translations matter a lot. If you rely on somebody who doesn't know the language you would be surprised to see how much difference it can make in the translation.

So I think we do it as thoroughly as you can knowing very well that what you're going to get is never going to be perfect in any poll let alone in a

poll in Third World countries. But as I said before, I'd rather have that any day of the week than listen to Ahmed Chalabi's advice about Iraqi public opinion.

MR. INDYK: I don't know why you keep on pushing Ahmed Chalabi.

MR. SHANEL: Mohammad Shanel, Voice of America. Although the United States is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on public diplomacy to win hearts and minds in the Middle East, your figures are showing no good return on the investment. So can you pinpoint if the public diplomacy effort is a problem or that we need something else to win hearts the minds?

MR. TELHAMI: I think people expect too much of public diplomacy. Every single poll, even every commission of public diplomacy including the bipartisan one headed by Ed Durigian, the CFR Public Diplomacy Commission, everybody says it's really policies that matter for public opinion, that public diplomacy matters only a little bit but still matters. In my own opinion it matters more on the long terms.

If you look at it as a short-term fix, it simply isn't going to matter. I think the question is what sort of public diplomacy policies you can pursue that build a reservoir of trust across societies enabling you to withstand crises, where you have people at least have faith to trust what you're saying and what you're doing, to have segments of society who are more likely to give you the benefit of the doubt. In my opinion based on polls as well, exchanges matter more than anything else, much more than media, that if you ask somebody ["]have you ever visited the U.S.,["] ["]have you ever interacted with an American,["] ["]have you ever studied in the U.S. or interacted with Americans,["] if you asked them then their views of the U.S., that segment of the public is far more likely to have a favorable view of the U.S. than the general public. The reason for it is simple. It's not that people are going to start loving America. People start looking at America realistically just like Americans who study in the Arab world. So I think exchanges matter. I don't think it's wrong.

And I think the media matters on the margin as well. I don't think there's anything wrong with having an American voice in the Middle East. What's wrong is to expect that that voice is going to change public opinion toward the United States.

MR. INDYK: James Kafil?

MR. KAFIL: I wonder if Martin and Shibley will address David's basic point which is that if you're invested in this Bush policy that the long-term mantra to terrorism is to spread democracy in the Middle East and the heart of the Middle Easterner's searches for freedom and liberty is just like around the world, it's a universal sense. If you look at this poll you could draw some pretty pessimistic conclusions about how we're proceeding with that policy. I know there is kind of a bank shot here where they're embracing the negative, they're reacting against our policies with Israel or whatever, but can you read between the lines and try to discern whether this say something fundamental about whether that project is well intentioned?

MR. TELHAMI: There are two things. One, on the spread of democracy issue. I think it's clear that people don't believe what we say and they don't believe it because when you ask them, ["Do you believe the Middle East is more democratic or less democratic than it was?["] a majority of them say it's actually less democratic than it was before the Iraq war, and that's not just a perception. I think if you do an analysis, I know David is here, there were a lot of people who were optimistic particularly after the Lebanese elections and the Syrian expulsion and the Palestinian elections there were people who wanted policies to succeed. A lot of liberals actually in America even who didn't support necessarily the war for nuclear issues because they never believed Iraq had weapons of mass destruction still supported this theme. And you poll them now and say, ["Do you think that the Middle East is more democratic or less democratic?["] and I think you're not going to find people who are optimistic in America. By the way, if you ask people about our

policy of democracy in the Middle East and whether it's working or succeeding in our own public, I'm sure that we're going to find two-third saying no. So it's not a shocker that Arabs are not going to see it that way.

But there is a profound contradiction that we haven't come to grips with in our policy which is that above all, the United States is waging a war in Iraq which is clearly priority number one. Tied to that is the broader war on terrorism as defined by the administration which is also a top priority. Then there is the spread of democracy which is seen to be somehow directly or indirectly linked to it as an instrument of fighting the war on terrorism. In reality, when you go to the Middle East and 90 percent of the public say I oppose what you're doing, I don't want you to go to Iraq, I don't want you to do this on the Arab-Israeli issue, even the governments say I don't really think it's a good idea to wage the Iraq war. And then you go tell them but I want you to help me anyway, and then they say we have public opinion

against it and we say I don't care, find a way to come on board, and they come on board. How do they do it? How do they do it with 90 percent opposition? Clearly they're doing something to keep the public quiet. Institutionally when you're at war and that's your priority, when you go to the countries in the Middle East, think about where we are. In Iraq we're the biggest military power. In Kuwait we're the biggest military power. In the United Arab Emirates we're the biggest military power. In Qatar we're the biggest military power. In Bahrain we're the biggest military power. In Saudi Arabia we have a major presence. In Oman we have a major presence. In Yemen we have a major presence. In Jordan and Egypt we have very strong military and intelligence cooperation. So when you have those kinds of relationships, what do you think we're reinforcing in our relationships when the Pentagon and our intelligence are playing the top priority roles in our foreign policy? We're reinforcing the military institutions, the intelligence institutions, in every one of these

countries and those are issues that we theoretically are trying to weaken when we're trying to spread democracy. So there is a contradiction and that contradiction we haven't resolved.

I don't mean that we can't succeed on the margins of spreading democracy although we can do things that help reform. I think we have to be thoughtful about it. But to believe that this was going to trump our immediate priorities in fighting the war that unpopular in the region or that we're not somehow going to start worrying when you have people winning elections like in the Palestinian areas or elsewhere who are opposed to American foreign policy that it's not going to pose dilemmas to us, then, yes, I think something is wrong and I think we're going to have to reassess. There's no question that a new administration whether it's Republican or Democratic is going to have to reassess this approach because it has not succeeded.

MR. INDYK: Have the last word.



MR. IGNATIUS: I would note that one of questions that General Petraeus and Ryan Crocker was talking about in their testimony last week was why can't we get more Arab embassies in Baghdad, here we're doing this for the Arabs and yet they don't send an ambassador. I think that in this poll and in the question that you asked, James, is an answer which is that the American presence is so unpopular that there's a sense of shameful contamination with this outside intervention and a desire not to support it because of the political dangers. To me the biggest long-term reason to be concerned about the survivability of this Iraqi government is that in the long run it's just very hard to imagine an Arab population and the surrounding Arab neighbors embracing something that is seen as having been implanted by this extremely unpopular America. I wish that wasn't so, I'd love to see this government survive and prosper, but just there's something that tells me that that's a long shot.

MR. INDYK: And I think the underlying danger here is that precisely because what Shibley's results show, there's such a gap not just between the Arab popular opinion, public opinion, and the United States, but a wide gap between the policies pursued by Arab leaders and their public's view of these policies that that's ultimately it seems to me what U.S. policymakers need to be concerned about, the gap, not to much that they don't like it which is not exactly a headline, but that the gap between the policies of the leaders that we are relying on in order to protect and promote our interests and the people is very wide and therefore they become unreliable which is another way of saying what you're saying about their unwillingness to work --

MR. IGNATIUS: Do it in their interest as they seem to define it, but they don't do it, why? And that is the answer.

MR. INDYK: Because even though they're not democracies, they're facing this gap with their own people and precisely because they're authoritarian

leaders they are more sensitive to that.

Unfortunately, I see Al Maza has got his hand up, but I have to apologize that we've gone over what has been a fascinating presentation. Shibley, thank you very much for that. David, thank you for your commentary. Thank you all for coming.

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