

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

APRES THE ELECTIONS: U.S. POLICY AND POLITICAL STABILITY  
IN LEBANON

Washington, D.C.

Thursday, June 11, 2009

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

PARTICIPANTS:

**Featured Speakers:**

TAMARA WITTES  
Director, Middle East Democracy and  
Development Project

DANIEL BRUMBERG  
Acting Director, Muslim World Initiative,  
USIP; Director, Democracy and Governance  
Studies, GU

**Moderator:**

KENNETH POLLACK  
Director of Research Saban Center  
The Brookings Institution

\* \* \* \* \*

LEBANON-2009/06/11

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. BRUMBERG: (In progress) ...and has a smattering of Maronites and some Sunnis and some Shi'ites way up in the mountains, the Shias all grouped together.

So let's start with the slides here. Of course, here is the symbol of Lebanon in so many ways. Unfortunately, it's still standing in the minds of some probably of the end of the -- destroyed the week after it opened up -- bad timing, but it's right outside the Venetian Hotel, and it's right outside of your window, and it's so (inaudible) and reminding, but sometimes the reminder doesn't necessarily work like the magic it should.

So next slide, please. Now, in my first afternoon at, in Lebanon, I spent two hours, two and a half hours watching the Shi'ite television station which had a full day's live event from the Iranian Foreign Ministry, or the Iranian Embassy celebrating the 20th anniversary of Khomeini's death and bringing together Shi'ite, Sunnis, Christians of various kinds. It was an extraordinary feat of propaganda. You see on your right a Sunni religious leader in the center, a Christian leader

LEBANON-2009/06/11

on the left, the Minister of Justice and Administration.

It was really striking listening to this. I was, as I said, mesmerized, because, David, I've listed leaders of the Christian community repeating in atomics to Khomeini, and we -- so this -- here we have this Reformist Movement about to pass about to take over, and that ideology has been long described by the leaders of the Reformist Movement, and it's being expounded here, maybe just strategically, maybe realimentally, maybe more, and so I just -- I thought that it was a wonderful photo.

Next slide please. And here, of course, is the (inaudible)... names of speakers of the event, and it just shows you, we knew going into the elections, there was this expectation that it would either go one way or the other by a few votes, and all of the experts were predicting a very narrow marginal victory, and as a result the assumption was that because Christians were going to defect,

I mean in essence, and remain Christians and relate to the parties both for the March coalition, and there was the sense that maybe March 8th folks would win by a vote or two, or by a seat or two, or the other side would win.

LEBANON-2009/06/11

And watching this program sorted of tended to accentuate the influence of Iran that had certainly (inaudible) context.

Go ahead, please. There's another snapshot. I mean for somebody who's been somewhat obsessed with the Iran for a number of years, this is really, I would have to say, it's striking to see this sort of rhetoric with the heart of the logistics story. Go ahead.

Well, here's a view of the hotel. Somebody there is the area that Hariri rebuilt the downtown Lebanon, and here is a clear signal from the other side that this rebuilding and this movement which is seen as sort of jeopardizing the populous strategy, and the slogans of Hezbollah had to be stopped.

Go ahead. There's two very handsome-looking people there. (Laughter) And no further explanation is needed. I don't know how we brought that in up with a red shirts but it worked . What you see here, of course, is downtown with solidaric area where -- which Hariri, the late Hariri area rebuilt. His tomb is very closeby. We'll see a statue of that. It's really quite

LEBANON-2009/06/11

extraordinary to see the transformation of this area, the downtown area.

MS. WITTES: Did you get upset about the brass quicksteps, the final quicksteps of Hariri, in this area, because he has lunch down there and then got into his car, so the actual (inaudible) in the sidewalk marked --

MR. BRUMBERG: I missed that.

MS. WITTES: -- his last steps.

MR. BRUMBERG: I know the snapshot later on, we have of his tomb, but go ahead.

Okay, here we are at -- this is the -- now, one of the distinctive things about this election was the role of Lebanese Civil Society. I mean, truth be told, more associated with one side than the other. I don't think we need to elaborate which side we were closely associated with. Young Lebanese, secular, who were not having what the status quos, in terms of a good party to gamble for, tended to gravitate towards this, which was called LADE, which was this Lebanese Association of Democratic Elections. They were very active in monitoring the elections on the ground, and it was quite impressive.

LEBANON-2009/06/11

The Minister of Interior, who is a Civil Society activist himself, and closely what the kind of guy his -- the (inaudible) his pledge was this he's this man who became Minister of Interior and was able to facilitate. Know that, well, from experts -- so-called experts like us who work in the ad world, ministers of interiors, they're usually bad guys -- they're the ones who buy off elections and intimate people who are in jail. It's quite extraordinary to have a Civil Society activist head of the Minister of Interior, and that's actually, obviously, what I just --

Go ahead. Now, here is Makari on the left, the fellow in the blue shirt in the Lebanese Parliament closely associated with Hariri. He was a minister for some years. It is estimated that he spends about seven or eight million dollars, minimum, in that little area of Koura to buy off people, and I completely believe it. He is housed with festoon with security, quite extraordinary. There's lots of money going on. When we were on the beach, we heard -- overhead a young boy tell his father -- yeah, it was a boy who was of voting age -- tell his father that he

LEBANON-2009/06/11

had gotten 10 full cartons of open money for this gentleman here, and full project specimen. So the money is being passed around. The influence of the Saudis and the Shia and Iran had both sides competing, clearly had some impact in terms of the funds. This was the Lebanese stimulus package.

(Laughter)

Transparent ballot boxes the first time in the history of Lebanon, for the first time that you had an election, a national election, all on one day instead of four consecutive weekends. There was concern that so many crowds and so on trying to cover so much, would create violence and some sort of problem on the ground. But for the most part it did not. It was extraordinary to see the voting, the judges, and the voters, and the opposite, observers from different parties working together. And so it really was -- I mean I don't like to, you know, sound too savvy -- but it was really, it was really quite a (inaudible).

Here we have the Lebanese forces.

MS. WITTES: You should explain that the party

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



LEBANON-2009/06/11

agents can sit.

MR. BRUMBERG: Yes, the party agents are allowed to sit. There were some sort of -- I never quite understood it -- you could wear your tee-shirts, but you couldn't have a box with the emblem of your party on the lunchbox.

MS. WITTES: So you could see one there.

MR. BRUMBERG: Yes.

MS. WITTES: In fact -- because they all did.

MR. BRUMBERG: Everybody had their lunchboxes with their emblems and colors. Of course the Lebanese forces, and the leaders of Lebanese forces, the party connotes, of course, the militia, and that's where it began, you know, and in some respects that's what it surveys to some extent.

But anyway, for the most part the parties -- peoples sat together from different parties monitoring the election and doing no -- I didn't see any signs of violence or altercation between these people. So, certainly, it was a great, in that sense they (inaudible).

Here is one of the tee-shirts for the Lebanese Socialist Party, and it says, it says -- it says,

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

LEBANON-2009/06/11

"Authenticity and Luck." That's what it says right there.

MS. WITTES: (Speaking Arabic??)

MR. BRUMBERG: Yeah.

SPEAKER: Oh. It's the Syrian Socialist counterpart.

MR. BRUMBERG: Yes, and we have the combination of Lebanese authenticity, which when (inaudible) was here, "authenticity," whatever that means. We met with the leader of this party in El-Koura, and he was competing with Makari, and he, of course, denied that he had (inaudible) but clearly he lost that (audible). I mean it was just -- it was a hell of a lot of lightning washed around.

Here we are in the only Shi'ite area up in the hills and mountains, and what's remarkable about this vote, this is a voting station in the heart of a religious institution. So it's clear, most of the voting stations are in schools. They're in secular schools. And even the religious institutions, unless they have a lot -- but when you go into Shi'ite one, it's clear who you're voting for. There's discipline and you go in here, and there

LEBANON-2009/06/11

was -- it was very efficient voting from the Hezbollah voters, and it says, "Peace be upon Him," but I cannot read those final -- if anyone wants to try it --

SPEAKER: Salaam aleikum (speaking Arabic).

MR. BRUMBERG: Salaam aleikum --

SPEAKER: -- kumah al-bene hashim (phonetics.)

MR. BRUMBERG: Zeneim . Ah, okay, it is bene hashim .

Okay, anyway, so after we left this building, a young Shi'ite activist, who obviously had spent a lot of time in the United States had a -- gave us a long sort of speech about how the money was raised for this building by local -- by local people, not through the donations of the (inaudible) of Iran. He wanted to make that very clear, that's why he was telling the truth with us people .

And there he is, the man himself, Wasein and the leader, it says right there, and it -- Steve Handra had the opportunity to go into detail about the guy. But I think this was sort of illustrative of the things of almost worshiping (inaudible).

Okay, crowding in the voting place. If there

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

LEBANON-2009/06/11

was a lot -- you have multiple confessions going in one area. There were moments where, say, the Sunni voters were backing up, and they couldn't get in, and they reported to the Maronite bosses and say, "Ah, those Maronites are getting fast. They're going faster, and we assume --"

I mean we're in -- (inaudible) locations, and we saw a couple of fist fights. I mean that was as worse it got. And we were a little nervous when you have guns, you know, from the police standing in the middle of it, but what was remarkable about the police was they just didn't intervene. I mean they did nothing.

MS. WITTES: Right.

MR. BRUMBERG: And that was an issue that was raised towards the end. And people were fed up, I mean these two (inaudible) and they had been sitting there for four hours.

Go ahead. Here we have a caravan of people floating by car through the (inaudible), and this is -- let me see if my notes here -- I think this is the Marada Party of Sulieman Franjiyeh, and they were fiercely opposed by the Lebanese forces, and there was a lot of tension

LEBANON-2009/06/11

as we go through this town. One half of the town -- especially Franjiyeh people -- and the other side was Lebanese forces, and one cause of a Lebanese family, the kid came through and the driver was extremely nervous. I mean there was that sort of level of tension that was there, but it never really went beyond that.

Here we have the Franjiyeh family, two brothers and a son. One was going as an Independent, and one was on the Franjiyeh list, and they were fiercely opposed to one another. You have these divisions of Lebanese as well, so it's -- of course, it says, "Together, hand in hand, to build what has been destroyed." But the players here themselves are not exactly on the same page either.

And one of the things that we came across very clearly in our -- in (inaudible) -- there was this feeling in the United States, back here in the States, about the geostrategic significance, but on the ground, when you get to the nitty-gritty on the ground, you have local politics, local divisions, family and clans very intense.

And these are often the primary motivators, and not kind of neighborhood politics in Iran versus U.S., Saudi versus

LEBANON-2009/06/11

Iran, and that sort of thing. It's not -- getting it straight, the relationship between the politics of the leaders and the followers and the families and the clans, and to see these deep divisions within the Christian community going back to the '50s is a real challenge that --

Here's some more crowds. This was in a Sunni -- there's the blue Hariri shirt. This was a polling station only for Sunnis. We even found there were Maronites, and there was a lot of tension between essentially the Sunnis and -- this wasn't a coincidence. You know, we've been here for five hours, this is no (inaudible). And this turned a little bit violent after -- the risk is there's fighting.

Here's Hariri's tomb, speaking of Hariri, we visited it late at night, and then we walked back and it was night. Quite remarkable. Strange and weird and sad at the same time. Hariri's not only on the (inaudible), but his body guards, and so that was 00 body guards as well. And you get the sense of his martyrdom, you get a sense of the worship of this sort of leader. And what's

LEBANON-2009/06/11

remarkable, El-Koura has probably the highest literacy rate of all of Lebanon, by the way, but some of the worst family violence in that area. The correlation between rationality, literacy, and peace is -- and if Disraeli is quoted as an outlier in terms of theories of development --

(Laughter)

So, and Hariri -- I mean you get the sense of Hariri being the blessed leader, and worship gone. Gone. And the slide there, there is his retinue of bodyguards.

Twenty-one people were killed on that day. I mean I don't know how much -- whatever it was, a classic explosive was used -- but it was tremendous, it was huge.

And here is a picture of people mourning his death. It was an extraordinary (inaudible) in there. It was much longer, obviously, than this, but I just took a shot of them. It really gets to the sense that of the amount of (inaudible). So this is -- (inaudible) is very.

In Lebanese terms, in Lebanese positives, it just happened yesterday, but this was very close. And that's it.

So that's the sense of -- I think the message

LEBANON-2009/06/11

that I would take home from this is the sort of interesting and strange paradox between sort of the global implications, the regional implications of the election, and the perception between the rest of what really was motivating people, and was it local politics on the ground, and the difficulty of predicting -- which is a happy thing in terms of politics (inaudible) --

It was a high degree of uncertainty that wasn't expected, and certainly in the end the Christians decided that they were not going to in effect defect to March 8th.

So they going to vote for March 14th, and this may be partly attributed to the speech that LaEstrella made a few days, maybe a week, before the election when LaEstrella, referring to the events of May 7th or 8th of 2008 saying this was a blessed day. This was probably a mistake, as much of a mistake about Ahmadinejad or the Russian (inaudible) in 1938 . So this was -- and this really -- I think that this was in some sense scared a lot of people and gave people the sense that, well, this was messing with the center of the defection from the other sides that were -- that a coalition was too risky, and therefore we



LEBANON-2009/06/11

found that you have an extraordinary win by March 14th coalition, and the implication (inaudible).

Okay, so, thank you.

Tamara.

MS. WITTES: Thank you. Well, yeah, I think as Dan pointed out, the real story of this election was the swing vote among the Christian community. It really was a swing vote. It was very difficult for people on the ground, even party activists who had been working in local communities for months in preparation for the election, very typical for them to predict how things were going to go. But, essentially, the story is that there were several districts in which Aoun's party, the Free Patriotic Movement, thought that it could pick up some seats for the March 8th coalition and split those districts between March 8th and March 14th. In all of those places, March 14th swept.

Now, partly that's because, as Dan said, there were Christians who chose to vote for March 14th ticket; it partly is a question of numbers and that the Sunni vote on behalf of March 14th simply overwhelmed all the voters

LEBANON-2009/06/11

in those districts. And this gets to the way the districts are drawn and the way the confessional system is set up, which are issues I'll come back to in a minute.

I wanted to just address three quick issues. First, the sort of atmosphere of the elections, which I think Dan gave you a very good sense of, but then the really impressive thing here I think is the turnout. It was nearly 55 percent, which, considering the size of the ex-patriot population, means that you probably really had 75 to 80 percent of the actual available voting population at the polls, which for Lebanon -- well, for any country it's impression -- for Lebanon is really incredibly impressive.

And I think it speaks to, first of all, the sense that this was an election that mattered in different ways to different people, but everybody agreed that it was meaningful and that its outcome would have meaningful consequences.

And also the level of relative security in the country, that people felt safe coming out to vote. I was stationed in Ashouf, which is an area dominated by a willing to run in the Druze community and to watch political

LEBANON-2009/06/11

machines, so it wasn't for the most part a competitive district, but there are in that region a number of Christian villages that were locations of very heavy fighting during the civil war, and there are a lot of Christians living in Beirut and other places who were displaced from Ashouf, but which go back to vote.

And so one of the questions in Ashouf was, how many of them would actually come? And in the most heavily contested area in a town called Daro Kumar , there were buses and buses of people coming out from Beirut to vote.

And there were families, you know, in town for the day, wandering around, going to restaurants, SPM campaigners, who were by and large young Christian men and women in their 20s, who were really just passionate about their party and their candidates driving up and down the streets of the town, you know, right behind a PSP Jumblat's block parties' cars that were driving up and down with their flag.

And, as Dan said, there was a lot of friendly combative tension, but it was never nasty partisan tension.

And that was true on the streets, that was true in the

LEBANON-2009/06/11

polling places where you have sometimes very, very small rooms where these polling stations were. You had party representatives from these opposing coalitions sitting cheek by jowl, and they were kind of joshing each other all day long, which is what you might expect in a country that's used to peaceful political processes but really was quite striking in the Lebanese context.

About 15 or 20 thousand ex-patriots were estimated to have returned to Lebanon in order to vote, and that's also a much higher number than normal, and it's attributed in part to the funding of those trips. A lot of week-long vacations in Lebanon paid for mostly by a March 14th flight . It was mainly Sunnis, apparently, who were flying in to vote, paid for by March 14th.

Okay --

MR. BRUMBERG: But the law doesn't say, you could --

MS. WITTES: Right.

MR. BRUMBERG: The law says you can pay for people traveling, but if they're coming from Hong Kong, some people would interpret that as more than a hefty bribe

LEBANON-2009/06/11

than anything.

MS. WITTES: Right.

MR. BRUMBERG: So there's no question about the ambiguity of the law.

MS. WITTES: Right. I mean the issue of money in elections was something that everyone discussed, but it was also something that everyone was doing. And so in a way it was kind of an equal opportunity for all projects.

(Laughter)

MR. BRUMBERG: In Lebanon, you know, you pay people to vote, and here the candidates ask for the money.

MS. WITTES: Right. So it's just flippin' it around.

Okay, I wanted to talk a little bit about next steps for Lebanon in the wake of these elections, because the elections were a big story but they're really not (xxxital) the story of what direction Lebanon is going to go next. So, obviously, the first challenge is forming a government. I'll talk about that in a minute, but I wanted to talk first about two other things that are on

LEBANON-2009/06/11

the horizon, and our potential challenges for Lebanese stability and for the progress represented by the selection to continue.

The first is the Hariri Tribunal, which is in a way, the sense I got, hanging like a sword of Damocles over Lebanese politics. It is now running on its own track; it's run out of the Hagueal ; it is a process over which no Lebanese politician or government has any control; and it's out there, it's going to do its thing, and nobody knows when it might produce any serious indictments, any judicial process. And it might go on for years. So I think it's a little bit of a cautionary note for the international community when it looks at those conflict states and the question of transitional justice, you set up a process like this because you say, well, the local politics is too hot to handle this. We need to take it out, and we have these international centers of justice, and we'll let the U.N. handle it. And then you get a process that is like a run-away train with respect to its impact on local conflict resolution efforts.

Now, I'm not saying the Tribunal is going to

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

LEBANON-2009/06/11

have the explosive impact, I'm saying it might. And everybody worries about it, even though it's who's supported in principle.

The second thing I wanted to talk about is electoral reform. This year's elections took place under a new electoral law. It wasn't a perfect law but it was -- it introduced some major changes, including redistricting to have smaller constituencies, although they were still very unequal in size and in confessional representation. It introduced, as you saw, transparent ballot boxes, ballot envelopes, polling booths, also a set of measures designed to provide greater secrecy to the balloting process.

Now, for Americans, this may be hard to imagine, but typical Lebanese elections in the past, you would walk up toward the polling station, be given a preprinted ballot with the names of a slate of candidates handed to you by party activists. You would walk into the polling station and put it into a box.

MR. BRUMBERG: I didn't bring any.

MS. WITTES: Yeah, didn't bring any with me,

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

LEBANON-2009/06/11

either.

MR. BRUMBERG: I didn't vote for anyone.

MS. WITTES: And the parties print these up in, you know, certain fonts or certain sizes, so that it's very evident to anyone in the room which slate this person is voting for. The procedures this year were changed such that you would still get your preprinted ballot outside the polling station, but there was a distance away that the activists had to stand. When you went into the polling station, you had to take your preprinted ballot, or if you wanted, a piece of paper to write candidates' names on it, go into a polling booth that was enclosed, put the ballot into an envelope, seal it, and then bring it out and put it into a box. So there was much more opportunity to have real secrecy of the ballot.

And, in fact, in the district, the polling station where I observed the count, which was in this contested Christian town in Ashouf, 30 percent of the ballots that were counted in that polling station were either handwritten ballots or ballots in which someone had taken a preprinted ballot, crossed out some names,



LEBANON-2009/06/11

and had written in others. It was very high. In talking to my colleagues, it was higher than most other people thought.

MR. BRUMBERG: Oh, yes. You saw maybe --  
(inaudible).

MS. WITTES: Yes, there was a lot of straight-ticket voting. But I think the fact that, especially in a Christian community, you saw people wanting to split the ticket. It suggests that one of the most important reforms for Lebanese elections going forward is a unified official standard ballot where you have all the candidates' names, then you check off the ones you want to support. This would allow people to first of all have greater secrecy of the ballot, and, secondly, to split their tickets much more easily, if they want to, and maybe help to create some more positive confessional alliances over time.

So electoral reform in Lebanon is something that is already on the agenda. President Sulayman spoke about it at length the week before the election as a major agenda item. It's something again all the parties agree that

LEBANON-2009/06/11

there's a need to do it, but they all have different incentives to actually do it.

You know, one of the things about Lebanese politics is it's the same names, and it's been the same names for years. These are the same families. If it's not the father, it's the son, or the widow, or the grandson.

And I decided, actually, after watching this campaign for its final weeks that the real mark of progress in Lebanese politics will be when they stop putting pictures of dead people on their campaign posters, whether it was --

MR. BRUMBERG: That would be --

MS. WITTES: Yeah, whether it's Rafiq Hariri or Imoj Monea or Kamal Jumblat in Ashouf, these campaign posters are full of deceased martyrs of one variety or another.

Okay, finally, what happens now in terms of government formation which is the question everyone's asking. As you know, Lebanon's been governed for the last year under the DOHA Accord, which was sort of consensus agreement, yet another kind of external imposition on

LEBANON-2009/06/11

Lebanese political factions in the wake of Hezbollah's takeover of West Beirut last May. In that agreement, Hezbollah receives or the opposition received what's called a blocking third of votes within the Cabinet, so that they could, in principle, halt any initiatives that they felt were contrary to their interests and then in that way kind of enforce a degree of consensus in the Lebanese political system.

One of the big questions going into this election is whether Lebanon would continue to be governed by a cross-confessional consensus or whether, as Saad Hariri in the March 14th coalition were advocating, Lebanon would be governed by a majoritarian parliamentary democracy. So going into the election the March 14th's position was, if we win, we win. We're not giving a blocking veto to anybody, we're not giving the opposition seats in the Cabinet, we'll be the majority. And, in fact, they came out with an even stronger mandate than they expected, which raises the concern that they might actually follow through on this, and that that might provoke Hezbollah, out of concern for preservation of its special interests, to have

LEBANON-2009/06/11

a forceful confrontation in the streets to get what they couldn't get at the ballot box.

In the immediate wake of the election, everyone's been fairly conciliatory. The words on everyone's lips and "consensus" and "compromise." Everyone accepted the election results, which I think is an important thing to note. And nobody is yet talking about anything other than working within the results of the elections for consensus and compromise. But it's going to be a long, hot summer as they work this out.

You know, one possibility is to kind of preserve the arrangements of the DOHA Accord. Another possibility, as I said, is Hariri might try to forge a majoritarian government. Another possibility is to kind of come up with something in the middle. One proposal that some in March 14th had supported would be instead of giving a blocking veto to March 8th, they would give a blocking veto to the President and some of his allies who were elected to Parliament. That proposal has been rejected as a nonstarter by Hezbollah activists. They want that capacity to block government actions.

LEBANON-2009/06/11

The real dilemma here for March 14th is that for the past year governance on most major issues has been frozen, stagnated by the coalition created by the DOHA Accords. They haven't been able to take major decisions on anything except for this electoral reform law. So there's a lot of frustration over the economy, all of the standard issues. There's a lot of concern about corruption in politics because of the backroom deals required by this consensus process. So March 14th, essentially, bases a choice between serving its constituents and delivering on the promises it made to them by creating a government that can actually get things done, but if it does that, provoking a confrontation with Hezbollah that could bring the country back to the brink of conflict.

I think it's a really difficult choice for them.

I have noted that statements out of Washington have not been encouraging them in any particular reform direction, but again using terms like "compromise" and "tolerance."

So I think that this is going to be a tough one to resolve, and I wouldn't begin to predict which way it's going to come out.

LEBANON-2009/06/11

I'll probably stop there. I think that --

MR. BRUMBERG: Let me (inaudible). There are a couple of things that Tammy said, very quickly.

MS. WITTES: Oh, let me just say one more thing, and then I'll stop, which is that one of the things that's important to remember is although the parliamentary victory was a clear win for March 14th, the popular vote tells a different story. Roughly speaking, the popular vote numbers give the March 8th coalition a majority of 800,000 votes, nationally, compared to about 700,000 for March 14th, and that is going to be a factor that will hang heavily on the minds of all involved in this coalition formation process.

Dan.

MR. BRUMBERG: In fact, that's one of the points I want to make. And when -- I mean we're talking about this is a gerrymandering system. This is a gerrymandering system, and again between the popular vote and the outcoming of gerrymandering in a way suggests that there's a problem with legitimacy, particularly for the losers in this instance.

LEBANON-2009/06/11

But I want to quickly elaborate on what Tammy was mentioning about the Tribunal and Hariri. You know, the Lebanese political system basically was a system, as in all power strategy systems in which the rule of the game is that either side -- each side is not going to pose outcome unacceptable to (inaudible). And each side has the right to veto the other's efforts to do it, and the assumption is that there are reasons, acting rationally, nobody's going to throw something that's unacceptable to the other, so nobody will use their veto. And therefore, the veto hangs in the air to get people to act rationally.

When the Tribunal emerged and the government sided with the Tribunal, it was in effect imposing an unacceptable outcome to Hezbollah. And Hezbollah's only reaction at the time was to demand the right of veto, which was always there but you -- in effect -- but you're not supposed use it. To the extent that the trial now is going to go to the Hague, and may be going on for some years, it may, paradoxically, facilitate a measure of some sort of conciliation, to the extent that that was one of the fundamental issues that really triggered this conflict,

LEBANON-2009/06/11

if -- and Hariri -- and there are many other issues that are looming for Hariri's government -- but this one perhaps is somewhat received because it's no longer something that's going to happen right away.

This is a -- and this question of the veto is, as Tammy said, absolutely critical, and the Lebanese system only functions through consensus. I do not think it can succeed in a majoritarian system without some sort of concessions by the Haririan government conceding to the opposition. But thus far, of course, as Tammy said, the need is if both sides are willing to compromise. So the real hard part is now just, you know, -- (inaudible).

MR. POLLACK: Thank you both. I want to do two things first. First I'd like to ask you to comment on one aspect that you touched on, but I really don't think we get, and that is this question of the international law. You both touched on the money sloshing around, the Iranian money, the Saudi money, and a question I think that it would be interesting to get your thoughts on is just how important was it? If there was a lot of money on both sides, was it ultimately a wash? If you



LEBANON-2009/06/11

removed it altogether, would you have had a notably different results? How much can you actually blame on the outside influences?

And then part of it, another outside influence, the President's speech. There were a lot of people here who are claiming that the President's speech had something to do with the election. I'd be interested to know whether you guys saw any evidence of that.

So let me start by eliciting comments on control of the outside influences?

(Simultaneous commenting by both discussants -- not transcribable.)

MS. WITTES: Right. Right.

MR. BRUMBERG: There is no doubt that the stakes of this election were somewhat defined by this -- by perceptions in the West, but also by collaborating (inaudible) in the region that this was the choice not only between political lines, if you like, cultural and ideological lines. What is the definition of the future of Lebanon? Will it (inaudible) to the West? I mean, that's not -- that's hardly irrelevant, and I wouldn't

LEBANON-2009/06/11

want to suggest that it wasn't a factor and contributing to -- particularly in contributing to a decision by the Christians to go back and support Hariri. There's no doubt about that.

As I said before, when you're on the ground and you're observing up close, the local, the low cap of the localness of politics impresses you as much sometimes if not more, but both of these political factors. Now, how much can we -- can we think counter-factually, how much -- well, I mean, had you removed the money it's very hard to know. I think we would have to be honest. I mean there's normally (inaudible) there was kind of equalizer, and both sides brought their resources in there.

In some -- in some areas of Koura it may have made a very big difference, but I think that the effect of the money was not in that sense central.

The Obama speech, one would exaggerate to suggesting this speech has some sort of major effect on the choices. The choices were determined by much more the factors we've already talked about. It may be different in the case of Iran to some extent, but not I think in

LEBANON-2009/06/11

the case of the Lebanese election.

It was a great speech, and I think people -- you know, I think it definitely -- it definitely -- my sense is that it inspires -- it awes and inspires and makes uncomfortable the leaders of Hezbollah at the present. So that skillful at reaching out to the Muslim communities around the world is a factor. The American effort to reach out to the Muslim world is a longer-term factor, and I think the question is -- (inaudible). In Lebanon, of course, the Muslim world is profoundly divided, and so that's a factor.

Tammy?

MS. WITTES: I just have one thing, which is that I agree with Dan's basic point that American influences, and particularly American rhetoric in the last months leading up to the election, is only one among a number of external influences on Lebanese politics. Lebanon has always been intensely sensitive to external influences on its domestic politics.

So I'm not sure you can say whether American rhetoric was more important than the Saudi money that was

LEBANON-2009/06/11

(inaudible) in to vote or more important that the Hezbollah money that reconstructed the south after the 2006 war. But I would say this: I think to the extent that American positions, or statements, or visits had any impact over the last several months, it might have been somewhat marginal. But the way I would articulate it is that it was in kind of reducing, helping to reduce, tensions regionally.

It's the engagement component of American diplomacy that I think may have had some impact here in the sense that to the extent that particularly Lebanese Christians felt that there was no longer an intensely confrontational face-off between Iran and the West, regionally, or between Syria and Saudi, regionally, it made themselves feel less caught in between.

And Michael Allen's, the FPM's main campaign platform, was always claimed that given this confrontation, this face-off in the region taking place on Lebanese soil, that Christians needed a strong communal leader to represent them and protect their interests; that the West was growing weak, that Hezbollah was strong; and that

LEBANON-2009/06/11

that's why it was wise to align with Hezbollah, and we should all be under Allen because he's the guy that can protect us.

So I think that to the extent that, you know, some Saudi-Syrian rapprochement in the last few months, you have the U.S. reaching out to Syria a little bit. You had Syria not intervening in the very coercive ways that they had in past years in Lebanese politics, the Lebanese Christians felt a little less of the security dilemma as they were thinking about their voting options, and so maybe felt a little freer to split and to support March 14th over March 8th.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Tammy and Dan.

The last thing I wanted to do before opening it up to questions, I wanted to also bring in Bilal Saab, who is known to many of you. He's a research analyst at the Saban Center. Bilal is Lebanese by both birth and inclination, and I wanted to ask (inaudible). In particular, I'd be interested in Bilal's thoughts on Syria, and what it seems for all of us.

MR. SAAB: Thank you, Ken. First of all, it

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

LEBANON-2009/06/11

brings joy to my heart to see Tammy and Dan visiting Lebanon and seeing how that country is really different from other countries in the region.

It's worth saying a few words about a country that has dominated Lebanese politics for 15 years, if you don't count the years before the civil war and during the civil war, and that's Syria. Some have argued that Syria was the biggest loser in the election, and I can see why that's the case, and just think Allen and Syria have lost the elections, and they're not going to have the upper hand in the next Cabinet.

But that implies, if Syria lost in a big way, that implies that it has actually put in a lot of resources into that election and has actually played an active role in influencing the outcome. I think that's debatable. For the first time, the way I see it, in the history of Syria-Lebanon relations, Syria did not actually intervene in Lebanese elections like it did in the past. It has surely sent a lot of money to its candidates, but it did not intervene, and it certainly allowed the future movement to sweep the North, which has been considered by the Syrian

LEBANON-2009/06/11

leadership forever as Syrian strategic space.

Now, back to the question, why didn't they do that? Why didn't Syria assassinate a politician here and there? Or why did it not cause trouble? Why did it not create a major security incidents? And we can all speculate, but my guess is -- and we've all been reading the news -- that there is some of an understanding, rough or small, whatever you want to call it, between the Saudis and the Syrians.

The understanding is whatever comes out of the elections for the next Cabinet, that will be a national union government that is not going to work against Syrian vital interests in Lebanon and Syrian security. What does that mean in practice, we still don't know.

And there's more to that. The promise that we Arabs are going to invest in an ailing Syrian economy, and we're going to push Washington to move forward on serious negotiations with the Israelis over the recovery of the Golan Heights, that may be a little too much, but maybe that also, too, has been mentioned. And, most importantly, the survival of this energy .

LEBANON-2009/06/11

This is all purely speculation, but there is an understanding, if we know what is the nature of that understanding between the Syrians and the Saudis -- is it temporary, is it short-term, or is it long-term -- I think that's going to answer a lot of questions for us in terms of the day-after in Lebanese politics.

MR. BRUMBERG: Why don't we, just looking now in terms -- just keep in mind the consequences of the assassination of Hariri, and the way in which that related to the (inaudible) the Syrians, if they play that card again, and the difference is playing their cards. And that strategy can only be brought in under the most extreme circumstances.

MS. WITTES: That's right, and I'll add just one more thing, which is, you know, I think it's important to put this in the context as well to the Middle East Peace Process. Senator Mitchell is going to be in Beirut and then Damascus this week, and I think it's notable first of all that the trip is coming at this time, because it's a trip that has been speculated about ever since Mitchell came in.



LEBANON-2009/06/11

But also, that once again it's a trip to Beirut first, and then to Damascus. And I think, you know, there were a lot of people who were interpreting Secretary Clinton's visit, Vice President Biden's visit, Jeff Bauman's interview in An-Nahar over the weekend as a hard-edged American policy, saying, well, vote for the right guys, or we'll stop your assistance.

I think actually, in the context of the region, what was going on was reassurance of both sides. We want a comprehensive peace process, Syria; we're not cutting you out. If you want to jump on the train, we want you to jump on board; but at the same time reassuring Lebanese and reassuring March 14th we still support your sovereignty, we're not going to treat Lebanon in a way that Syria on behalf of the peace over the Golan Heights. And I think that those visits were really about that mutual reassurance when you see the details of what the discussions were that took place and the way in which the visits were set up.

And I think Mitchell's going to Lebanon before Damascus is just reaffirmation of my theory.

MR. BRUMBERG: And Biden, of course -- and

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

LEBANON-2009/06/11

Biden's statement, one sentence which was quoted widely was --

MS. WITTES: Right.

MR. BRUMBERG: -- which was a much more elaborate statement.

MS. WITTES: Right, which was about a comprehensive peace.

MR. BRUMBERG: Yeah, and surprise, surprise, that one sentence got the attention it did. I mean why would the Administration (inaudible) I don't know, but it was a much more sort of nuanced approach. Biden is not, as we all know --

MR. POLLACK: Well, if he speaks long enough, he covers all --

(Laughter)

Thank you, (inaudible). Why don't we take some questions. I'll take a list here, start off right in front of me.

SPEAKER: Okay, I'll make three very quick points. I think, the Mara Pur and on a very important subject

LEBANON-2009/06/11

which is the Obama speech was part and parcel of an overall approach that the Administration had toward particularly the swing community of Maronites efficient in Lebanon.

The speech in itself was much on the Maronites when President Obama said we want to give reassurance for the Maronites of Lebanon and the (inaudible) of Egypt.

And, you know, I think that's something that really rang in the ears of many Christians of Lebanon to hear that kind of reassurance, because the Allen propaganda leading up to the campaign has been, you know, "I am the leader of the Christian community. I made the right strategic decisions that allied with Syria and Iran. Syria and Iran are here on our doorstep. The Americans are here today, they will leave tomorrow. They sold us out in '76; they sold us out in 1990 with the Gulf War where they give Syrians the wink in an eye to dominate Lebanon, and they will do it again."

And so it was very important from an American standpoint to reassure the Christians that this will not happen again. The Obama speech went a long way to do that and the difference is that it went a long way to do that.

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

LEBANON-2009/06/11

The issue of the popular vote versus consensus.

I think that's important because we can't have both. We're either in a system that is majoritarian and therefore those who get the popular vote get legitimacy; or a system that is built on the different consensus to (inaudible).

And if we are in the second -- and I agree that we are because we sort of keep changing their rules for the game here -- we had an election law in 2005 that was put in place by Syria that was deeply legitimized March 14th and want according to that, but we heard throughout 2005-06 that: You're not really the legitimate majority because you ran according to a Syrian electoral vote. And, in fact, you also ran in an alliance with Hezbollah and (inaudible).

So we changed the law. The law at this time was one as was actually favored by the opposition, and it came at the barrel of the gun after the DOHA Agreement.

And now again we see it talked about, well, you really weren't the popular -- I mean at some point we've got to draw the line and say , you know, you can't keep changing (inaudible) on your rules.

LEBANON-2009/06/11

SPEAKER: And this election was just based on the 1961, and another election could yet be based on another electoral system.

SPEAKER: That's right. And I mean in 2005 it was based on they just --

(Three people speaking simultaneously - not transcribable)

SPEAKER: And this one was one of the smaller districts, but the opposite shows, and March 14th still one, so we've got to keep that in mind.

What we've also got to keep in mind, that it is a consensus of the system that March 14th won the majority of Druze votes, Sunni votes, and Christian votes. They won 58 percent of the Christian votes this time compared to 42, as published in -- and (inaudible).

The last one, which is the Cabinet formation, I think it's important to think of that as part of a basket of issues that are currently on the table. We have the election of the House Speaker, which the majority in Parliament March 14th is going to have the upper hand in choosing. We have the choice for the prime ministership,

LEBANON-2009/06/11

and then we have the issue of -- and I think what the parties are -- the way they're approaching this is, this is a basket.

If we are going to choose, then negotiating, go back and forth on all these issues, it's important for us to think of it as (inaudible).

My question is, how do you think the outcome of the election is going to impact the Syrian -- the U.S.-Syrian relationship, (inaudible) given that the Administration made a very conscientious choice not to engage, or not to send Mitchell, before the election was over.

MS. WITTES: Um-hmm. So you want to take this with (inaudible)?

SPEAKER: Yeah, I think for now.

MR. POLLACK: Again, if you've got a question, just give me a high sign, and I'll let you (inaudible).

MS. WITTES: You know, as I said, I think in the context of my interpretation of what the U.S. was trying to do with this neutral reassurance, or rather reassurance and engagement, you know, it parallels in a way what they're doing in Iraq, which is reassurance of the United States

LEBANON-2009/06/11

and Israel and the attempts to engage Iran, simultaneously.

You know, it seems to me that the decision not to send Mitchell before the elections was a desire not to appear to be undercutting the electoral process.

MR. BRUMBERG: Right.

MS. WITTES: And so now it's okay to send Mitchell, not because we won and Syria lost, but because it's now not going to have an impact on the process. And if the core message of American policy was Lebanese decide what's good for Lebanon, that the core message of American policy has been sovereignty; then you didn't want to undermine sovereignty by going to Damascus too early, A.

B, I think the peace process stuff between the U.S. and Syria, and the U.S. Syrian relations, yes, it has to do with Lebanon, but it certainly did not only have to do with Lebanon. The American list of concerns with Syria, still, I think, has Iraq at the top. And there are a lot of difficult issues for Washington and Damascus to get through before they can really -- before I think Washington can really look on Syria as, potentially, realigning its

LEBANON-2009/06/11

strategic direction in the Middle East.

So Lebanon is one important piece of that puzzle, but it's by no means the only area even the most important piece.

MR. BRUMBERG: You know, I went with a delegation to Syria in December, and we met with Assad for two and a half hours. And it was good at that point that he was thinking, well, the United States is coming to me. You need me.

MS. WITTES: Right.

MR. BRUMBERG: And he's not a man who suffers from being modest, but: You need me, and I know the reason, I can go into the goods, let's talk. And this was the sort of bravado that we were getting as well as this degree of insecurity, and U.S. leverage has increased in capacity, and particularly if the election is in a (inaudible). The stars are aligning, and so it's extraordinarily possible that tomorrow's going to be -- it could be a fateful day. And it will be one way or the other.

MS. WITTES: Right.

MR. BRUMBERG: But for the elections in Lebanon



LEBANON-2009/06/11

to have ended with a clear victory for Hariri and Musabi wins (inaudible), or it's just a run-off.

MS. WITTES: The power of the one.

MR. BRUMBERG: It's -- so it's -- and so the Administration was very shrewd and made, I think, the right choices. And now it could be a (inaudible) to go back, and the Syrians may feel that no (inaudible) was going to the United States and the Syrians need to move to the (inaudible).

So the essence of about Iraq as well, that was the purpose of our missions in Syria. But -- and so it's we'll see. And tomorrow will not be unimportant in this whole (inaudible).

MR. POLLACK: I would ask everyone to identify themselves when they ask the questions, and (inaudible).

MS. (Inaudible): I'm Leslie (inaudible), Resources. I want to pick up on the question that (inaudible) asked and pose it in a slightly different way. The debate now on the popular vote, and it's really out there and certainly coming from the March 8th camp, and it appears like there's a force to use it as a delegitimizing

LEBANON-2009/06/11

of the election.

MS. WITTES: Um-hmm.

MS. (Inaudible): So do you have that narrative emerging?

MS. WITTES: Well, in remembering back when Hezbollah walked out of the Cabinet over the issue of the Hariri Tribunal, and then in March 14th did not come back and say, okay, we're going to talk this out, and so consensus model was a thing into the air. And so -- and that was a big issue for Hezbollah. So there you have two different -- Hezbollah's rejecting two different models. One is rejecting at the consensus and rejecting with the majoritarian at the same time.

So looking at it from that plane and how Hezbollah is going to respond to the formation of this next Cabinet, they didn't get their electoral victory that they wanted. Obviously, I remind you they were seeking that, they couldn't get what they wanted through, you know, bringing the government to paralysis, and it went to elections, they still didn't get what they wanted.

MS. (Inaudible): Well, in terms of what is going

LEBANON-2009/06/11

to be their tactics at this point in time, Are we going to see a Hezbollah that is really seeking consensus at this point? Or are we looking for more power moves, or -- and how's that going to play out where it's (inaudible)?

MS. WITTES: Well, you know, I actually think we have to be precise about what Hezbollah wants versus what the March 8th coalition wants. The March 8th coalition wanted to win. I don't think Hezbollah wanted to win. Hezbollah ran in exactly the same -- ran exactly the same number of seats that it ran last time. It wasn't really eager at the notion of becoming the majority and, you know, running the government.

And that's because their core concern is supporting their base, the Shia community, and they have, you know, almost the universal support, the -- (inaudible) coming to them in the South, can attest to this in the districts that he -- that he visited. But if you look at popular vote, you see the impact of that universal Shia support for Hezbollah. They know they have that. Those are their people, those are the people they want to take care of, and their other course is use their weapons, which

LEBANON-2009/06/11

they want to protect the resistance. They want to protect the resistance.

They don't need to go there to do that, and so you say they rejected a consensus model, and they rejected a majoritarian model, I think they'd be perfectly happy without the consensus model if it protects those two things.

And I think that's essentially what LaEstrella has been signally in the statements he's made since the election.

So, you know, it's conceivable to me that they might -- that March 14th might arrive at some kind of compromise with the opposition under which, you know, they'll agree to table once again forever and ever the issue of the weapons, and, you know, they'll make some assurances about services and investment issue of community, which, you know, Hezbollah's actually going to want them to, extends the power of the Lebanese states in those communities anyway, Hezbollah would rather have them in (inaudible).

But, you know, I think the point about the popular vote, the reason it's being talked up so much is because it gives Hezbollah the basis on which to say you can't ignore us. But the real basis of which they can't

LEBANON-2009/06/11

be ignored is their weaponry, and everyone knows that. So the popular vote is just a (inaudible)

MR. BRUMBERG: You know, the major- -- I mean Lebanon system, you know, surely, the majoritarian is very illusive. It's a possessive system that is wedded to which the majoritarian systems, and at the end of the day the real question of the balance of power comes to people with the (inaudible) on this question of (inaudible). And I think that's not really something that would heavily back up who was going to be within the (inaudible). And it backs up its claims for its use of who has access to weapons.

But the critical thing here is that they face a loss, they submitted a loss. They miscalculated, and it turns out they the May, a year ago was a miscalculation, and that they are paying a certain price.

So I think the incentive for the moment is to (inaudible) by their title and see how things are going and look at events in Iran as (inaudible). One shouldn't -- and by the way, we haven't mentioned the President.

MS. WITTES: That's right.

MR. BRUMBERG: So it's really pitiful. The

LEBANON-2009/06/11

President will play a role, and there has been much discussion about the President appointing X-number of members of a Cabinet to provide the balance, really to stand in between those two forces. And I think that's going to be critical to creating this balance.

But you never -- you know, with all due respect, and again I'm not an expert -- an expert (inaudible) -- but, you know, you get the (inaudible) reaction, and that whatever the progress is, how quickly it could come undone (inaudible). In some respects it remains very tenuous (inaudible).

MR. LEWIS: Sam Lewis, (xxxital) American Academy of (inaudible). An observation and then a question?

Reinforcing your theory about what the Syrian view is, conversations I've had with key Syrians in the last year on several occasions, and all showed a very surprising relaxation of their worries about this coming election.

And you heard it at a lot of different levels. Whatever the outcome, we will have a consensus government, and that's all we worried about.

And it seems to me it's heading -- it's going

LEBANON-2009/06/11

to head in that direction, inevitably, because nobody wants to stir up the assassins any sooner than necessary.

I'm curious. You talked a lot about how much competition there was -- well, Nakour you might expect it among the Christians -- and in the Druze community, you wouldn't expect it among the Druze, although you said there was quite a bit among the Christians. Was there any evidence anywhere in the country of any competition between Shias? Is Amal totally neutered at this point?

MR. BRUMBERG: Well, there was some -- there was an agreement basically to give up (inaudible) Amal. Of course, we all know that Amal and Hezbollah were fighting for (inaudible) Adams (inaudible) years ago.

MR. LEWIS: Sure, that's what I mean,

MR. BRUMBERG: They exist -- preexisted.

MR. LEWIS: I realized (inaudible), they had the upper hand.

MR. BRUMBERG: But I think they come to a (inaudible) understanding.

MR. LEWIS: And, locally, there was no evidence

-- MS. WITTES: And -- (indistinguishable).

LEBANON-2009/06/11

MR. LEWIS: Amal is a politically rich party.

MS. WITTES: Yes.

MR. BRUMBERG: (Inaudible).

MS. WITTES: I think it was mostly worked out in the Kennedy (inaudible). In other words, they didn't run people against one another.

MR. LEWIS: Yes, I see.

MS. WITTES: They split up --

MR. LEWIS: Whereas, the Christians did.

MS. WITTES: Exactly.

MR. MARSHALL: I'm Dana Marshall with (xxxital) Dewey & LeBoeuf. Thanks so much for these very interesting remarks.

I wanted -- I have two quick questions, one just to ask you to elaborate a little bit more on this question about the link between Hezbollah providing, you know, for so much socioeconomic needs, especially in the South with reconstruction and all of that, and the election. But looking more to the future, to what extent does all that we saw that happened last Sunday provide any ability for us to try to loosen that a little bit, given who won of



LEBANON-2009/06/11

-- and all of that. That's one.

The other thing is you didn't mention anything, at least that I heard much about, whether either Israel or the United States factored much into the elections. How salient of an issue was -- were either of the two countries across the parties there?

MS. WITTES: Well, maybe I'll -- on Israel I would say there was concern over what the Israeli attitude would be toward the electoral outcome, and, in fact, the Israelis held a major civil defense exercise the day before in the North with air raid sirens and helicopters, and a simulated temtration [sic] of the border and civil response. So that was interpreted on the Lebanese news as a clear signal to Lebanon, you know, Look out who do you vote for. And I've heard a lot of worry expressed over, you know, what Israel's attitude would be toward Lebanon after the elections.

I think, in fact, Israel's -- the Hague or Israel's attitude will probably have an impact if the negotiations over the tornation of the government go on for awhile because, as Dan said, Hezbollah, to the extent

LEBANON-2009/06/11

that it's made any strategic mistakes in playing the Lebanese political game, the two clear ones were the summer of 2006 and last May. And one of those was about Israel and the other was about turning its weapons on the Lebanese people. And I think that those are two mistakes they're going to seek to avoid.

MR. BRUMBERG: The -- you know, Hezbollah claims the patronage game is masters, but everybody has, it's a patronage system. And one of the politics over the (inaudible) and local resources meetings is to mobilize your vote. So I -- you know, I don't see any of these events undoing.

It's a very mixed state, and economically there are many underserved communities, and not just the (inaudible) Shi'ites. So I don't see this election as providing necessarily the building blocks of a (inaudible) that move beyond this, how the system is predicated on that kind of a weak --

MR. POLLACK: If the U.S. model -- and let's be very frank about this to capitalize on this election and really try to loosen that bond either by big investments

LEBANON-2009/06/11

in Lebanon, maybe encouraging the new Lebanese government to go in there and finally do something to help these people, are you saying that there are other things that link those type of issues to Hezbollah beyond simply the patronage? Is there a way of do a wedge here some- -- at this point?

MS. WITTES: Well, it's more that the patronage extends on all sides so that we can encourage on March 14th by government to expend reconstruction money in the South and, in fact, did encourage them strongly, and go at the institutions of the Lebanese state and build up the Lebanese armed forces and all this stuff.

But the patronage is such that when that money -- when money comes in from foreign assistance or other mechanisms for sewage projects or road projects or what have you, it gets directed through semi-patronage mechanisms, and Druze patronage. It gets siphoned off because it's a Kline Toy system. And it's very hard for the leadership of March 14th to turn to their parliamentarians and cabinet ministers and say, no, you can't use this money in your districts because we have to send it to the South. That's not -- you know, that's

LEBANON-2009/06/11

not in our -- even that's going to keep their coalition together.

So I think the answer is really that the patronage pushes back against what you would say would be an obvious strategy occur for American policy. But you can't just say that, you know, we shouldn't try to do it anyway. I just think you should be realistic about the impact that it's going to have.

The one exception here, though, is the Lebanese armed forces are calling to -- were deplete across the South. The ISF, Internal Security Forces, and the Lebanese armed forces were tasked with providing security for freedom of movement of people going back to their villages to vote. That was the army's job directing traffic. The ISF's job was securing polling stations, ballot boxes, all that stuff, and they were deployed everywhere. The ISF was deployed in Dacia, and they were deployed in Jumblat's hometown. It was very consensual. Our colleagues who were in Dacia said there was no interference by Hezbollah with the ISF at the polling stations. At Dacia they were in complete charge.

LEBANON-2009/06/11

So that is one potential avenue, but on the social services I think it was very (inaudible).

MR. BRUMBERG: You know, especially in Israel, I mean the maneuvers that took place in the north of Israel on the border. That's where the part of my family lives in Israel, and there are a lot of reports they looked at perception-wise that, well, this is the part getting ready for an Hezbollah retaliation (inaudible).

And we have to -- and so there were multiple signals were being sent (inaudible), probably to Washington as well about the seriousness of this Israeli (inaudible) can Netanyahu resolve.

So -- and so the Lebanese saw this as well, and, of course, this question of Iran (inaudible), the Israelis viewed this as an attack. It's hard to imagine (inaudible).

And then, of course, the repercussions were then being conducted (inaudible).

MR. POLLACK: Not to take this much further, but I mean, what -- I accept, Tammy, what you were saying, but it just seems like this is such a great opportunity not to try to do something a bit more creative, especially

LEBANON-2009/06/11

because the scenario that you expressed out. which is certainly anything but a theoretical one, you could try to drive the people away from supporting --

MR. BRUMBERG: It probably is the time for an effort, and an effort requires a longer time frame, and (inaudible) the nature of the local politics are a force against us, and resources come in and (inaudible) get siphoned off.

You know, in principle you're right, but I mean the time frames don't align very well.

MR. POLLACK: We're seeing this play out in the northwest of Pakistan where the people are saying, you know what? We don't want these people around us. You know, they're destroying our life with -- anyway --

MR. POLLACK: The way that -- regularly, I read a great essay, one of which traces the roots of this (inaudible) is about 221 years.

(Inaudible), do you want to make a --

SPEAKER: Just a very quick comment. Before talking about increasing the number of USA deposit in the South, which they do exist, by the way, I think we

LEBANON-2009/06/11

should ask the very simple question: Do they actually want -- it's a very fully integrated relationship between Hezbollah and the Shi'ite communities. They don't -- the comparison that you just mentioned so not hold at all. They don't like the Taleban in Pakistan. The Shia community life is broken, and this is the crucial difference: It's a fully integrated relationship at all levels.

SPEAKER: Too enlivened enough to say it's okay to fire rockets into Israel and then have retaliation [sic]. I mean how (inaudible) do they like them?

SPEAKER: That's a different question.

SPEAKER: But that's what I'm asking.

SPEAKER: Well, nobody likes to hear rockets and bombs falling on their head, absolutely. But if the elections are any indication -- I mean they swept the Shia vote by -- it was so easy.

SPEAKER: I happen to be one of those three who actually disagrees about what Hezbollah says or does, but I'm a member of the Shantenu . But I'm one of the very few.

LEBANON-2009/06/11

MR. POLLACK: Thank you. Iraq again is different. Back to questions.

SPEAKER: No. 1, you mentioned the Iranian money sloshing around. Do you have any stories about absolutely Iranian agents or other kind of influence in Lebanon that is going on?

And the second thing is, really, can you want to wear that, too, with regard to the possible impact of the result of the elections and further developments on U.S. policy. Do you think that if, as seems to be a consensus here, it's going to go to Hezbollah again, having the blocking third? Will it have an effect on U.S. policy?

Should it have an effect on U.S. policy with regard to arms sales, with regard to engagement with a lot of these governments?

MR. BRUMBERG: You know, I think that is striking by -- and I've known this from Hezbollah and many people here will probably agree, is that its relationship with Iran is much more important than its relationship with Syria. And the closeness, I mean I displayed those slides in the beginning. It was a remarkable show of solidarity.



LEBANON-2009/06/11

I have never seen, I never fully appreciated the effect of the party leaders. And LaEstrella is extremely adaptive, every speech he makes providing three or four different lines assigned the page, one for the Iranian, I mean a Shi'ite populace, and a swearing of his allegiance to (inaudible), at the same time standing up there on behalf of (inaudible). And so it's very striking how --

I -- we didn't hear anything but what we (inaudible) about evidence. And (inaudible) why would they need it in this relationship between the party. And, by the way, the first time I heard LaEstrella give a speech it was a 10 on the (inaudible).

(Laughter)

MS. WITTES: Yeah. On the second little bit of your question on should it affect U.S. policy specifically with respect to arms sales to Lebanese armed forces, I mean I think it's an issue that we need to look at. I mean and be careful about. I think the alternative of not supporting the Lebanese armed forces, which is, frankly, the only national institution that garners the support of all communities and has that kind of

LEBANON-2009/06/11

cross-confessional regeneracies , so if you're not going to build that up, where are you doing, really?

That said, I think, you know, yes, there are units in the Lebanese army that are, you know, known to be close to the Shia leadership and the Hezbollah leadership, and that's just a fact. So, you know, but that's a Lebanese question, you know, is the government of Lebanon concerned about a Fifth Column in the Lebanese armed forces? I would say that overall political dynamic today is one that pushes very much against that. Hezbollah, first of all, doesn't need a Fifth Column in Lebanese armed forces. It's stronger than the Lebanese armed forces.

But, secondly, I think that they would be very disinclined to use it because the consequences, the backlash for them would be very serious. So I don't think that that should dissuade the United States from providing support to the Lebanese armed forces, and I think, as we've done in many other developing countries around the world, one of the goals of military assistance is to promote professionalization and depoliticization of foreign militaries. And we're actually pretty good about that.

LEBANON-2009/06/11

SPEAKER: So you're talking about Barack. Barack said on the --

MS. WITTES: I don't buy it.

MR. POLLACK: Yeah, and I'll just weigh in on that (inaudible). I strongly agree with him, and, you know, I think dealing with Hezbollah and its arms is, obviously, an unbelievably thorny issue, and I think that in some ways what we've got to hope for is that Hezbollah makes some terrible mistake that creates an opportunity. If that ever occurs, you're going to want to have a Lebanese army that is strong, that has a sense of self-confidence, that has the confidence of the people that can move in and fill the gap. And that's got to be what we're looking for.

And, you know, I look at the 2005, the civil revolution, and say that could have been that moment that we didn't have that strong Lebanese state, that strong Lebanese army. So we've just got to continue to support, and Tammy's right, there is the Fifth Column there, but at the end of the day what we're looking for is that moment when the members of the Lebanese army are looking as well,

LEBANON-2009/06/11

and say they've made a terrible mistake. The people have moved away from them for whatever reason. This is now an opportunity for us not to go with them, in which case we're gone, or else to stand up for the army, which is something that we believe in and we want to -- we want to give them that choice.

MS. WITTES: Right.

MR. POLLACK: Do you guys have any other comments you'd like to add? Any last thoughts you'd like to leave us with?

MS. WITTES: Well, I'll just, circling back around to where we started, the day before the election I was driving around these little villages in Ashouf with my -- our Lebanese long-term observer and our driver, and just talking about how beautiful Ashouf was. And they kind of wryly said, well, everything in Lebanese is beautiful except for our politics.

And I have to say, having watched this election, as Dan said, you don't want to make too much of this, but given the expectations, given the concerns, I have to say compared to the rest of the Arab world, Lebanon has

LEBANON-2009/06/11

beautiful politics.

(Laughter)

MR. BRUMBERG: Actually, I want to add just kind of on Syria again. One of the things that I took note of was immediately happening with the Syrian president is his -- his real concern about the effect of sectarianism under the whole society. The Syrians are constantly running around telling that they won, people won, and, "My cousin is a Shi'ite," and they don't realize it's as fascist as ever, but it's held together by this regime, this tough regime.

MS. WITTES: And --

MR. BRUMBERG: And they look at what -- at what Assad said, was, you know, "We -- this is a sectarian bomb." Of course, the Syrians can explain it and use it and manipulate it, and it constantly backfired on them. And they would like to see, I think, generally speaking, some sort of consensus that's been (inaudible) that (inaudible) Hezbollah's strength. But in some sense it diffuses this bomb because it's bad for Syrian society and, yes, the

LEBANON-2009/06/11

Syrian regime has one paramount concern: It's survival.

And so I think they're in a process now of sort of rethinking this (inaudible) as civil form with the way in which the stars are aligning, we'll see tomorrow and beyond, and one has to say the astute politics in this administration, which is so refreshing, it could be that we'll see some openings with the Syrians that (inaudible) we have before. Now, a lot could hinge in part on U.S. intervention if we wanted to...(inaudible).

SPEAKER: A question for Ken?

MR. POLLACK: Dan, can you weigh in just quickly because you raised the Iranian election? Can you give us your feel as to what the impact might need on Cabinet formation on the future of Lebanon, how things might unfold if the two different candidates come out of the Iranian election (inaudible), if it's Admadinejad, if it's Moussavi.

MR. BRUMBERG: Well, of course, Iran is hoping for the Moussavi effect, and I think further sort of temper Hezbollah and send a signal, because in many respects the leaders -- Moussavi represents presents that populace

LEBANON-2009/06/11

Islamist, Shi'ite sort of ideology which has traveled (inaudible) Islamic left to the center. It hasn't happened (inaudible). And that has, in effect, that advocates (inaudible) the United States. After all, who among the advocates of (inaudible) and the United States, but not many of the figures who starred in the hostage crisis, the two American hostages.

So it's an extraordinary tale they have to tell. Moussavi was part of it. He was supposed to run in 1996, and then he stood out (inaudible). Rafsanjani was pushing initially for Moussavi, and Moussavi's reputation and the age was still hanging in the air, and it wasn't clear how much this left him.

So it's an historic disjuncture, and this is being -- that old left, that popu- -- is being repudiated in Iran. What is this apply for Hezbollah? What (inaudible) be a positive, very positive signal and leverage.

On the other hand, if Ahmadinejad wins, it's going to be in part through voter fraud and manipulation and force. And it's going to polarize the country, and Iran may be in an historical moment that we didn't

LEBANON-2009/06/11

anticipate in that (inaudible). It's harder judgment without some of the people that Ahmadinejad steals in the election and succeeds, that's what I was implying than the people had wanted. So there is a lot riding on it.

MR. POLLACK: Please join me in thanking our two speakers.

(Applause)

Thank all of you for joining us this morning.

\* \* \* \* \*



LEBANON-2009/06/11

## 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

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