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THE SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY

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AMBASSADOR MARTIN INDYK: Ladies and gentlemen, if I could have your attention, please. Please continue with your lunch. We're very glad to have you here on this occasion, this special occasion to have a chance to exchange views with Dr. Abd Al Kareem Al-Iryani, a good friend, and as he's described in this biographical note, one of Yemen's shrewdest and most experienced politicians. Actually I would say you are actually Yemen's shrewdest and most experienced politician. Having served as a government minister almost continuously since 1974, first in the Yemen Arab Republic and later in the unified state of the Yemen Republic.

Born in 1934 in the village of Iryan, hence Iryani, in the central highlights, to one of Yemen's most prominent families, his uncle, the late Abdul Rahman Al-Iryani, was president of the Republic during the early 1970s.

Before entering politics, Abd Al Kareem studied biochemistry and genetics in the United States, where he obtained a doctorate at Yale University. My daughter goes to Yale, so I just wanted you to know that. I'm one of those people that when somebody says, "Nice day, isn't it," I say, "Yes, my daughter is having a very nice day at Yale."

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: She goes to Yale? After she will be president of Yale.

AMBASSADOR INDYK: Dr. Al-Iryani has held a variety of government posts, including agricultural minister, planning and development minister, education minister and, of course, most importantly prime minister. He is currently secretary general of Yemen's largest political party, the General People's Congress and a political advisor to President Ali Abdullah Saleh. He is certainly the closest advisor, political advisor to the president and played a crucial role in developing the north's political strategy before and during the civil war. It's interesting that this is in your biography, because that's when I first met you.

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: You would say it without it being in my biography.

AMBASSADOR INDYK: That's right.

And the reason for that is that I had my toughest meeting in the U.S. government, in my eight years in the U.S. government with Dr. Al-Iryani during the civil war. I certainly remember -- I don't know whether you do -- but we crossed swords and became great friends.

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: I do.

AMBASSADOR INDYK: And it was then that I gained great respect for you, as you're described, for your shrewdness and political acumen.

Anyway, it's great to have you back. Dr. Al-Iryani spoke to our task force on U.S. relations with the Islamic world a few months ago and we're very glad to have an opportunity to hear you again on the issues of greatest concern to the United States and Yemen, the war on terrorism and the question of how to deal with the longer term challenge of Islamic extremism in the Arab world.

Before I ask you to speak, I thought it might be useful for you if we have everybody just go around and introduce themselves.

SEYMOUR HERSH: Seymour Hersh with the *New Yorker*.

KARIM KAWAR: Karim Kawar, embassy of Jordan.

BARRY SCHWEID: Barry Schweid of AP.

RAFAEL BARAK: Rafael Barak, Embassy of Israel.

GERALD THOMAS: Gerry Thomas from the National Defense University.

HUSSEIN MUBARAK: Hussein Mubarak, Embassy of Egypt.

(Introductions off mike.)

PETER THEROUX: Peter Theroux --

(Introductions off mike.)

MARVIN KALB: Marvin Kalb, Shorenstein Center.

(Introductions off mike.)

ELLEN LAIPSON: Ellen Laipson, Henry L. Stimson Center.

AMBASSADOR INDYK: The floor is yours, sir.

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: The floor is mine, but I'm afraid. Such a distinguished group, what could I say to them?

First of all, my friend Martin said it's better to be on record, right?

AMBASSADOR INDYK: Yes.

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Okay. So whatever I say you can -- you know, I'm more free now; I can say a lot of things without being asked.

So I think I will try to develop a very short let's call it intervention, because I always, everywhere I go, I say I do not want all years to become just listeners. They listen a little bit but they have to pick the mind or interrogate or whatever they want from the speaker. Any speaker who comes to talk only I think he's a coward. You have to talk and stay to listen to what people are going to tell you. And that's why I will be brief.

I think there are two or three issues that I will deal with. The first one frankly, which is my view, is what is the best means to fight extremism. I'm sure all of you will say the same thing that I would say -- democratization. And I believe that democratization and democracy is the best safety valve from going extremist.

I will give an example of the case of Yemen. Yemen is the least -- one of the least developed countries in the world, the least developed country in the Arab world, the poorest country in the Arab world with the exception of Mauritania maybe. Per capita income is less than \$500, illiteracy still among women I think reaches more than 50 percent and among men about 30.

I'm painting this pessimistic picture to come out with an optimistic view at least. Because the question is does democracy or is a high standard of development a prerequisite for democracy to survive in any country? I know many countries in East Asia and in the Arab world, at one time or another were saying let's concentrate on economic development and then we will come to political development and democratization. I think this has been one of the ills of the Arab world, one of the sicknesses, if we call it sickness, that we all thought that economics is more important than political development. I think that has been a mistake and I hope all the Arab countries will learn from that mistake.

The first revolution of any significance was the Egyptian revolution, and the first thing it did was to conclude that a multi-party system is a corrupt system, and abolished the multi-party system yet never abolished corruption.

So to say that there is a need to ignore the political system and the democratization process in order to succeed in economic development I think that has been a very bad and wrong thesis, which prevailed in the Arab world for some time; now hopefully it's beginning to be in the phasing-out stage. I would not say that everybody has now been convinced, but I hope and I think it's in the stage of phasing out.

Yemen with all its poverty I think is having a very useful democratic and very significant democratic experience. Two or three weeks ago we had a seminar in which I participated. It was under the title "Peace in Time of War" and it was sponsored by the German and French embassy. There was a heavy European presence and I felt it was a bit biased against American policy. And I think your embassy felt the same way. But they were all talking about terrorism and the way the war against terrorism is going and

the approach of the United States to it, that the United States has begun to ignore democratization in favor of the war on terrorism. But the interesting thing about it was that my friend -- and you'll be surprised I'm saying my friend -- Prince Turki al-Faisal was present, and he gave a very interesting speech. Of course, he was clearly unhappy with American mass media dealing with Saudi Arabia and he was calling for the need of change and that was for me very significant. That's the highest level I've ever heard, you may have heard someone higher.

MR.: The need for political change?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Yes, for political change in the Arabian Peninsula and in Saudi Arabia and he said that the experiment in Yemen in multi-party system and free election and non-governmental organizations and the freedom of the press is an example not only good for us in the Arabian Peninsula but good for many countries in the Arab world. So I'm not giving witness to my own country but I was very interested and very pleased to hear that from Prince Turki Al-Faisal.

So I hope we are now aware that all hotbeds of extremism are usually bred and multiplied under oppression and under dictatorships and bad government system. I'm not saying that Yemen is corrupt free, is oppression free, is 100 percent -- is a full fledged democracy.

I spoke to Middle East Studies Association (MESA) two days ago. I told them I'm prepared to call Yemen an emerging genuine democracy, an emerging genuine democracy. And if we maintain this course, I would say after two or three more parliamentary elections, one of them, the third one is coming next April, two more elections after that, I think democracy would be fostered and really will be established in Yemen.

Another aspect of democratization in the Arab world is decentralization and the development of local governing councils. Most Arab countries, I could be wrong, but the concept that a central government should run everything is still very prevalent in the Arab world. There is no full readiness to decentralize, which means democratize, give locally elected councils authority in development, in deciding local policy issues, in the educational system, in supervising the health system. I think this is also a democratic process.

And after four years of debate in Yemen about the local governance law, the laws issued in the year 2000 and we had local elections in 2001, I'm proud that I was then prime minister so I left a mark when I left the government, and those councils today are the best and most important safety valve for parliamentary democracy. They are promoting civil organizations, they are handling development, but, of course, the administrative system, the judicial, the legal system in Yemen is still highly underdeveloped. They are not doing a perfect job and they will never do a perfect job, and anyone who expects that the first election will produce a perfect parliament is also wrong, especially after a long period or a traditional history of a society.

Yemen is a highly traditional society. And what I mean by traditional is that Yemen has a very long history, 3,000 years back, with continuous we call -- you may call it culture or civilization, whether pre-Islamic or post-Islamic, but that has developed one thing that is usually not understood or not observed in Yemen. Yemen is always tribal. All the tribes, men are running around with their horses, with their cars, with their trucks doing whatever they want and so on. Yemen in my view has one important aspect of its tradition; that is the feeling of statehood. Yemen is not a new state. The feeling of statehood, Yemen has been a state with government, with kings, with lords, with whatever you call them, with sultans, with imams for thousands of years, so the concept of statehood is very important. Therefore, they accepted very openly the idea of democratization or multi-party system and so on.

I don't think I have enough time to tell you how that evolved and developed, but I wanted to emphasize that the best hotbed and breeding ground for extremism, whatever it is, is oppression. And Islamic, so many extremist movements came out into the history books or came to the history books of Islam. If you look at it eventually it was oppression.

During one of the greatest caliphs, Al-Abbasi i al-Ma'mun, who was the greatest, one of the greatest Moslem caliphs, was a very oppressive man, you will be surprised, as great as he was. He came to this conflict between the so-called Mutazila and the non Mutazila regarding the nature of the Koran, whether it was created or was sent, and he oppressed the non Mutazila Muslims to the extent that he created the extremist afterward. So that's one.

As I said, I have to be brief so that I give you a chance to ask questions. I'll move to the question of counter-terrorism today, because this is hopefully a short-term issue. I started with what is a long-term issue in the Arab world, freedom, freethinking and our education.

Also I should give one sentence: The objective of any educational system is to produce, if the word is right, freethinking people. I would say that our educational system, at least in our country; I have no right to talk about other Arab countries, is not producing freethinking people. If you are not producing freethinking individuals from an early age, from childhood or whatever you call it, he's not going to be democratic. If you are not a freethinker you are not democratic. And I believe our education system has this great flaw in it that it is not the kind of curriculum we need, does not produce freethinkers.

And that is why Bernard Lewis said in his latest book, "What Went Wrong," he said there is a strange phenomenon in the Arab world; that is democracy without freedom. And I think I disagree with Mr. Bernard Lewis in many ways, but I think he was right on this one, a great discovery that has developed in the Arab world, that's democracy without freedom.

The question of the war on terrorism, you know, on the first day of September 11th all television channels in the world became engaged on the great tragedy that took place in New York and the horrendous criminal act was witnessed by millions around the world. The BBC, British Broadcasting Corporation, brought an expert on Yemen named Fred Halliday I think at the London School of Economics and so he was talking about this horrendous crime and what the United States will do and, of course, he was saying the United States must take a very strong action. It may have to go to war in Afghanistan, war in Pakistan and war in Yemen. I was really shocked and became angry at my friend Fred Halliday that he put Yemen number three.

But then when all those, even in the opposition parties in Yemen heard this and started talking about it and they're saying, "Look, Yemen has been going in the wrong direction; now they are number three in the targeting list, if you say so."

The reason for that I think was simple: At the beginning I was very angry, but then I remembered where was the latest, most serious and most dangerous terrorism act was committed. It was in Yemen frankly. The U.S.S. Cole, almost 13 months before. And therefore Yemen became in the targeting list in the minds of experts, of analysts and so on.

I think the Yemeni leadership was very quick to realize that Yemen is really in danger and from that moment on, and our ambassador has been instrumental in it, we expressed and established a close cooperation between Yemen and the United States in the fight against terrorism. And I think had Yemen not moved that way, of course, it was culminated by a presidential visit in November 2001, about two months after the tragedy of New York, and I think Yemen has proved itself to be a partner in the war against terrorism. I have to be clear, we are not a partner in any other war that is in your mind and in our mind, but in the war against terrorism, yes, we are partners.

Now, of course, the greatest flash in Yemen's cooperation in the war against terrorism was the question and the story of the Predator. Now, you are journalists, I would admit that some of you may know about it more than I do, many times more, but unfortunately the way it came out in the U.S. mass media was not favorable to Yemen. It created the wrong impression in the world, in the Arab world, in the Arab press that this was done with the long arm of the United States alone and that Yemen did not elect; that's natural, really. That impression was created and we were very upset about it.

Without Yemeni government and security people's cooperation, that would have never happened, absolutely never.

And the world was surprised that the Predator was flying in Yemen. The U2 is also flying, if you don't know that. I'm not divulging another secret, but some of you may remember I gave -- by accident I gave an interview in the "New York Times" with the "New York Times" correspondent in Cairo. I always have difficulty in pronouncing his name. And I told him, I said we have been unable to track those particularly three prominent al-Qaeda leaders in Yemen because they are roaming in the southern part,

between Yemen and Saudi Arabia but really mainly in Yemen, because unfortunately in the "New York Times" my brothers in Saudi Arabia thought that I meant that they are going back and forth. No, I didn't mean that. But when they need money they do send someone to bring the money from people, not from the government I can tell you. And they move with tremendous resources in their hands.

Of course, they have their guards, they have their bodyguards and so on but they move in small groups with some nomadic people so that they are in the vast desert and they take them around, they pitch a tent here for a day or two whilst they hear that the government informers are beginning to run around, they know it. Those Bedouins are so clever; they know it when they are 300, 400 kilometers away. They are better than radar.

So, frankly, the government was not able to capture them. And they cut themselves off from the city; they never go to a town, to a village, to anywhere, but they had several satellite telephones. Senyan al-Harthi had five when he was hit by the Predator. And he would every week or so put a chip -- I'm not familiar with this satellite system but he puts a chip and changes the telephone number and so the United States and all those tracking satellites and all, no, this number has disappeared, this number has appeared and the last call he made to somewhere -- I don't want because you are journalists I will not tell you where. It's not to Saudi Arabia, but because all of you will think it is, it's not. And that was the final click that --

MR.: It was to Israel.

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: No. I wish it was. (Laughter.) It would have been a good sign.

So he made it and that was the one that clicked the tracking, and our security people were tracking him on the ground. There was a helicopter going toward the area, when the Predator was faster and more accurate, and I can tell you with the cooperation of the Yemeni government this would have never taken place. But today everybody is talking about violating Yemen's sovereignty; it's not true. We did it together and it was an agreement and the Predator would never fly in Yemen without our what you call joint operating room, the radars and so on, and the airports and everybody knowing the flight path and where it will go and when it will return back to Djibouti. It doesn't stay in Yemen, it doesn't stay in Yemeni airports, maybe for security reasons.

So this happened with full cooperation. I wanted to prove in this that Yemen has moved from target three, I hope to the bottom of the list, I hope. Thank you very much.

AMBASSADOR INDYK: Just a procedural thing: For the sound system it would be helpful if when you asked a question you pressed this button on the microphones in front of you or near you and when you finish asking a question please turn it off. And please again identify yourself when you ask the question.

But I'll intervene first and I just heard you yesterday on McNeil Lehrer. I don't know whether you had the opportunity to listen to the discussion afterwards after they interviewed you, but the whole question was about are we winning or losing the war against al-Qaeda. And I wondered if you could give us your assessment of that. Of course, what does winning mean? You may want to define that in broad or narrow terms, but what is your sense? Clearly we've had some success in working with Yemen, we've had some success in apprehending or taking out some key al-Qaeda members, but Osama bin Laden is still alive, there are still hot warnings of attacks, they've still been able to operate one out of Yemen and Indonesia. What's your net assessment at the moment?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: I don't claim to be an expert. I wouldn't claim that I'm an expert in assessing the success and failure of wars. First of all, I don't like wars to start with. But I am not really qualified.

And also I just bought Bob Woodward's book yesterday; I haven't read it, "War at Bush" (sic) -- I don't know whether -- "Bush at War" or "War at Bush" you know. You can take it this way or that way, but the title was "Bush at War". I don't know what he said, whether Bush is winning. He's much more qualified than I am, whether he's winning the war or not.

But I would say extremism, the war on extremism I think we have not won, neither internally nor internationally. War on extremism, I admit extremism in my country is still there. When you hear some of those Friday sermons you hear stand-up of the extremist language that's being used. And Yemen is not alone. I'm sure some of my Arab friends here could agree with me.

AMBASSADOR INDYK: And is that worse since September 11th?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: It's not worse; it has not been declining let's say. It's still extremist what you call formal speech that prevails in our streets and some of our newspapers and in some of our mosques. And this is where the real success will come. Could the United States and its Arab partners develop, not war in the terms of guns and artilleries and aircraft, but a war on extremists, a mental war to abate extremism in the Middle East? I am afraid there are reasons inside and outside the Middle East for these extremist views.

Let's not forget, I know, I came here last time and I told you I'm not going to say the reason for what happened in New York is the Arab-Israeli conflict, I don't say that, but one of the strongest cards in the hand of the extremist today is the Arab-Israeli conflict. So we will win the war on extremists if we bring peace, stability and a beginning of a form of democracy to the region.

So I'm not an expert to say has the United States won its current war on terrorism but the war on extremists I think we all need to work much harder.

QUESTION: Let's start off with a purely practical one. Could you explain in a little more detail exactly what the mechanism was with the attack, the Predator attack on al-Harhi and when he made his phone call what exactly happened? I admit it's a rather technical thing but it was particularly interesting.

And after that I wondered if you could perhaps comment on the approach of the administration towards this war on what you call extremism. Other than killing people and bombing places, are there other steps that they could be taking, which might make it more likely that they will win?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Thank you. First of all, you assume that I know everything about this Predator story. I don't. It happened when I was attending the Community of Democracies Forum and I was not surprised but I admit that I didn't know everything because I was not even inside the country. But later on I heard this how many telephones he had. He used to change his car almost every other day. Where is the money for him to do all this? It's not from governments; I can assure you, no Arab government today supports those people, but there is money in the world whether from the Arab world or from outside coming to those people.

So I was not there. The only thing I did when I heard it and then heard my friend Mr. Wolfowitz, was I sent an e-mail to the American ambassador and somehow said I didn't like it.

Now, this question of another war on terrorism or extremism I think yes there has to be another war. This war is needed today but cannot continue on and on until we get rid of terrorists and extremists. Human development, economic development again, again and again democratization, all this is a long-term process. It's not the single administration objective. If it is, if the United States thinks of a single administration winning the war on terrorism and extremism I think they are shortsighted. I'm sure they don't. It's long term. And extremism even inside the United States, some of those evangelists, let's be honest, they use a language that even in the United States is not acceptable.

QUESTION: Individual Saudis could be providing financing to terrorists in Yemen or elsewhere without the Saudi government knowing about it. I assume the sums of money are large. Can there be a surreptitious operation like that and the Saudi government is totally in the dark?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: First of all, it's not only Saudi money. It will be unfair to Saudi Arabia to say that the only money that comes from individuals to some of the terrorists is Saudi money.

QUESTION: By the way, the White House today said exactly the same thing, the Saudis are not, most of the money -- Saudi Arabia is not the source, is not the number one source, no, not the number one source.

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Not the number one. Okay, I am glad, I agree with them because I haven't heard what they said, but that's what I wanted to emphasize. I don't want to list countries. I'm not here, because I'll be doing damage to some countries but I know of several countries that the individuals, big merchants, big whatever you call them, are giving money. So that was your question?

QUESTION: Can this be done in that kind of society without the government being aware of it?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Yes, easily. You know, many Arab societies, while especially us in the Arabian Peninsula, with the exception probably of Kuwait, we are cash money holders. The banking system is not as prevalent as it would be let's say in Jordan and maybe in Jordan in the rural areas the banking system has not yet taken root. So a lot of people keep their cash, and they circulate cash, no problem, very easy.

QUESTION: But they know what they're doing, don't they?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Of course.

QUESTION: They know it isn't charity.

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Those who do it?

QUESTION: Yes.

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: They know. I would say most of them they know. I don't know if someone doesn't know that -- I know one or two charity organizations in Yemen that if I had money I would not give them.

QUESTION: Dr. Al-Iryani, once the war against Iraq gets underway how do you see this anti-terror cooperation between Yemen and the United States is affected? That's one.

And second, how do you also see this cooperation in the larger view of Sharon using the same thing, the same war against terror to continue to brutalize the Palestinians and continue the occupation?

And one final personal question, sir, you as a biochemist, how do you feel about the proposition that Iraqi biochemists should be taken out of the country and interrogated in a third country?

Thank you, sir.

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Well, your first question was to the comparison?

QUESTION: My first question, sir, how do you see the effect on the war against Iraq.

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Oh, Iraq, yes the war on Iraq. It will be negative. I think it will negatively affect the cooperation of almost every other Arab country at least during the war. After the war maybe the people will come back, but I can't imagine that a war in Iraq will allow any country to go about the war on terrorism business as usual. I don't expect that. That's one.

The question of this misuse of the war on terrorism to terrorize other people, I think is immoral. It is absolutely unacceptable to terrorize people under occupation under the pretext that you are fighting terrorism. That's impossible to defend in my view.

Your third question was?

QUESTION: (Off mike.)

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Yeah, I know. First of all, I'm glad the United Nations resolution did not contain that paragraph, operative paragraph in the United Nations language. I think it was dropped out. And I think it was a horrible idea. And I think Mr. Blix was straightforward about it I think. I admire him for that.

I mean, to take a person outside of his country to interrogate him, you are condemning him to what you call it, at least life imprisonment once he returns back. This would have been horrible.

Not only the biochemists, the nuclear physicists, nuclear scientists, any citizen to be taken away from his homeland and interrogated, and then what would he do, return him back? You have condemned him and returned him back. This is unfair. It's impossible to think. But somebody thought of it unfortunately.

QUESTION: Since I just want to as an aside raise the question, do you draw distinctions between what the president calls good terrorism and bad terrorism, suicide bombings against Israelis, blowing up kids and so on? What's your view on that?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: No, I think suicide bombing against civilians and so on, all of us, even most of the Arab countries do not condone it, they are not supporting it. But a lot of us say such desperation maybe could be understood when desperate people do these things, but not condoned or justified. But if you are in such despair, you don't do what human beings do.

I mean, we here in this table we think very rational and we have to. But once you are under oppression, under restrictions, under siege, under, under, under, you never know what human beings will do. I can't imagine that anyone could predict what human

beings should have done in Auschwitz if they had guns and dynamite and explosives. Do you think they would have not used it?

So the desperate human being, I am not comparing Auschwitz to Israel but the despair of human beings can never be predicted how it will be expressed.

And you cannot justify it, yes, you cannot condone it, yes.

QUESTION: Do you condemn it?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: You condemn it, you should. Of course.

QUESTION: Thank you. As a State Department person here, let me clarify or comment unofficially that as far as taking Iraqi scientists out of Iraq for conversations, I think that the intention would be that they would not return to an Iraq that would be governed by people who would put them in prison for life, that maybe there would be a change there.

My question is actually about one of your neighbors, about Saudi Arabia. I think you've made some very interesting comments about democracy and about extremism. I was very interested to hear the remarks you were reporting from Turki al-Faisal.

In the context of a possible coalition action targeting the government in Iraq, how do you see, given what the popular feelings are in Saudi Arabia, on the Arab-Israeli dispute, on the current war on terrorism and so forth, does it worry you at all what the reaction might be, popular reaction, especially in Saudi Arabia?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Not only Saudi Arabia, everywhere. What worries me frankly is the popular reaction and who in the world will have the genius, ability to rule Iraq when the regime is removed by force. I can't imagine how it will be. Maybe you will see several wars, several wars inside Iraq, I'm afraid. Do you think it's possible? I think it's quite possible.

The nature of the Iraqi society, it is not a very homogeneous society, definitely. I mean, we cannot deny that there are Kurds, there are Turkomans, there are Sunnis, there are Shia, there are Assyrians. Assyrians. They are not going to fight. The Assyrians are very, very peaceful people, by the way, but they might be killed. That's another story.

And so I can't imagine how could you remove a regime by force and suddenly establish an authority that will maintain peace and security in order to fulfill the objective of your war. I'm afraid I can't. Maybe there is someone who can find a way.

You know, the last one I was bidding on that he may be a good leader was al-Khazraji and do you know now he is under house arrest in Sweden or Denmark -- in Denmark.

So you go to war, you remove a regime and you don't have the paramount authority to take care of that new situation.

QUESTION: The beginning of your remarks you talked about the solutions being democratization and education and those are wonderful and I think many people here agree, but it seems to me those take a lot of time so you may be talking about saving the next generation from extremism, but do we have that much time and so are you suggesting indirectly that we're going to be in for a rather long period of not being able to solve the problem until this generation grows up or changes its mind, perhaps the generation after will have different values?

And similarly, I think you may have started to answer in response to Peter, it sounded to me like you are not very optimistic that even if the United States is the agent of change in Iraq that democracy in Iraq is something that can or will happen. What do you think about the possibility with a lot of involvement of the international community for Iraq to be a democratic country and do you think a democratic Iraq would influence its neighbors in terms of democratization?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: So far it is a long-term proposal to fight terrorism, but I think we need to separate two kinds of extremism, two kinds of extremists, at least the one I see in Yemen. There is religious extremism, but not actively violent extremism, and thus we call them the Salafis. I think they are everywhere but in Yemen they are not actively violent but they are extremists in their thinking and looking to the outside world and to viewing the other, whoever he is, Christian, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, that is long term, yes we need to plan for long term.

Now, active extremists, which will eventually lead to throwing a grenade or exploding, attacking a tank, that has to continue until it is really eliminated, because this is the greatest and the worst form of extremism, this active extremist. And so there is a short-term and there is a long-term.

Your second question? I didn't take my pad, because my memory can work only with pads.

QUESTION: If the United States were the agent of change in Iraq --

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Ah, the democratization. First of all, there is no community and no society in the world that is immune to democratization. To say that Iraq is not qualified to be democratic I think, of course, is absolutely not true.

Good governance, then democratization are I think every society in the world will accept but to equate this situation with what happened in Japan and in Germany I think the proposal is much, much, much more difficult and complicated than what happened, quite different.

Now, any democracy, I'm glad that Yemen let's say is a nascent, emerging, whatever you call it, democracy, has brought a Saudi prince to Yemen and to say you are doing the right thing and this is a good example. So democratization always has its influence.

You know, when we started our multi-party system and freedom of the press I was one of those saying this is not for export. We don't intend -- I'm sure Martin has heard it -- we don't mean that everyone should do what we do, but I'm glad that they say what you are doing is right.

So any democratic system around in the region or environment that's surrounded by non-democratic systems, of course, I think the positive effect is going to be there.

Now, in my view, after all, there are influential countries, there are less influential, in my view, if there is in the Arab world a place for democracy to really influence everyone, the more democratic Egypt is I think, you know, they play the tone, even though we don't like it.

QUESTION: If Marvin will allow me just to intervene on this, because it's really quite interesting that you have at the moment a situation where Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iraq are the four Arab regional powers and all of them are in effect frozen in terms of any political reform process, and then around them you have Yemen, Qatar, Bahrain, Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia -- Tunisia is more economic rather than political.

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Tunisia was invited as a guest in --

QUESTION: Right. And so --

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: We in Jordan, we are --

QUESTION: So in a sense you have the kind of periphery trying to infect the --

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: The center.

QUESTION: -- the center with these radical ideas of democracy. And you say, well, I mean you kind of confirm this with this notion that Egypt is in a way that most important because it's the most influential power in the Arab world. But is this theory correct that this process of influencing from the lesser powers to the greater powers is actually, do you really think that it will work?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: I think the example works, but the immediate influence is very slow. But I think -- I know Egyptian intellectuals, Egyptian journalists, writers, teachers who come to Yemen and they really admire what they see in Yemen, but it doesn't mean that they can go there and change it. So this kind of let's say passive influence, I wouldn't call it active influence, I think democracy is very infective.

QUESTION: I think that I'm the only one at this table formally associated with Harvard and at Harvard we're always examining the mind of the Yale graduate. (Laughter.) So in that context, I want to go back to the comment that you made --

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Who is more predictable?

QUESTION: Yeah. I'm not sure I know.

I want to go back to the comment that you made earlier, a comparison that you then said was not a comparison between Auschwitz and the suicide bombing saga, because it's kind of interesting there. Were you suggesting that if the Jews facing extermination at Auschwitz had weapons that they would then use against the Nazis, that that would be the equivalent of the suicide bomber using weapons against Israeli citizens?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: I didn't mean that.

QUESTION: What did you mean?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: I'm speaking about what a human being will do when he is under siege, oppression and so on. One can never predict -- I was saying suppose they had these bombs, wouldn't they have defended what they think, defend themselves, but to go to a city, to Tel Aviv and kill people during their sleep, that's not the way to do it let's say. But to resist occupation, which means either oppression or whatever you call it, human beings under great stress you never know what they will do. In other words, just to preach, preaching only to the extremists, stop doing it, without them seeing results or a way out, a light at the end of the tunnel, just to condemn them I think is useless. But you have to give people in desperation a light at the end of the tunnel. Then, if I'm using the right word, you're advise, preaching or whatever you call it, will become effective. Today we are telling them this is wrong, frankly, but you are not telling them what is the way out. I'm hearing about a roadmap to peace but I haven't seen the road.

QUESTION: You suggested that Yemen's cooperation in the war on terrorism in its full cooperation was to a certain extent compelled, the notion of being number three on the target list, shall we say, focused the mind. And I think that when the Predator attack took place one of the reasons why we all in the press were having such a hard time getting people to confirm it that night was a sense in not a particularly sensitive administration but was having a brief moment of sensitivity that there was some concern that it would be difficult for your government to know, for people to know that this was taking place over Yemen, even though it was all so obvious.

Was that difficult and generally what's the political situation there? If you're seen as actively cooperating with the United States, allowing the U.S. to have Predators fly over there, rocketing people in the middle of the desert, is that good for your government,

does that strengthen your government, does that weaken your government and was this administration, shall we say, more sensitive than you wanted them to be?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Yes. First of all, I don't know if the word "compelled" was the right one. I think Yemen can see the dangers and the great dangers that the events in New York put the whole world, not only Yemen. So I think it was a quick understanding that here is a situation, which is unlike our disagreement with the United States during the Gulf War number two, let's say. That one is tolerable but this one any hesitation to cooperate will become a great enigma for a long time and I think the leadership in Yemen realized that this has to be done.

Now, with regard to the impact of this Predator case, again I go back to my friend MacFarquhar.

QUESTION: MacFarquhar?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: He called me. He tracked me until he found me, immediately after the news came out. Fortunately I had heard the news. I would have appeared stupid if he asked me what do you think will happen and I tell him I haven't heard it.

Then he was saying what of the -- because he was there and I think he got the impression that the tribesmen are so strong and they really could resist the government and they can topple a government, he said, "What do you expect will happen after this incident? How is Yemen going to be?" I told him nothing will happen. He didn't like it because I put a cold shower on his head. He expected me to say, "Yes, there will be a great upheaval." There was none.

And the reason for it first of all there is a feeling that this cooperation has served Yemen, general feeling, public feeling. So far no one is saying it has damaged or hurt Yemen or compromised Yemen, let's say decision-making, sovereignty, especially that we say yes we are with you on the war on terrorism but we are not with you in the war on Iraq. We are not going to oppose you I know but you should know that we don't believe that we can support you in that.

So I don't expect any serious -- well, there has been no serious backlash on the incident. Now, the opposition parties are having a field day with it, yes, but I don't think they are that strong to change the public mind completely.

The question, the interesting question, which was raised at MESA when I spoke, someone said, "Well, okay you say nothing happened, how many incidents of this nature could Yemen experience without anything happening?" That I really don't know. Too many things of this kind, of course, are not good.

QUESTION: Can I ask a follow-up? What are the benefits other than that fact that you're not number three on the hit list? What are the clear benefits that the public

feels in Yemen that they get for this collaboration with the United States in the war on terrorism?

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Well, I tell you honestly immediately the first few weeks after New York every Yemeni was scared, honestly. The public in Yemen just an automatic feeling, nobody fit in that fear. But, of course, they watch these TV stations, BBC TV cable, BBC, even Al-Jazeera promoted that kind of language. And so there was a great deal of fear until the president came here, until things started clearing up and I think that situation was not in any other Arab country as prevalent as it was in Yemen. I don't know how it was in Jordan but we were afraid frankly. And I think this is the benefit, this is why people tolerated this cooperation and what happened. But how many times? That's another story.

QUESTION: As you know, there's been a great deal of debate in the U.S. government and at centers such as Brookings about what the United States can do to further democratic processes in the Arab world, and I'm curious about your views about what the U.S. could or should do or is anything the United States is going to do doomed to backlash in terms of hurting the people that we would try to help? And I'm not talking about external policies such as the Arab-Israeli conflict but things like education and good governance, those sorts of things.

QUESTION: From reading the Palestinian papers in the last week or more, one can see an emerging consensus calling for stopping the suicide bombings, the military attacks, which have helped only the rightwing in Israel and helped the left and the labor and it seems like it was more of a self-imposed desperation, as they describe it, rather than something imposed by Israel.

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: In Arabic the man asked is no more knowledgeable than the man asking, and that's my situation with you.

HUSSEIN MUBARAK: Thank you very much. My name is Hussein Mubarak from the Embassy of Egypt. First of all, I would like to thank Dr. Al-Iryani for his excellent presentation.

Second, I just have two questions I would like to raise. First, don't you think that on the short term that the efforts to combat international terrorism will not be complete --

[TAPE CHANGE.]

HUSSEIN MUBARAK: -- deeply into the underlying causes of terrorism? We can scour the land looking for terrorists and launching wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq and all around the world and that costs bunches of countries a lot of money without having to look to what could be much lesser reasons to combat international terrorism,

which could be something like poverty, like under development, social and economic development, inequality, the lack of distribution of wealth. So this is my first remark.

My second remark is with regard to the democracy, the linkage that democracy is a remedy for terrorism. I beg to differ on this concept. I do agree that democracy is one of the reasons to combat terrorism but it is not the only reason to combat terrorism. For instance, during the '50s, '60s and '70s the number of regimes around the world that enjoyed democracy were much lesser than what we have now. However, at that time the terrorist incidents were not as much as we have now. So I think the reason behind my question is that we have to have a hard look into reasons of terrorism and how to combat it. Thank you very much.

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: Thank you very much. I couldn't agree more. I fully agree with you. But I wanted to be brief but frankly all these things were in my mind that it's not only just democratization but there are so many issues. I think unless we look into all these issues that you raised we are shortsighted, and therefore it is a combination of policies that would reduce extremism. Let's say terrorism I hope is not going to be with us all the time but extremist ideas are in every society all the time. The question how prevalent or how influential they are and I think it is our job to make them less influential. But to say there will be no one who is not extreme at all, there will be no extremism in any society, no, there will always be, but as I said active or passive extremism.

What the United States can do, I was asked this question I think last night about the United States support for democratization. No, it was in MESA. It was in MESA. Frankly, I don't think the United States is doing all what it can do to promote democratization.

I agree with my brother from the embassy that social justice, economic development, all these are factors in fostering a democracy, and reducing the let's say hatred, disagreement, dislike for governments and so on that we have.

So, for example, which will be my last comment, there are political parties in Yemen after the 1997 election which said the voter registry was a fraud and that my party has cheated and registered duplicate names and they had, the Islam Party, the Islamist Party had a computer graduate from the United States and he produced 600,000 names out of 4 million that are the same names and he said that's the proof of it.

Then after so much argument and disagreement, I'm glad when I was the prime minister I had agreed to the president's instruction, because we were resisting this, because it was going to be expensive, the president finally said, "Okay, let's cancel all the older registration, all the registration system and start again." We started again last October. The registry listed at 4.6 million people became 8 and instead of 1.2 million women became 3.3 million registered voters.

Now, what was the role of the United States in that operation? It was minimum. I think the Germans, the Dutch and the United Nations gave more support to Yemen in

this operation, much more than the United States did. They did I think contribute something but they should have been the leader. They should have taken the lead to assist Yemen, re-register its voters, and by the way we spent an equivalent of what's 8 billion Rials, what would it be, the equivalent of about \$10 million doing that. We could have used it for development.

So I wish and I want to make this, I wish and I hope to see the United States doing two things in its fight against terrorism and extremism, assist emerging democracies in fostering that democracy and alleviating poverty. Those two twin antagonists I think have to be dealt with.

AMBASSADOR INDYK: Dr. Al-Iryani, I want to thank you very much for what was a very lively and enlightening discussion. I feel like we've bounced from Predators to democracy and back again in a way that I think has been very useful for us here in Washington, so I want to thank you for that.

I want to thank you for your country's cooperation in the war on terrorism, which I think is a very important development, and I want you to know that you will always be welcome back here at the Saban Center at Brookings. Thank you.

DR. ABD AL KAREEM AL-IRYANI: I'm always happy to be at Brookings.

[END OF EVENT]