

A Brookings Iraq Series Briefing

**THE BUMPY ROAD TO BAGHDAD:
THE HARD FIGHTING LEADS TO POLITICAL REVERBERATIONS
AT HOME AND ABROAD**

**The Brookings Institution
Falk Auditorium
April 3, 2003**

Moderator:

JAMES M. LINDSAY

Deputy Director and Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies, Brookings

Panelists:

PHILIP H. GORDON

Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies, Brookings, and Director, Center on the United States and France, Brookings

THOMAS E. MANN

Senior Fellow, Governance Studies, and the W. Averell Harriman Chair, Brookings

MICHAEL E. O'HANLON

Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies, and the Sydney Stein Jr. Chair, Brookings

KENNETH M. POLLACK

Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies, and Director of Research, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings

MR. JAMES M. LINDSAY: Hi and welcome to the Brookings Institution, our weekly briefing on the war in Iraq. I am Jim Lindsay, a Senior Fellow here in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at Brookings and I'm joined on the platform today by my colleagues, and I will go from left to right. I know most of you know these esteemed gentlemen already but we'll go through the formalities.

To my far left is Mike O'Hanlon, a Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies, an expert on military strategy.

To my left is Philip Gordon, Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies and Director on the Center for the United States and France.

To my immediate right is Ken Pollack, Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies Program as well, and Research Director for the Saban Center here at Brookings.

To my far right is our -- far right physically but not politically -- is our esteemed colleague Tom Mann, Director Emeritus of the Government Studies Program, and Senior Fellow and wise man here at Brookings.

What we're going to do is do a briefing on the war in Iraq and I think we'll begin with my colleague Michael O'Hanlon. Mike?

MR. MICHAEL E. O'HANLON: Thanks, Jim.

I just wanted to set the stage with a couple of broad comments on the military campaign and the overall theme of my opening remarks is that we need to continue to maintain a balanced view, and those of us in the punditry and in the scholar and in the media communities have not been all that distinguished in our ability to do this in the first two weeks of the conflict. I've tried to be an optimist by comparison to a lot of last week's discussion in thinking the basic contours of the strategy have been found. I wrote a couple of pieces along those lines last week.

I remain an optimist but I also think we all know that one better still be a little bit nervous about the looming potential of our battle for Baghdad which is more than a potential battle, it's a very likely battle. And even as we see Republican Guard units being decisively beaten on the outskirts of Baghdad, we also hear troubling indicators of many units moving into the city. This may actually come back to really haunt U.S.-Turkish relations if it appears that a number of divisions that were initially north of Baghdad now have an easier time getting into the city because there is no northern approach to this invasion effort and this [blight effect] being put onto Baghdad. So it's far too early to claim that things are going to be a cakewalk from this point on, but certainly the last couple of days have been very good news and reaffirm I think the argument that I felt relatively lonely in making last week that things were still going pretty well.

A couple of people on the panel here were also making that argument, but not too many others in Washington.

A couple of specific points then I will wrap up in these opening thoughts.

What could possibly explain the great success of the last 48 hours? We still don't know. It appears to be real success. When I first heard General Myers on Sunday say we had had 50 percent attrition from air attacks against certain Republican Guard units I was highly skeptical. There was no historical basis for thinking this was even possible. Even in Desert Storm it took us 40 days to get to 25 percent attrition against most Iraqi forces deployed out in the open in the desert. And granted, we didn't have as many weapons, or didn't have as many planes with precision strike capability, and we had other limitations on our capabilities. We had a big Iraqi military to attack and a relatively modest number of airplanes but we had 40 days and we had Iraqi forces exposed in the desert and we still didn't get much above 25 percent attrition.

Here's General Myers saying that after about ten days of a war against the Republican Guard up around Baghdad we somehow reached that 50 percent threshold with certain key units. I thought maybe he was talking about a couple of platoons here and there, but then you started to hear more and more people in CENTCOM and the U.S. military make the same argument, that larger and larger formations had been attrited to that extent, and we started then hearing on about Monday claims that the Baghdad and Medina Divisions might have suffered 50 percent or more attrition primarily from air attacks alone at that time. This was remarkable.

If it's true there's a lot that will have to be said about this and analyzed in coming weeks, but what it appears to be is a couple of things. One, the Iraqis still aren't very good at digging in even when they have a pretty build-up complex backdrop against which to hide their forces. Frankly, they should have been able to protect themselves better than they have.

Secondly, we're perhaps even better at figuring out where the Iraqis are than I would have guessed or than I would have understood how we could have easily done this.

A week and a half ago we heard about these Apache raids going in, the first wave of about 30 Apache helicopters coming home with one aircraft shot down, almost all the others damaged, and perhaps only ten Iraqi vehicles destroyed. Ten days later somehow the tactics have been improved enough in the U.S. approach to this campaign that we had obliterated many many hundreds of Iraqi armored vehicles.

I don't know what explains the difference, but it appears that we radically changed our tactics and perhaps used Apaches and other helicopters and other assets to try to draw fire, not get as close to the Iraqis, try to get close enough to get them to move, get them to fire, and then use our reconnaissance capabilities to pinpoint the locations of these systems so that over the

ensuing week or so we could to after them gradually with air power.

I'm looking very much forward to hearing more detail on what explains this remarkable turn-around, but the fact that we could have gone from the Apache debacle about ten days ago to the overwhelming air success that appears to have been produced in the following week is quite remarkable and yet another major development in the improvement of military technology and reconnaissance systems that tie everybody together on the battlefield.

Just one last quick point and I'll stop. Obviously the ground campaign has also made a big difference in the last 24-48 hours. It remains to be seen if it was essentially mopping up after these air assaults had been so effective or if the ground campaign really had a large role itself, but it looks to me as if the latter is probably the case, that as effective as these airstrikes were, the ground campaign was also quite effective. And the point I would emphasize, again it's a provisional conclusion, but I believe that our artillery has been remarkably effective against Iraqi ground vehicles.

In Desert Storm we saw a lot of situations in which our tanks outshot Iraqi tanks and I'm sure some of that's been happening as well. But I think our artillery has been capable of extremely precise strikes against Iraqi artillery and even Iraqi tanks. We do have precision-guided rounds on artillery, we have very accurate counter-artillery radar, and this appears to have been quite important in taking out a lot of Iraqi equipment because if we're having such low American casualties in the ground fight, even though we are better than the Iraqis even though our equipment is better, if we're having casualties that are that low, almost trivial. Historically these casualties are a factor of ten better than even our Desert Storm performance on a daily basis. If that's happening I believe it's because we're not even getting within direct fire range of many Iraqi systems. We're destroying them with artillery and air power before we are even within two to three miles proximity. But these are, as I say, very provisions, tactical conclusions of what might have happened in the last 48 hours and I'll look forward to seeing more data and maybe corrections from my colleagues to see what really happened.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you very much, Michael, for your guarded optimism, for reminding us how much we in fact don't know right now. We'll be learning more and more in the weeks and months to come.

I'd like to now turn to my colleague Ken Pollack. Ken?

MR. KENNETH M. POLLACK: Thank you, Jim. Let me echo a number of Mike's remarks and add a little bit to it as well.

First I want to start in terms of my bottom line which is the same as Mike's. It's interesting. I feel like Mike and I at these briefings, our job seems to be to push back on

whatever the prevailing view is.

In the first few days there was wild exuberance. Mike and I were up here saying be a little careful, it's early, all we're doing is conquering a lot of empty desert. We haven't gotten to anything important. Last week there was gloom and doom and we were saying it's not as bad as it seems. This week I think again people feel like we're on a roll and I think both Mike and I are feeling like we need to temper our enthusiasm once again. I think things are going well. Again, there's nothing I've seen that's happened so far that lies outside the broad outlines of what I expected of this war. That is all to the positive. But I do think that we need to be a little bit concerned with some of the things that we're saying and not be overly confident, not be glib. Let me make a few points.

First I want to expand a little bit on some of the points that Mike made about the amount of destruction that we've inflicted on the Republican Guard. Now as Mike suggested, we just don't now how much damage we've inflicted on the Republican Guard. Mike and I don't even have access to the data that U.S. Central Command and the other intelligence agencies have. My guess is they don't have the kind of data that you would like to really make a good assessment of whether or not a division was destroyed. But I'll make a few comments.

First, just watching the reports from the embedded reporters, they're not coming across a whole lot of destroyed equipment. In fact you're starting to hear this morning a lot of people saying where is the Republican Guard? Yesterday it was we destroyed the Republican Guard. Today it seems to be we missed the Republican Guard. I think that may be a little bit more accurate. I don't get the feeling that they actually did confront the bulk of either the Medina or the Baghdad yesterday, although again I'm glad to be proven wrong.

As Mike point out, it is tough to do this from the air, and in particular it's important to remember the Baghdad Division is light infantry. There are never more than about 35 tanks in the Baghdad Division and maybe 60 or 70 artillery pieces. It is overwhelming infantry with small arms in the Baghdad Division and that is exceptionally hard to destroy from the air. Even if you were using lots and lots of cluster munitions it is hard to kill dug-in infantry from the air.

I'll tell you something else, yesterday when I was listening to General Brooks and I hear him say the Baghdad Division is destroyed, I had an immediate flashback to 1991 and another general wearing desert camouflage telling me that Republican Guard divisions were destroyed. At that point in time it was the Hamarabi and the Medina were destroyed. And in fact we'd done some damage to the Hamarabi and the Medina but they were more intact than destroyed. Those were the divisions that Saddam used to put down the Intafada afterwards. So I think we have to be careful about the level of destruction.

Beyond that it's also important to remember that the terms that the military uses have

different meanings. The term they have been using in particular is "rendered combat ineffective". What that means is that a unit can no longer function as that size unit. So a division rendered combat ineffective means that the unit can no longer function as a division. It doesn't mean that the division is all dead. It doesn't mean the division is completely scattered. In point of fact, a division rendered combat ineffective might be a perfectly adequate brigade and a brigade is still a meaningful amount of combat power especially if it pulls back into the Baghdad area so we have to be concerned about that also.

That gets to my point again that it does seem that what the Iraqis did was they did pull back the Republican Guard at the last minute to try to avoid its destruction in combat with U.S. ground forces on this outer defense ring around Baghdad, pull it back to the outskirts of the city itself. Under all of those circumstances is my guess is we did do a bunch of damage to these divisions but they may still have some combat capability. They may not be able to function as full strength divisions but they may be at brigade or even better strength and that is still a meaningful amount of combat power.

Command and control. Another thing that you heard from the Administration repeatedly is that Iraqi command and control is frayed, it is discombobulated, use whatever term you want to. What they're suggesting is that Iraqi command and control is not very effective right now. That's probably true, but again as a historian of Iraqi military, Iraqi command and control is always frayed and discombobulated. Iraq has terrible command and control. It is one of the problems with their combat forces. They had poor command and control in the Yom Kippur War, they had poor command and control in the Iran-Iraq War, they had poor command and control in the Gulf War in 1991. They don't have good command and control. This is one of the problems with their army. Their command and control is very herky-jerky, it is very top-down, it is very slow because they have a great deal of trouble getting information from front line units to someone who can actually make a decision, have that person or that group make a decision, and then transmit orders back down the line.

As a result what I am seeing on the battlefield actually looks very familiar to me. Just over the course of the war I keep having these daily conversations with a very good friend of mine who is still in the government and is responsible for some of the intelligence work on Iraqi armed forces. Every day we have a conversation that goes along the lines of, all right, what we should have seen them do already is X. Why haven't they done X? And two days later they do X. Again, it seems to be very much according to this historical pattern which is it takes time for the Iraqi general staff to understand what is going on because they have very poor sources of information. Information does not flow well up their chain of command. They then have to make a decision and transmit it down to the line formations. The line formations won't make decisions for themselves.

So things like shifting Republican Guard divisions down to confront the main U.S. thrust.

That should have happened about three or four days before it did. It was a little bit late. Pulling the Republican Guard back to Baghdad the way they just did yesterday is probably something that should have happened about two days ago. Again, it took a little time but there's nothing I'm really seeing in Iraq's command and control that looks particularly different from past conflicts. Which is to say that there may be a degradation of Iraq's command and control, but it's hard to tell because by any historical standards the Iraqis are doing about as well or as poorly as they always do.

Another point worth making, I think that isn't really rising to the surface is claims about interdiction. Before the war you heard people claiming if the Iraqis move, if they come out of their holes they're dead. That's a claim we've heard repeatedly in the past. Repeatedly it has not proven to be true. I would say again, it is not proving to be true.

What is so striking to me about this war is how easily the Iraqis are able to move. Some of you may not have caught this, it was buried in one of the massive New York Times pieces, but one of our airstrikes was against a Republican Guard brigade mounted on a train moving toward Baghdad. That is a remarkable degree of chutzpah. We have complete air supremacy and they are mounting up a brigade on a train and moving it to Baghdad. I will say that some of my sources suggested to me that one of the reasons they were doing that is because they actually did get a train into Baghdad which says something to you I think about our degree of interdiction. It's clearly good. I think we are busting up Iraqi tanks, but it is not perfect. The Iraqis have been able to move big formations. They moved the Adnan down. They moved the [Nebuchadnezzar] down, they've moved the Al Nida, they've moved the Hamarabi, they've moved all of these formations in fairly significant fashion around the board and they have suffered some but they have not been stopped from doing so.

Let me make a final point in Iraqi strategy which is to say that I was hoping that the Iraqis would stay in place. As I said I had this conversation a few days before with my friend saying boy oh boy, if they're smart they will pull the Guard back to the outskirts of Baghdad because where they are deployed at that point in time along this defense line, about 30 to 40 miles south of Baghdad, was perfect for us. I kept seeing in my own head Operation Typhoon which was the operation that Germans mounted right before Moscow when the Russians had a long defensive line in front of Moscow, they did a double envelopment of the operation and the scooped up 600,000 Russian prisoners. One of the largest prisoner bags in history. That's what I was looking at there. If the Iraqis had stayed along those defensive lines, 3rd Infantry could have turned in, the Marines could have turned in, and we might have bagged just about the entire Republican Guard.

Instead, the Iraqis figured out just in time it seems that that was about to happen and they pulled the forces back to Baghdad. As I said, I have no doubt that those divisions got battered falling back to Baghdad, but my guess is that they probably have fallen back to Baghdad in some

way, shape or form. And even if they are in only brigade strength, those units on the perimeter of Baghdad are going to be much harder for us to dig out than they would have been manning that defensive line 40 to 50 miles south.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you, Ken, for sharing your guarded skepticism with us. I assume in the next few weeks we will find out whether the glass is three-quarters full or one-quarter empty.

Much of the focus has been on military strategy, certainly in the war coverage, but there is a diplomatic element to this war. Secretary Powell is headed off to Ankara. He is scheduled to go to Brussels to confer with our allies. And to discuss that and other issues is my colleague Phil Gordon.

MR. PHILIP H. GORDON: Jim as I sit here with my same friends and colleagues from last week I'm reminded of being teased earlier in the week by a Brookings colleague that said why should we come and hear the same guys hear the same thing again? That's actually not true for Mike and Ken who always have fresh insight into what's going on, but I fear it might be true for myself when I talk about relations with Europeans and the overall theme is well things are really bad and it looks like they're going to get worse before they get better. I fear that that's my theme for today as well.

That's not completely true or fair. Indeed, you give one reason why it doesn't entirely apply, at least the Secretary of State is off meeting with the Europeans now as we speak. He's been to Turkey. He's talking to EU and NATO counterparts and there are some other things going on.

The Germans and Russians yesterday came out quite clearly saying who they want to win the war and it turned out to be us, which is good.

[Laughter]

And it might seem that should go without saying, indeed I hope it goes without saying, but there's a difference between it going without saying and it being said. And the Germans, who were deeply opposed to this war, the Foreign Minister and the Chancellor have said quite clearly they want the U.S. to win and quickly. And the Russians said the same thing, although when they added "for economic reasons" I found that fairly bizarre that they would explain that that's why they want us to win. But nonetheless, we'll take what we can get in terms of support for this thing anywhere in Europe we can find it.

So there's that and there are other signs from Germany and other countries in Europe that they're keen on repairing this rift and putting things back together.

In Turkey, Secretary Powell achieved an agreement with the Turks after all of these difficult relations, that Turkey would allow humanitarian assistance to go through and food and fuel. Again, there's a part of self-interest there because the idea I think is that we buy that food and fuel in Turkey which would be a boost to the Turkish economy but nonetheless, you take progress where you can get it and that was a positive sign leaving Ankara.

Now Secretary Powell is in Brussels meeting with EU and NATO allies. The meeting in itself is a positive sign. The Secretary of State is reaching out to these allies that we've had such a difficult time with, and he said one of the things that they wanted to hear which is that we think the UN should have a role in all of this.

So in all of those senses my overall theme that things are bad with the Europeans and likely to get worse, may not be completely right. But here's why I think it remains the case. None of this, and nothing we're hearing about this trip, is really addressing the European concerns about what next. My fear in all of this is that we're going to see a repeat of the U.S.-European diplomacy that we saw on the road towards the war itself, which is to say that we come together and we try to reach an agreement as we did at the UN and 1441 and all of that, and we come pretty close, but at the end of the day we're not willing to pay what will be necessary really to get them on board. What I'm talking about here is the post-war phase, the reconstruction phase, and the UN role in all of that.

We've already heard quite clearly from the Europeans that they want a real UN role. They want the United Nations to appoint an authority who would be responsible for Iraq, responsible for controlling Iraq's oil, responsible for manning governance in Iraq once the war is over and so on. The United States has no interest in doing that. After going to war, such an important thing, this Administration has no interest in turning it over to the UN and running the risk that it doesn't work.

Europeans in turn say, and here what's different about the 1441 process is it's all Europeans. It's not the French or the French, Germans and Belgians. It's all of them including Tony Blair who came here last week with that message but didn't leave with the answer that he needed to hear.

So what I'm afraid of is that both sides are sufficiently dug in. When the Europeans say you're not getting a single Euro for reconstruction if the UN isn't in charge, we then say, they would like us to say okay, let's see if we can work this out, but I have a feeling the answer will be you can keep your Euros because the President has staked so much on this war that the idea of taking a risk now and turning it over to the UN which this Administration doesn't believe could work, doesn't fly. And even the economic incentive, if you compare it to things like the Balkans when we desperately wanted European support because we needed their peacekeepers on the

ground and we didn't want to do it, Congress wasn't going to authorize funds, we didn't want to pay for it so you had to make compromises with the Europeans for the post-war phase there.

Here I think the attitude is look, we've already spent \$100 billion on this war, or we will have soon. Why are we going to make a huge concession for another couple of billion dollars from the Europeans? We'll manage the oil, we'll manage stability, and we'll do it all ourselves. And that will I think produce the European reaction of fine, it's your war, you broke it, you fix it.

I hope we can avoid that scenario, and Powell was in part opening a slight door to the Europeans and saying we want to see a UN role, but if you really listen to what the U.S. is offering to the UN here so far, it is yes, we will allow the UN to bless our sole authority over Iraq once the war is over. That's probably not going to be enough to get the Europeans on board. If they're not on board for the economic phase then they're not on board for the political phase and we end up owning this ourselves which would be no good.

A last point just to throw out one idea for consideration which is the possible role for NATO in all of this.

It is interesting to think -- first of all if you abstracted this and NATO didn't exist and you had the U.S. doing the Iraq war and then looking, how do we win legitimacy and multinational support afterwards? Wouldn't it be neat, if you didn't have NATO if someone said at that moment, wouldn't it be great if we had 19 and soon to be 26 democratic allies in Europe who would be able to put in peacekeepers and who had interoperable military forces, and there was a structure in place to coordinate them and they would bring money to the table and it would legitimize it so it wouldn't be the U.S. -- that would seem like a pretty cool thing if it didn't exist. And everyone said it's so unfortunate we don't have something. Well we do. It's there, and it has experienced reaching out to improve civil/military relations in countries where it didn't work in the former communist bloc. It has experience coordinating military forces. It could play a role in eliminating weapons of mass destruction. A lot of things. It's there. It should be looked at. It might be looked at. And in the end it probably won't be accepted because there are a number of countries in Europe that would see that as a proxy for U.S. leadership which brings me back to the theme of my presentation which is that it's probably likely to get worse before it gets better with the Europeans.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you, Phil. And thank you for being a brave man to stick to your message. I wouldn't describe it as being repetitive but being consistent, which may make you a lone man in Washington.

[Laughter]

I'm now going to turn to my esteemed colleague Tom Mann who is going to bring the focus back to the United States.

MR. THOMAS E. MANN: Actually, Jim challenged me to name as many members of the coalition as I could from memory but I decided to pass up on that and instead talk a bit about domestic politics.

The roller coaster views of the war's progress and the Administration's determination before the war to sell this as much more benefit than cost, and now to put the most positive spin on the conduct of the war contrasts dramatically with the public sobriety about the war.

It's times like this that you say thank God we have a small d democracy in this country. In many respects the public is much more pessimistic than anyone in the Administration about the cost of the war in terms of the time it will take, the casualties involved, the possibility of terrorists, retribution on the U.S., the problems we will have to deal with our allies, the unpopularity on the Arab streets. Americans see all of this and yet their support for the war and support for the President's conduct of the war remains exceedingly high. I mean it's been 70 percent plus or minus a few percentage points from the beginning, it remains there. It doesn't take a dip when the news is on the downside. It seems to me the public has a very pragmatic and sensible and practical view of this and that the key remains the certainty of victory. As long as the public believes we've going to accomplish the objective of deposing Saddam Hussein's regime, they will support this even as and if costs mount.

The same is true in the Congress, basically. Nothing is going to happen in the way of preventing the appropriations of necessary resources. Congress is going to fight back appropriately in terms of its control of how those monies are spent and make some adjustments at the margin, but that's it.

The post-war period though is likely to be quite different. With both the public, the larger public and the Congress. Once the military engagement is largely over, the possibilities of building a durable public support for a major commitment of American forces and resources in a period of potential conflict, ambiguity, outbreaks of guerrilla warfare, are problematic. And if you listen carefully to congressional leaders, particularly in the majority party, in the Republican party, you will find little interest in committing to any substantial U.S. financial investment. There is a belief that somehow Iraqi oil resources are going to take care of all of this.

So for the active war period count on broad, enduring reliable public support and congressional support. Look for difficulties as soon as the guns cool and we start the battle to win the peace.

Now this past week has been characterized as the week of the emergence of the

Republican moderate. This reminds me of the hype we've seen associated with the roller coaster on the conduct of the war.

Yes, there have been some legislative setbacks for the President. Anwar drilling, the state-based initiative that's largely been stripped of the substance of what the President wants, difficulties with getting a cap on medical malpractice suits, the continuing frustration and the efforts to get Manuel Estrada confirmed as a Circuit Court Judge, and of course the budget resolution vote that cut that part of the President's tax cut to be protected by reconciliation roughly in half.

The presumption has been the moderates are rising and it's problems in the war that are causing these difficulties. I'd say generally no and no. That is I question the rise of the Republican moderate and I question whether much of this is related to the war. In fact almost none of it is related to the war. Each of these issues has its own politics. In fact on the budget resolution the key is Fritz Hollings. The fact is the deal was put together for this vote a week before, but Fritz Hollings didn't want any tax cut and he couldn't be persuaded to settle for half.

Over the weekend they worked out some language saying well, this money would actually go to help save Social Security. He said okay, I'll do it. That meant Chafey said he'd do it, at which point all the other Democrats came along.

What was surprising is that Bill Frist didn't see this coming because it was there to be won.

Now listen, the mounting cost of the war or at least the increasing transparency of the cost of the war are creating, is creating some real uneasiness among Republicans. Not just moderates, among sort of fiscal hawks and others.

But what is striking to me is that the President is still pretty well positioned to get a substantial tax cut trough. That's really quite amazing if you look at sort of the objective conditions of what's happening to the budget deficit, what the out-year costs are at the time the boomers are retiring. The cost of the war and the post-war reconstruction. Questions about whether there is any growth or stimulus in the package, when it will come into effect. We had a sort of very discouraging from the Administration's point of view, CBO exercise in dynamic scoring. We had Alan Greenspan some weeks ago saying don't mess with stock dividends, taxes alone, it has to be part of a broader tax reform. In spite of all of this the President is still well positioned. The efforts to hold down the tax cut falls on the shoulders of Olympia Snow. She's the only one holding it back and she has sent indications that she will support whatever comes out of the conference committee which will probably be about a \$550 billion tax cut protected by reconciliation, and then room for another \$300 or \$400 billion in tax cuts not protected by reconciliation, and they may move some numbers, popular things there.

So it really is much too early to talk about the negative effect of the war on the President's domestic agenda.

I think more realistic is the post war political halo for the President and its limits. I think it's fair to say that any political success the President enjoys in this war is unlikely to produce any domestic policy gain beyond the tax cuts that he's able to achieve not because of the war but in spite of the war. I say that because of the historical lessons from other Presidents in similar circumstances, because this President seems still determined to govern from his base and not try to reach out and appeal to a broader coalition, because the Democrats have found unity as well as anger and intensity and opposition, and because of the objective conditions that the President will face with growing deficits, a sluggish economy, and the post-war demands and challenges for the U.S., all of which mean a likely decline in the President's political standing after the war and a rather dramatic shift in the terms of the political debate.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you very much, Tom, and thank you for reminding us that as much as you like to make fun of the American public because it can't name the Prime Minister of Canada or confuses Slovak to Slovene, that in fact the American people when it comes to the big picture actually are pretty prudent.

What we're going to do now is go to our questions and answers. Before I go to the first question let me remind everybody that a transcript of this briefing and the other briefings we have been doing on the war in Iraq are available on the Brookings web site, www.brookings.edu.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION: Steve Shiffley, BBC News.

I just wonder if the panel could address the post-war reconstruction planning question in a bit more detail, particularly all the press reports that have been about disagreements between the State Department and the Pentagon on who should run it and under what terms should it take place. And particularly the question would be whether the State Department, how close the State Department actually is to the European position or the British position; and secondly, how much chance that actually has of coming through, who's winning this internal fight over the reconstruction between the Pentagon and the State Department at the moment?

MR. GORDON: You're right that there's a difference in the State Department and the Defense Department.

First let me say it's wrong to think of this in terms of one or the other. It's not the UN does it or the U.S. does it. There's actually a whole spectrum from there in terms of how long the

transition period because you know the U.S. is going to run it in the immediate aftermath of the war; the U.S. military is going to be in charge of Iraq. Nobody disputes that.

So you have two questions. One, how long does it take you to transition to something else? And is there a UN phase in between? Do you go straight from the U.S. is in charge to, no matter how long it takes, the Iraqis are in charge? Or do you go U.S. military is in charge, then a special representative of the Secretary General of the UN, and then later the Iraqis? So that's one set of issues. How long it takes to get there and how many phases there are in the mean time.

There is a difference between the State Department and the Pentagon on that. I think the Pentagon has been quite clear that you don't need the middle phase. You put the U.S. military in charge and then a U.S. civilian structure under the U.S. military, and then as quickly as possible you turn it over to Iraqis. Why mix in the UN and all sorts of things like that?

The State Department I think is closer to the European view, but it's not at the European view. There will be a number of questions on, for example, who controls the oil. You might put UN in charge of humanitarian and give them a role in oil but nothing on the security side, whereas Europeans, some Europeans would be much more of a European role. So all of that is in the mix for negotiation. And it's possible it can come out right, but it seems to me more likely that the U.S., as I said before, will feel we invested so much in this that we're just not prepared to take risks on it not working in order to get a little bit of the UN role. The European argument is that it's more designed towards failure if we refuse that UN role and legitimacy, and that's what I think the State Department has sympathy with.

The last point in addition to all the functional and time table issues that are involved in all of this is the personnel issue, and there we've seen in the press some reports of differences between State and Defense about who precisely gets involved. Without wanting too much to comment on different individuals I think there's a view in the State Department and in Europe that putting, for example, James Woolsey in charge of the Information Ministry in Iraq has been reported to be the Pentagon position, raises questions. Do you put a former CIA Director in charge of information? If you're trying to avoid the perception that this is the American running the show and turning this into a colony which is one of the great risks in all of this, that might be questioned. I think that's the kind of battle you're going to see as well between the two departments.

MR. MANN: It's worth noting that congressional appropriators who ordinarily are much more comfortable appropriating money for Defense than for the State Department have in the case of the supplemental appropriation actually steered some of the dollars away from Defense to the State Department for post-war reconstruction. They do that not out of any love of the State Department but out of some real institutional conflict with Rumsfeld and the Pentagon and the belief that this Administration and this White House holds them largely in contempt and want to

do whatever they want to do without any controls by the Congress.

QUESTION: Tenley Lewis of Copley News Service.

Mr. Gordon, I wonder if you could address the issue of collateral damage to other institutions beyond the UN, particularly perhaps the WTO, and more specifically whether Zellick and LeMay are going to be successful in isolating the trade agenda from the spillover effects of the bad feelings that we're witnessing. We've already seen the Doha Round missing a key deadline. Are there larger issues here as well that are going to fall victim to this in the trade area?

MR. GORDON: I think there are plenty of reasons to be pessimistic and skeptical about the Doha Round and the future of the WTO, but I don't think they have much to do with Iraq. There are reasons we're having trouble agreeing on the trade rounds. I think there was agriculture and the pain that will cause in various European countries, France, and also the new members of the European Union, Poland and so on, that make it extremely difficult to move forward on this agenda. I don't really see, though, the degree to which Iraq interferes with all of this except at the sort of broader level that it squeezes everybody's economy and therefore it's that much more difficult to make painful domestic policy choices on some of these issues when you're already being squeezed with recession and budget deficits and all the rest. But I don't really see it as political, that somehow one side or the other is going to fail to cooperate or refuse to cooperate on the WTO agenda because we weren't happy with their position on the war.

QUESTION: [Inaudible], a columnist with [inaudible] Magazine.

I hope that the [inaudible] also will deal with the post-war era as far as the repercussions in the Arab world. In what sense the [inaudible] is fighting with complete air supremacy. And at the same time you have lost, the war has lasted until now about 15 days. What will be the effect, the repercussions in the Arab world? Will they see that a small country was able to stand up for two great powers for that length of time without air superiority, without any air support? What would it be, the repercussions? Could I say, or could any of you say that you can win the war, and definitely you are going to win the war militarily, but you can lose it politically?

MR. POLLACK: The way I would answer it is to actually take a very different tack. I think on the short term there is no question that the war is causing problems in the Arab world with the Arab street. It's also something that I think was entirely to be expected. Certainly every commentator predicted, I actually think that to a certain extent the Administration also recognized it. I think the question there is can you minimize that through the conduct of the war? And by the aftermath of the war? But more importantly, what's the long-term effect? That's really the issue here, is what is the long-term effect? There will be unhappiness in the short term, but I think we also all totally agree that in the short term the governments will be able to repress any kind of real dissent in the street so therefore in the short term it's probably not terribly

meaningful. The question is the long term, and I think that really is the critical question.

For me, I think the issue of the long term is very much about the reconstruction of Iraq and about the rest of U.S. policy toward the Middle East.

On the reconstruction of Iraq it's why, I think Phil characterized it beautifully, it's why these issues are so important to me. Because I am afraid that if the United States starts out with a military authority of some sort and then simply hands that off to the Iraqi Opposition, and of course that's the other debate that Phil didn't mention which is there's also the question of that Iraqi authority when you eventually get to it, who is it? Is it the Iraqi Opposition? Is it something from inside of Iraq? Is it some combination of the two? I'm perfectly willing to believe that the Iraqi Opposition can play an important role in Iraq post-Saddam. What I'm nervous about is simply handing over the government of Iraq purely to the Iraqi Opposition. That I think would be very problematic. I think that would be problematic within Iraq, I think it would be problematic for the rest of the Arab world.

I think that if the rest of the Arab world believes that the United States did only intend to colonize Iraq, steal its oil, put in place a puppet, really do nothing for the Iraqi people, that too would cement very harsh feelings over the long term.

Beyond that, I think if the U.S. does not get serious about the peace process after the war with Iraq, that too is going to send a signal. You know this better than I. You can spin it better than I can in terms of how it will play on the Arab street in terms of the Americans are only interested in crushing strong Arab states, they're absolutely uninterested in what the Arab people want which is a reasonable peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The Americans are willing to give in entirely to Sharon, to let him do whatever he wants to. I'm not saying I agree with this, but we all know that that's how it will play on the street. If the U.S. does not make a much greater effort, a much bigger push on the peace process once the war is over.

Beyond that I do also think that it goes to the larger, the broader U.S. policy towards the Middle East. I would describe it as a policy that we've had for the Middle East over the last 30 years has been one that is at best episodic. We have mostly left the Middle East, its political and economic development to the leaders of the Middle Eastern countries. We have not bothered ourselves with it. We have only really bothered ourselves with those issues in the Middle East that have risen to affect our security interests in a very immediate sense. So when Saddam Hussein rears his ugly head, we push back on him. We hammer him. When Mohamar Qadafi raises his ugly head we push back. We deal with it.

If we continue in that fashion, this too, I think, will continue to harden anti-American sentiment against the United States. On the other hand, my hope is that in the course of rebuilding Iraq, the United States will embrace a broader policy of helping the region to move in

a much more progressive direction, helping it economically, politically, socially, with all these other factors which we've simply neglected over the years. And my belief is if the U.S. is willing to do that I think over the long term you could see Arab public opinion begin to change in a very positive direction. I think if we don't do those things then yes, I think the current pernicious trends will simply get exacerbated.

QUESTION: Irv Chapman. I work for Bloomberg Radio.

Do you think that the relationship with the governments of Europe that have opposed the war can be repaired and relations with the European population at large can be repaired while George W. Bush is in the White House? And given the proclivity of the electorate to bring in Presidents with no foreign policy experience, would even his replacement do any good in that regard?

MR. LINDSAY: Phil, is Europe a lost cause for this Administration?

MR. GORDON: I think that's a different question from the one that -- [Laughter]

I was going to answer yes to one, and --

I don't think that relations with Europe can be fully repaired under these leaders, frankly. I know there's a range, and obviously things get slightly better if Iraq turns out well and we do impose something stable and sort of prove the naysayers wrong and it's better for Arab peoples in the region. In that case the rawness of the tensions and resentments and recriminations would be less. But I think --

Look at the polling numbers of George W. Bush in Europe. He is deeply, deeply unpopular across the continent. The relations, the individual relationships between Bush and Schroeder and Bush and Chirac I do not think can be repaired. As long as these leaders, they'll deal with each other and have civil relations and relations with the countries will have to go on, but the personal relationships are completely broken down.

And one thing we know about George W. Bush is he values loyalty very highly and is not inclined to say well, let bygones be bygones, let's try to move ahead. We saw the way the White House froze out the Germans after Schroeder came out against the war in the fall of last year, and I just don't think -- You do have an attitude in large parts of this Administration as well, that it doesn't really matter. That we don't need France and Germany, we've got plenty of other allies in the world. And it's their job to come to us. We're the powerful ones. We can advance our agenda. We don't really need them.

So I don't think you're going to have a lot of reaching out from this side but you don't see

much on the other side either to do this. So I think we are in for a period of chill. Not to say we shouldn't work against that trend, and Secretary Powell is doing an admirable job of trying to do that, but I think the chill is going to last for awhile.

MR. MANN: The question implied that the problem was inexperience in foreign policy. I would challenge that.

There are plenty of experienced hands in this Administration. In fact we made much of the impressive foreign policy team that the President put together. It's not a matter of experience, it's a matter of belief and ideology and approach to foreign policy. And therefore I wouldn't measure the President's successor in terms of whether he or she has experience or not but rather what the world view, what the ideology, what the set of beliefs is and how that might assist in repairing the breaches with our allies.

QUESTION: Rick Newman with U.S. News and World Report for Ken and for Mike, I guess.

What do you make of the Iraqi collapse scenario at this point? There is the theory that there will come a tipping point when the military leaders inside Baghdad realize the game is over. CENTCOM does still seem to be clinging to this notion, if you believe that they are going to go into Baghdad without a couple more divisions to help out which would probably be at least several weeks.

Do you buy into this at this point? Especially given the kind of resistance we've seen in Basra and elsewhere?

MR. LINDSAY: Mike, have we reached a tipping point?

MR. O'HANLON: I don't think we have yet but I think the strategy is still sound to pursue that tipping point. I don't think it will be attained without some serious fighting in Baghdad.

A couple of specific points, though. If we had to defeat every single Republican Guard and Special Republican Guard troop, and there was therefore never a tipping point, that would make for a much tougher war than I hope is still ahead.

My aspiration is that much of the Republican Guard will not get back to Baghdad. Ken and my fears on that problem will be largely dealt with by American air power. I think there probably will be some brigades to get back, but hopefully not full divisions. And so there will be a force of maybe 50,000 or so we have to confront. Then once you go in with the right tactics, and I think they involve some form of what I would call an urban blitzkrieg, trying to seize key

sites once you've identified them and trying to break the city up as you begin to go in, that that will then lead to a lack of verve and staying power on the part of at least many of the Republican Guard forces and I hope some of the special Republican Guard as well. That's one set of tactics, and I think at some point it will be used.

Another set of tactics is what the Brits are apparently now doing in Basra. More and more raiding, more and more intelligence, sort of reconnaissance in force mission, trying to disrupt the Fedayeen and other units down there, and also trying to figure out what the landscape is so that when we go in more strongly we have a set of the targets.

But in the mean time you also try to embolden the local population to have confidence that you are coming and gradually gaining control of the situation, gradually building up their confidence to do things like what happened the other day when we learned about Private Lynch from a note being passed from an Iraqi to an American. We want to see more and more of that.

So it's a gradual thing. It's not an either/or tip, but where along the spectrum it happens will be of great importance.

I think we will be in for a couple of days of ugly urban fighting, but I hope we can keep it to that if the tipping occurs relatively early in the process, even though I don't think it will occur instantaneously or before that battle for Baghdad.

MR. LINDSAY: Any elaborations or qualifications?

MR. POLLACK: I'll add a little bit because I think Mike is right and I'd agree with him.

The only point I'd add to that is I think when you're thinking about how to take this regime down you've got to look for ways that you can get it to come down quickly and easily, but also recognize that those are probably longer shots and you've got to have the fall-back strategy of all right, if that doesn't happen we're going to have to go in on the ground exactly as Mike described it.

For me, it's very much like that opening shot that the Administration took on the 19th. I was perfectly glad to take that shot. If it had worked we might have brought the whole regime down and not had to fight the war at all. It didn't work. There was some downside to it, but don't think there was a major downside to it. I think the same thing is true right now.

There are a number of different scenarios that you can come up with for how this regime might get pulled apart and I think that the military is very rightly saying let's see if we can make those scenarios work out because if they do they will save us this potentially ugly fight. If they don't work out, you've got to be ready to do it. You've got to be ready to go in and finish the job

that way. But it's much better if you can make one of these scenarios work. You just have to recognize that the scenarios are long shots.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. My name is Imad Mustafa. I am Chief of Public Diplomacy at the Embassy of Syria. However, my question is more about an intellectual analysis of the differing points of views between the Arab political analysts and the American political analysts.

Both analysts agree that this war is just the first chapter. And they already know what sort of outcome it will end up with.

Now the difference starts afterwards. Here we hear talking about reconstructing Iraq, rebuilding Iraq, a friendly Iraqi government to the United States and such things which might be right, I don't know really. But in the Arab street, what they are talking about is something very different. They know that this outcome of this war is already, I mean well known to everybody. What they are saying is, our only hope in the Arab world is to repeat the Lebanese experience. Sharon led an invasion with military superiority in Lebanon and he was easily able to crush every opposition he faced, but two, three four years later, five years later, none stop resistance, and then suddenly they realize what America realized many years before in Vietnam. There is no hope. The first invasion could be easily successful but then it will be like a non-stop endless resistance.

I'm not saying this is what I am expecting. I'm saying this is what you will hear in the whole Arab world, the prevailing concept. Everything will start and then will end with the true outcome of this war. What are your military analysis of that? Thank you.

MR. POLLACK: I think the right answer to that is it can't possibly be a military solution. It goes back to my answer to Mohammed which is we have to convince the Arab world that we're not coming as conquerors. That we genuinely are coming to help. I think that's the great challenge for the Bush Administration. I think in a lot of their rhetoric they have sent some very wrong signals to the Arab world and I think that's why, as I said to Mohammed, what is so important after this war is to demonstrate that we truly do want to rebuild Iraq, to build a strong and prosperous Iraq because as you well know, one of the slams against the United States is that we hate strong Arab countries and we look for them and we crush them every time that we see that. That's one of the raps against the U.S. about Iraq is that Saddam Hussein was too powerful an Arab leader. He stood up to us and he stood up to Israel and therefore we destroyed him. If we can build a strong and prosperous Iraq maybe we'll start to change that.

The same thing about the peace process. If we engage in it perhaps we start to change minds there.

Remember what it was like in the 1990s? It was a very different impression on the Arab street then.

Lastly my point about embracing change in the Arab world more broadly, helping political and economic progress in the Arab world in a way that we never have in the past. I think that there are more and more people, at least in Washington, who are recognizing that this was a failure of the United States over the last 20 of 30 years and it's got to be remedied.

MR. O'HANLON: I don't have a lot to add, but I think in invoking the Lebanon example we have to work very hard to prevent Iraq from getting to a point where the analogy works and what that means is prevent Iraq from getting to a point where internal parties inside of Iraq are producing a conflict environment, fighting amongst themselves, and then we're seeing it somehow taking sides or unfairly influencing the course of internal dialogue and internal contest for power.

So in Lebanon the U.S. and Israeli intervention, of course Israel is a different matter for many different reasons but the U.S. intervention in the early '80s, we were seen as sort of picking fights, not really having a serious game plan. We have to avoid that and the key is to start with a strong internationally sanctioned and legitimated stabilization effort that does not let the Iraqi parties start warring to a point where we later have to disentangle that process.

So we can start with a sense of peace and then gradually work on a coalition government, getting ourselves as much out of the picture as possible, as quickly as possible. I hope the Lebanon analogy won't really apply.

QUESTION: What if?

MR. O'HANLON: There are what if's in any scenario. What you have to do is minimize your risks, not close your eyes because there are risks. Now that we're at this point the risks are real. I think what you have to do, I would go to a lot of what Phil said earlier. You want to get the U.S. imprint on this as small as possible as fast as possible, have it be more of an international effort, and you want to prevent the initial period from becoming destabilized. If you can do those two things, and then along with Ken's argument about helping Iraq rebuild quickly. If you put those three things together then I think you have a pretty good chance.

MR. GORDON: I'd just add one thought which is I think that the military concept of a tipping point applies to the question of Iraq's political future just as well. That is to say that your scenario, Imad, that you outlined of Lebanon and Arabs and Iraqis turning against the U.S. colonizer, that's plausible. I believe in that more than I wish I did. But it's also plausible the Administration's view, at least certain views, that this turns out to be good for the Iraqi people, it has a domino effect on others in the region who want to aspire, just like the scenarios for

Baghdad or the horror scenarios -- I really believe both of those are possible and there's a tipping point and it should be our job -- It seems to me that the more we come in and look like the U.S. military is in charge of this and we're bringing our boys from London with us and we're putting them in and they're not going to have legitimacy internationally and within Iraq and so on, we tend to tip it towards your scenario.

But there are things we can do and some people here have outlined them, that can tip it towards the other one. It's an enormous challenge but also a responsibility of the United States to make sure it tips the right way.

QUESTION: My name is Haida Akas from Umkutz. A very quick question to Ken Pollack.

MR. POLLACK: You're not allowed to ask me the same question you keep asking.

QUESTION: No, not the same one.

How do you feel about proposing James Woolsey, someone that you know very well, as the Minister of Information for Iraq? What kind of message does that send to the Arab world?

There is also talk of creating a global village, an American global village in Iraq with like a military base and so on.

My second question is on the issue of, the Palestinian issue. There seems to be no one who is taking the roadmap seriously around this town and everybody thinks that at best they will probably go along with Sharon's vision for a Palestinian state.

And thirdly, to Michael O'Hanlon, how serious should the Syrians take Rumsfeld's threat to them? Thank you.

MR. POLLACK: As Phil pointed out I think the optic of having a former U.S. Director of Central Intelligence as Communications Minister, Information Minister of a new Iraqi government is a very bad optic. Regardless of who the person was, it's a very bad optic. And I think that they're recognizing that and my guess is you won't see that follow through, nor will they reach out to, I don't know, Stan Turner or Dick Helms or any of the other former DCIs that are wandering around out there. Bill Webster.

The U.S. military presence in Iraq. Let me put it this way. I'm willing to believe that you could see a U.S. military presence long term in Iraq if the Iraqis want it. If you've got a representative legitimate Iraqi government who says to the United States, you know what? We're not allowed to have weapons of mass destruction which I think is going to be a likely prospect,

so we need some other form of guarantee. Why don't you stick a base down by Az Zubayr, out by [Shaiba], something like that. It will make us all feel better, it will guarantee our security, you won't be in our cities, but we'd like you here. I could imagine that scenario. But again, I think that depends entirely on the Iraqi government. Again, it has to be a legitimate Iraqi government, recognized as such by the Iraqi people.

If they want a U.S. military presence in Iraq I don't think the U.S. military would object.

The road map. I think the problem with a road map is that it's only as good as the Administration wants to make it. If the Administration wanted to really push hard you might be able to do something with the roadmap. For me it's kind of an imperfect document. I see a lot of the problems that the Arabs and the Israelis have both pointed to in the road map but I've also been dealing with the peace process long enough to know that they're all imperfect documents in some sense. And really what matters is whether or not the Administration is willing to actually do something about it. I just don't know the answer to that question.

What you keep hearing me say is I think it is of critical importance that the Administration be willing to do something, be willing to push hard on the peace process because I think if they aren't willing to it will have repercussions for a whole variety of things, but most important for the reconstruction of Iraq.

MR. O'HANLON: I'll make two points on the Syria issue. One is in the short term to the extent there really is intelligence information that we're confident about that Syria is helping Iraq, I think Rumsfeld's veiled threat is very serious and moreover, appropriate, and I think it would lead to potentially a targeted military action. What would that mean? Maybe if you could ever identify a convoy moving across the border from Syria into Iraq with military goods the United States would certainly be willing to strike that. Even if we couldn't find that kind of a convoy, if you could figure out who was responsible for the under-the-table trade, you might even strike a ministry in Damascus in a worst case. I think that is not out of the question. However, I doubt very much that Syria is going to continue whatever support it might have been giving and I don't have reason to think that support was all that great to begin with. So I wouldn't expect this to escalate along those lines. It has the potential to in theory, but in practice I don't expect it.

Then there's the broader debate which many of us have been engaged in here and elsewhere about what's the Administration's long-term thinking about Syria? There are certain of my colleagues who believe that certain hardliners in the Bush Administration would see Syria as a potential next target for sort of the move towards democracy and use of force to try to remake the Middle East.

I personally have no doubt there are some people in the Administration who would have

that aspiration, but I doubt extremely seriously they will come close to winning the debate, for a number of reasons. First of all, the American people may not be big admirers of Syria. Going back to Tom's argument about a level-headedness of the public. But they also know that Syria's threat posed to the United States is not great. Syria is maybe a fourth or fifth tier state sponsor of terrorism. It does harbor too many anti-Israeli terrorist organizations still in Damascus, but it does not appear to even be a major funder, organizer or promoter of that terrorism from what recent trends in terrorism tell us. It still does too much from what I know, but it doesn't do so much as to make the American people really think that this is a serious threat to U.S. security.

Secondly, there's absolutely no international legal basis for doing it. All of us like to talk about the unilateralist Bush Administration, cowboy George Bush from Texas running the show, not caring about the rest of the world. That's nonsense. He is checked by the rest of the world quite a bit, and if there weren't 17 UN Security Council Resolutions demanding that Iraq eliminate its weapons of mass destruction we would never have had this war in my firm belief. There is no such body of UN Security Council Resolutions or any other kind of legal basis for going after Syria. So unless things were to change radically, I don't see how the Administration could even get to step one of taking this kind of idea seriously.

Having said that, I should be fair and acknowledge that people in my division at Brookings, a number of them disagree with me on this bottom line. But I don't see how the argument comes together.

MR. LINDSAY: Phil I believe wants to weigh in vehemently.

MR. GORDON: Not vehemently, but I'm one of them. Just to give a slightly different take.

Mike is obviously right that in a static sense we're not going to finish the job in Iraq and say okay, let's do Syria, or let's do Iran. This worked really well, why don't we remove that government? All things equal, he's obviously right without a pretext, without a UN Security Council backing it's not going to happen.

But things are never static and the scenario, it seems to me, would be dependent on their actions. In the Syrian case it would be aid to Hezbollah, attacks on Israel, an escalation of attacks on Israel. Not just little skirmishes over Shabah farms vis-à-vis military targets that don't inflict casualties, but Katushas in northern Israel that do inflict civilian casualties. Then you're not doing it static out of the blue, you're doing a self defense, anti-terrorism, type of action. Or fomenting opposition to the new Iraqi government, links to Syrian intelligence, aid to Kurds or others in Iraq who might -- So it wouldn't be just out of the blue, it would be based on something. I think the whole point of Iraq is to send a message to some of the neighbors, don't do that stuff because we've now shown we can do it.

In Iran it could be any of that type of thing or nuclear proliferation. The reactors are going ahead, they're on the road but they're not as far as North Korea, and so it's not, well let's just change the government of Iran. I don't think it would get to that point anyway. But it could very well be we're going to take out the reactors. And if you don't like it, or if you don't believe us, see Iraq.

MR. POLLACK: Actually I think much of Mike's analysis is right, I think much of Phil's analysis is right. I just want to add one more cynical note which is for all of you who are playing this game and trying to figure out who's next, the really tantalizing dip that's out there that neither Mike nor Phil has mentioned are the intelligence reports that the Iraqis moved significant weapons of mass destruction into Syria. Those reports have been out there for months. From what I'm told by my friends in the intelligence community, they are too good to dismiss. They don't make sense to a lot of people, but they are simply too good to be dismissed. And if you see those rising, if all of a sudden you see those again resurfacing in the American political debate, that to me would be a sign that people inside the U.S. Administration are trying to push things in that direction, to make Syria next. That's what I would be looking for.

I think, however, the U.S. government is going to finish this war before it starts fighting the next one.

QUESTION: Mary Mullen, and I work for the Bosnia Support Committee.

This morning on television it said that two journalists from Al Jazeera were forced by the Iraqis out of the country and that Al Jazeera then said they're not going to let any of the journalists into the country. It happened while I was getting ready to leave and I was reading it because it was one of these statements that is beneath the picture on television.

I was wondering if you knew about that and if you could discuss that.

MR. LINDSAY: Okay, Ken. Why did Al Jazeera get the boot?

MR. POLLACK: I don't know the details of it. I saw the headline ticker at the bottom of the screen when I was getting dressed this morning also. I don't have the details on it. I don't know.

What I will say is that Al Jazeera is more independent than most people in the United States give it credit for. Yes, it does have a very nasty bent to it. Yes, a lot of their programs do bash the United States, do bash Israel. But Al Jazeera is a pretty independent network and they also say things that other Arab governments don't like either. They've had running battles with a number of different Arab governments and it's entirely conceivable to me that Al Jazeera was

doing stuff that the Iraqis didn't like either. The Iraqis do like to control the message that's coming out of Baghdad. And even while we get annoyed at Al Jazeera for some of the things that they do and for some of the biases in the reporting, we shouldn't assume that they are necessarily slaves to Baghdad.

MR. O'HANLON: ?? I think it's worth pointing out that Al Jazeera also had its reporters booted out in the past by the Iraqi government. I think in one case because they used simply the phrase "The Iraqi President" rather than "The Iraqi President Saddam Hussein." Nonetheless, they were able to return to Baghdad so I'm sure they will have an opportunity to go again.

QUESTION: [inaudible], from the U.S. Institute of Peace.

I'm struck by the fact that all the panelists are saying well it could tip this way or it could tip that way, and of course that's the wise thing to say. My question is --

MR. LINDSAY: We're wise people.

[Laughter]

QUESTION: It's good to know.

My question is why we should have any serious hope that it's going to tip the right way. I say this because Mr. Gordon pointed out that given the disagreement with Europe over the role of the UN there's a good chance that the U.S. is going to go this alone in the post-war situation.

Mr. Mann pointed out that there's not a lot of enthusiasm in Congress for a sustained financial investment in Iraq post-war as far as we can tell, and the question then arises what does this mean economically, for stability?

You add to this the public plan for General Garner's office which is going to be running initially post-war Iraq as far as we know, that stays for no more than 90 days, and reports coming out of Um Qasr that the Iraqi administration there has simply disappeared. You wonder how the country can be put back together in 90 days when only the U.S. is going to be involved if these scenarios play out this way.

So I'd like to hear anybody's opinions on why we should expect this to work.

MR. LINDSAY: Mike is brave enough to tell us why it will work.

MR. O'HANLON: I'm the Pollyanna at Brookings these days on post-war, maybe because I know the least about it. But let me say a couple of things.

First of all, we're not going to leave in 90 days. It's just not going to happen. The Clinton Administration was going to leave Bosnia in a year. I'm not trying to be too hard on the Bush team, but their aspirations for this hinged on the decapitation scenario working. The more optimistic minimal occupation force, quick departure, it's just not going to happen at this point. It probably wouldn't have under any circumstances but it certainly isn't going to now even if they're not yet saying go.

Secondly, let's compare it to the baseline. The baseline is Saddam Hussein. Iraq's going to be a better place once he's gone. And we are going to have 300,000 coalition forces in place. So in the classic debate General Shinseki against Paul Wolfowitz, who's right about how many U.S. forces we're going to keep in Iraq after the war, obviously Wolfowitz sort of outranks Shinseki especially when you realize that Rumsfeld agrees with Wolfowitz. On the other hand, we're going to start with a huge force in place. And it's going to be difficult to withdraw it immediately, and as things start to get tossed inside of Iraq in the weeks and months after the war is over there is going to be serious incentive to reconsider whatever departure schedule we've drawn up. I think we'll wind up keeping a somewhat larger force.

So I just think that when you look at this thing practically, people always want to promise a quick post-war mission whether they're Democrats or Republicans, whether they're nationbuilding, liberal, willy-headed Bill Clintons or tough guys from Texas, either way they want to say we're getting out fast, and either way when they actually consider the situation before them, George Bush is still in Bosnia. George Bush is still in Kosovo. Admittedly he's got only a small force in Afghanistan, but he's still there. It's a mistake that he's so small, but at least he's not trying to propose that we pull out.

So I think when the reality dawns upon these people they're going to have to reassess their plans.

MR. POLLACK: Let me add another note of cautious optimism which is I think we tend to be unduly pessimistic about the determination and the ability of this Administration to simply ignore public pressure and diplomatic pressure. I always think back to what they were saying about going to war with Iraq about this time last year. At this time last year it was we're going to war with Iraq, we know why and we're not going to tell you, we don't need the Congress, we don't need the UN, and we can do it with two brigade combat teams driving up the two rivers. That was their position. They really believed that they could do this. And over the course of time enough people pushed back that they realized that none of that was true.

Now you can say that in every one of those cases they didn't go as far as they might have, as they should have, as I would have liked them to. I would have liked to have seen a full-scale declaration of war. I also know that having served in the executive branch for a long enough

period of time that was never going to happen. But they did go to the Congress. They got a resolution. They did go to the UN. They got a resolution there as well.

Yes, we all agree that their diplomacy was not as good as it might have been in the UN, but at least they went.

The military plan. Again, I would have liked to have seen a bigger force, but they put in a lot more troops than they originally did. And it is going to turn out to be just enough to get the job done, to get it done without massive casualties on any side. That leads me to believe that with continuing pressure this can change too.

And on the reconstruction, that's also been the case. When they started out a year ago talking about reconstruction basically what they wanted to do is what they did in Afghanistan. They would find a bunch of guys from the opposition who they could stick in charge in Baghdad, put up a facade government and walk away. That was really what they wanted to do. Over the course of time I think they've recognized that that simply isn't a going proposition.

Now what you've got is exactly what Phil described which is everything that they're saying in the Administration is, this is, the reconstruction of Iraq is going to be the most important thing this President does. Therefore, how can we possibly trust it to the United Nations?

Again, we may all decide that's not exactly where we'd like him to be. I too would very much, I've been saying this for over a year now, I'd like to see this done under the umbrella of the United Nations. But where the Administration is now is a far cry from where they started out. It is much more positive and the debate that is now going on in the Administration I think is a much more reasonable debate than the debate that was going on a year ago.

MR. MANN: That's true. But there are ample grounds for pessimism remaining and each of the points you made in your initial question remain relevant to this debate.

The President has done nothing to prepare his colleagues in the Congress for what lies ahead and the cost entailed, and at the same time seems determined to pursue a domestic economic agenda that make it all the more difficult to leverage the resources to get the job done.

Then you add to that the difficulties entailed in the post-war period because of the way in which we went into this and I think it's not unreasonable to set expectations low. That's where the President always likes them. Maybe he will, as he has so many times in his political career, greatly exceed those expectations.

But just like the public is sober about the post-war period, I think we ought to be as well.

MR. LINDSAY: I think if anything, Tom, you've let members of Congress off the hook here. If they don't realize this is going to be a difficult, costly endeavor but the American public does, I think it's time for the people over on the Hill to turn in their voting cards and go back to private life.

I also think that there's real bias in the questions that have been asked of us and the way we've answered. We focus very much on what the United States is going to do as if the United States alone is going to decide whether this experiment works or not. I don't think we should underestimate the capacities or abilities of the Iraqi people. They will be major players in all of this. And I think it will also matter what people, what the governments in the neighboring countries do.

I think one of the things to keep in mind, we talked earlier about the Lebanon example and will the United States repeat what happened in Lebanon. I think one of the discoveries in Lebanon for the United States was to govern is to choose. To choose is to alienate. We picked winners and losers. The winners were ungrateful and the losers were ticked off. But it wasn't necessarily a revolt in Lebanon of Lebanese people. It was unrest also directed, encouraged, guided by neighboring country Syria and also by Iran. So there are a lot of players in this mixture who are going to be playing, and part of the difficulty is we're not really sure how some of those neighboring countries are going to play their cards as we go forward.

QUESTION: My name is Tura, Finnish Broadcasting Company. Actually two questions. One for Thomas Mann.

You spoke about the 70 percent approval rate for the war and that goes with the [rodeo] psychology. How much would you expect the rate to be for rebuilding Iraq? Would that be something like 35? Is that good enough?

The other question for Michael O'Hanlon. And you can put your mike a little higher because we would like to have you on record. [Laughter]

During the debate in the beginning what's going to happen in Iraq, it was sort of everything is depending on Saddam Hussein and when he is gone everything is gone. That was plain stupid because in some countries you have something which is called [inaudible]. That is regardless of Saddam Hussein. The funny thing, as a Finn I can tell you the secret. When Josef Visayonovich Stalin tried to attack Finland in '39 he was pretty sure that Civil War 1918 made the Finnish working class ready to say to the Red Army okay, you are the right guys, we are here with the flowers.

Basically what the Administration did here in regards of Iraq was the same thing. Josef

Visayonovich stupid. Josef Visayonovich once more.

So what would you expect patriotism playing a role in Iraq during rebuilding? What sort of sentiment does that create in the population? And against the United States.

MR. MANN: My view is that if the President assumes his responsibility and seeks to lead public opinion on the post-war period as much as he worked to lead them into the military engagement in Iraq, the public will stick with him. But it's going to take a lot of political capital and the public, just as it wanted the validation of international support at the front end to make sure we are doing the right thing, will look for the same kind of international engagement and involvement in this post-war period. But if he fails to do that, then the public left to its own devices will turn its attention to problems back home and some of its instinctive skepticism about foreign assistance will come to the fore.

MR. O'HANLON: Sir, I think you asked your question in a deliberately provocative way so I will respond in a deliberately provocative way. The analogy you raised is nonsense. The idea that Josef Stalin can be compared to a war that, whether you like it or not, is going to improve the lot of the Iraqi people is just a foolish analogy. I think that we have to be very concerned about the Iraqi people not trusting us. Because we come with baggage. We come with baggage of 12 years of sanctions. We come with baggage of our British allies and their historical role. We come with our association with Israel. Those are all very real reasons for worry about the kind of reception we're going to get. But let's be fair to the Bush Administration in a way that many Europeans have not been in recent months, and I'm not a big supporter myself, so let's be fair. As Tony Blair has said, regime change is a desirable result of this military intervention. It is not an undesirable one. We are liberating the Iraqi people. They have the same kind of aspirations that you and I do and they have been denied them under Saddam Hussein, and we should be able to realize those aspirations in a better way than they've been able to be realized in the last 25 years or longer under the kind of despotic rule that now prevails in Iraq.

So while I do worry and we talked a lot today about the potential for this thing being a problem for us over the long term, I simply reject the analogy with anything Stalin might have been thinking for any country in European history.

QUESTION: My name is Tamelin Varage from [inaudible] Magazine.

I wonder what about the smiling Ayatollah which is being polished on CBS. The Ayatollah [Hakim], you know? He is not frowning like Ayatollah Khomeini, but he is smiling and nice and so on. Do you expect that this Ayatollah will not sweep everything and take over power? Do you think these academics, Iraqi academics and professors and bankers will tell him no, no, no, get off? What do you expect? He already has troops calling [...in Arabic...] Hakim. By sword, by blood, we will sacrifice for you Hakim. He is already there. He has like 20,000 in

northern Iraq.

So what are we expecting? Are we think that the American and British will tell him back off?

MR. POLLACK: I think you're greatly exaggerating [inaudible] Hakim's power inside of Iraq. You're right. He does have [bader bridges]. [Bader brigades] do constitute a form of military power. As best we've ever been able to tell, no more than 10 to 15 percent of the Shia if Iraq consider themselves to be orthodox. We've never been able to determine how many of the orthodox actually consider themselves to be fundamentalist or supporters of the [inaudible]. We simply do not know the answer to that. But all the evidence that we have out there is that the majority of the Iraqi people are not ready to fall down on their knees before Bakarol Hakim.

I think Bakarol Hakim is going to be a player in some way, shape or form inside of Iraq after this is over. Because he does command some presence inside of Iraq.

My hope would be that the Iraqi government that is constituted will allow Bakarol Hakim to play a role in the future government of Iraq based on his actual support inside the country. Based on whether people actually do want him to be part of a government, not based on his ability to command military troops like the bader brigade.

I also note that we've heard soldiers for 30 years saying they would give their blood and their soul for Saddam Hussein. That's not always turned out to be the case either.

I'm willing to believe that in the case of the bader brigades there are a larger number who actually do mean it, and we have seen them fight Saddam's regime for 12 years now. They've not done a bad job of it. But this is one of the reasons why the United States is going to need to lead a multinational security force for at least some period of time so that no group, whether it is the Skiri, whether it is the Kurd, whether it is leftover Suni generals or tribal sheiks, to use military force to advance their political agenda. That is the principle reason for having a security force.

And let's be realistic. Historically it's one of the things that these peacekeeping forces have done best. There are lots of real challenges in these reconstruction operations. The security mission is the easiest part of that.

QUESTION: My name is David Hoffman.

Mr. O'Hanlon, let me be deliberately provocative as a follow-up also. And I should say that if the choice is simply Josef Stalin on the left, I suppose, and George Bush on the right, then I too would align myself with George Bush. But obviously those may be the polar opposites but there is a considerable range that falls within those two boundaries.

My question to you is this. You talk about our so-called liberation, perspective liberation of Iraq as bringing democracy and representative institutions and, you didn't use all these words, pluralism, that sort of thing. All of this is much to be desired. And just as you said, I believe the Iraqi population would choose this for themselves. Whether or not they would want us with the military hobnailed boot to choose it for them is, however, a very very different question as I am sure you will agree.

So here's my question.

If the U.S. military occupation leads more or less to what's been called Ba'thism without Saddam, however it might be somewhat differently colored but it's still, it is a less than democratic regime that we feel comfortable leaving behind us so that the centrifugal forces driving the unitary state into a breakup does not happen. If it's some form of Ba'thism without Saddam are you still going to be applauding?

MR. O'HANLON: My threshold for success, and this is a very rough, intuitive sense and others may want to comment on this too, is what I would consider sort of the minimal standard is Turkey under Ataturk. That's the sort of, in other words I could live with something short of Western European style democracy and still consider this a major improvement over what's been in Iraq up until now. I would want to set the bar at least that high. And others here know more about the region and can comment as to whether that's a good model or not, but that to me, that's in other words a process where you may have a fairly strong hand and some certain limitations on full democratic participation, but a gradually liberalizing trend over a period of years and maybe it even takes decades to get to where you ultimately want to be which is basically Turkey today.

For me that's acceptable. It's not a goal. It's not even the preferred course. But it's better than having a tyrant who has sent a million people to their deaths in the last 20 years. It's better than having a tyrant who tortures and kills internal opponents by the thousands every year. It's better than having a tyrant who obviously would like to dominate the Persian Gulf and has only been prevented from doing so in the last 12 years by American military deterrence.

So for me, I'm not trying to say that's something that would leave me content and happy, but that would be about where I would start to draw the line, a threshold of notable improvement.

MR. GORDON: I don't want to be flippant about a very serious subject, but I would draw the line much lower than that. Ataturk's Turkey would be a brilliant success as far as I'm concerned for this. I would draw it much lower for the reasons you said. Compared to where we're starting.

Would you take Mubarak's Egypt? It would be a hell of a lot better than a regime that has been killing opposition and supporting terrorism and invading its neighbors for the past 30 years.

So where we would like to be is obviously much much higher than that. But stability, no weapons of mass destruction, no invasions of neighbors and no death squads running around the country, that would be a start, yeah.

So I think even if we come far short of the Switzerland that some people would like to see. [Laughter] We will have done much better than what has been in Iraq for 30 years, which has led to U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia and resentment of the United States and further terrorism and so on and so forth and so on.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you very much, Phil.

I want to thank my panelists for speaking today. And I'd like to remind everybody that you can get a transcript of this and all other Brookings press briefings on the Brookings web page, www.brookings.edu. Thank you and have a great day.

###