

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION



"U.S. POLICY TOWARD IRAQ"

SENATOR JOSEPH BIDEN [D-DELAWARE]

INTRODUCTION BY:

THOMAS MANN,

BROOKINGS SENIOR FELLOW, GOVERNANCE STUDIES

Thursday, July 31, 2003

1775 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20036

[TRANSCRIPT PREPARED FROM A TAPE RECORDING.]

PROCEEDINGS



MR. MANN : He is Chairman and ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He has provided crucial leadership on a range of issues, including NATO expansion, relations with the U.N. and certainly U.S. policy in the Balkans.

With Senators Dick Lugar and Chuck Hagel, his colleagues on the committee, Joe Biden has created what I think of as an oasis of serious, informed, bipartisan and independent congressional deliberation and oversight on Iraq in a desert of congressional inattention, partisanship and buck passing.

From hearings he convened a year ago to this week's sharp questioning of Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz and OMB Director Bolten, Senator Biden has not been shy about posing difficult and personally embarrassing questions to policymakers and administration officials.

Brookings is pleased to provide this forum for Senator Biden to share his thoughts on U.S. policy towards Iraq and its implications for our engagement with the rest of the world. He will make some initial remarks, then take some questions. We are praying that the never-ending energy bill on the Senate floor will pause long enough to keep him from having to return for a vote.

Please welcome Senator Joseph Biden.
[Applause.]



SENATOR BIDEN: Thank you all very much. Thank you very much. It's an honor to be here, and I appreciate your attendance. I apologize for being late. As I was sitting listening to that--Mr. Secretary, how are you? Secretary Coleman, it is a pleasure to see you. One of the great guys in Washington and in this country. It's great to see you.

I was sitting talking to Steven Smith, as we were going through that introduction, and I want to make it clear that I am delighted I am no longer chairman of the Judiciary Committee. One of the reasons I am late, we are voting on an incredibly controversial nominee, and there seems to be more and more of those, and it seems to be the most divisive thing that's happened in the Senate these days. So I'm delighted to be able to participate in dealing with the much gentler subject of foreign policy and war.
[Laughter.]

SENATOR BIDEN: Most Americans do not know what you and I in this room know; that there's a war being waged in Washington, D.C., and it's a war over the future of American foreign policy. It goes well beyond the ordinary skirmishes we're accustomed to in this town beyond the political and tactical arguments that usually are associated with that issue.

This war is philosophic, this war is strategic, and its outcome in my view will shape the first 50 years of this century as significantly as the policy of containment shaped the last 50 years.

Right now, the neoconservatives, and I say that not in a pejorative way; I say that in a comp--these are people who are bright, incredibly well informed, are patriots and truly believe the answer to American security is to follow their prescriptions. So I in no way mean that in a pejorative sense. But the war right now is being won by the neoconservatives in this administration. They seem to have captured the heart and the mind of the President of the United States, and they are controlling the foreign policy agenda.

They put a premium on the use of unilateral force, and they have a set of basic prescriptions with which I fundamentally disagree. Just as I disagree with those in my own party who have not yet faced the reality of how changed the world is post-9/11 and believe still that we can only exercise force or use power if it is done multilaterally.

I don't question the motives either of those in my party who hold that view, nor do I question the motives of the neoconservatives. They genuinely view the world differently than I do. But suffice it to say, in my view, they are both wrong.

What we need today isn't the death of internationalism or the denial of stark national interests, but a more enlightened nationalism, one that understands the value of international institutions, but allows the use of military power without apology, without apology or apprehension if we conclude we must act, but does not allow us to be so blinded by our overwhelming military power that we fail to see the benefits of sharing the risks, as well as the obligations of making the world safer.

In my view, the stakes are too high. The opportunities are too great to conduct our foreign policy at the extremes.

Exactly one year ago today, back in the good old days when I was chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, for that brief moment, we began a series with my colleague, the Senator from Indiana, now the chairman of the committee and my good friend, we began a series of hearings, bipartisan hearings, about America's policy toward Iraq.

Our purpose, stated by both me and by Senator Lugar, was to start a national dialogue and give the American people an informed basis upon which to draw their own opinions about what we should be doing in Iraq.

At that first hearing I said, and I quote, "President Bush has stated his determination to remove Saddam from power. And the view of many in Congress, they share that view, and I am among them."

I also said as clearly as I could, and I quote, "If removing Saddam is the course we pursue, it matters profoundly how we do it and what we do after we remove him, for surely we will if we try."

Now, a year later, Saddam Hussein is no longer in power, and that is a very good thing. His sons Qusay and Uday both have been killed, and that's another good thing, for I think there's a special place in hell reserved for both of them and what they did, but the mission is hardly accomplished.

The new day in the Middle East that we looked for has yet to dawn. We are still at war. American soldiers are still being killed, one, two and three at a time. Iraq is still not secure. Still, no one holds our troops to the, at this point, no one has told our troops that what we have always known, we have known from this time last year, that they would have to stay there, in large numbers, for a long period of time, and that they are going to have to tough it out.

Most Americans still don't realize that it's costing us a billion dollars a week just to keep our troops in Iraq, and billions more in reconstruction will be needed and that the revenue from Iraqi oil will not come close, will not come close to meeting those needs in the next three to five years.

We still haven't heard a single clear statement from the President of the United States of America articulating his policy in general and specifically that securing Iraq will cost billions of American dollars, require tens of thousands of American troops for an extended period of time, and that it's worth it, that it is worth it and, most importantly, that it is in our national interest to stay the course; a view that I strongly hold.

Some in my own party have said that it was a mistake to go to Iraq in the first place and believe that it's not worth the cost, whatever benefit may flow from our engagement in Iraq. But the cost of not acting against Saddam I think would have been much greater, and so is the cost, and so will be the cost of not finishing this job.

The President of the United States is a bold leader, and he is popular. The stakes are high, and the need for leadership is great. I wish he'd use some of his stored-up popularity to make what I admit is not a very popular case, but I, and many others, will support him when he makes the case.

I wish the President, instead of standing in front of an aircraft carrier several--in front of a banner several months ago saying, "Mission accomplished," had stood in front of a banner that said, "We've only just begun," because that would have been the truth. They are the facts.

I also wish he would stand in front of the American people very shortly and say something to the effect, "My fellow Americans, we have a long and hard road ahead of us in Iraq, but we must stay in Iraq. We have to finish the job. If we don't, the following will happen. Here is what I am going to ask of you over the next months and years." And by the way, I'm going to ask the rest of the world as well to help us. I am confident we will succeed, and as a consequence of that success, I guarantee you we will be more secure as a nation."

I said a year ago, and I quote, "In Afghanistan, the war was prosecuted exceptionally well, but the follow-through commitment to Afghanistan, Afghanistan's security and reconstruction has fallen very short."

Our failure to extend security beyond Kabul has handed most of the country back to the warlords. The Taliban is regrouping. The border area with Pakistan is the Wild East of lawlessness. Afghanistan is now the number one opium producer in the world, the proceeds from which will fund tyrants and terrorists who will fill the security vacuum, just as they did a decade ago. And the billion dollars the administration is now talking about sending to Mr. Karzai is a year late and about \$2 billion short.

The failure to win the peace in Afghanistan risks being repeated in Iraq, but with even greater consequences. Those failures would condemn both countries--Iraq and Afghanistan--to a future as failed states. And we know from bitter experience about failed states. We know that they become the incubators for terror. If we don't write a different future, Americans are going to be much less secure than they were before we went in, before we went into Iraq.

I said at the first hearing a year ago today, and I still believe that, "We need a better understanding of what it would take to secure Iraq and rebuild it economically and politically. It would be a tragedy if we removed a tyrant and replaced it only with chaos."

But that is exactly what could happen unless we make some significant changes, and quickly. Dr. Hamre and his committee, at the request of the Secretary of Defense, went into--these are serious people--went into Iraq from the end of June to the beginning of July, and they wrote a comprehensive report. I recommend it to all of you, all of you in this room. Many of you have read it, and those on C-SPAN who may be watching, write for it. It is well written, and it is important.

And in testimony before our committee explaining his report with his committee members present, Dr. Hamre made one overwhelming, compelling point. He said the window of opportunity in Iraq is closing, and it is closing quickly. It is a matter of weeks and months before it closes.

Nine months ago, I voted with my colleagues to give the President of the United States of America the authority to use force, and I would vote that way again today. It was a right vote then, and it'll be a correct vote today. And everybody asks me why, in light of

my criticism of how things are going, why was it the correct vote? Well, because for more than a decade, Saddam Hussein defied more than a dozen U.N. security resolutions. This is a man who invaded a country, lost the war, sued for peace, was told by the international community what he had to do to stay in power. Had this been 1919, he would have not gone to the Security Council, he would have been in Versailles signing a peace agreement.

And what has he done? He violated every commitment that he made. He played cat and mouse with the weapons inspectors. He failed to account for the huge gaps in weapons declarations that were documented by U.N. weapons inspector and submitted by them to the U.N. Security Council in 1998, and every nation in that Council believed he possessed those weapons at that time.

He refused to abide by any conditions. And when he refused, it became, in my view, the fundamental right and obligation of the international community to enforce the commitments this man who invaded another country, who was driven back, sued for peace, and the conditions of his remaining in power were that he abide by the U.N. resolutions.

I voted to give the President authority to use force because Saddam Hussein violated those agreements. Failure to do so renders useless, in my view, renders useless, such international commitments.

This man was a sadistic dictator who used chemical weapons against the Kurds and the Iranians, who killed thousands of Shi'ites, who invaded his neighbors, who invaded his neighbors, who crossed the line in the sand, who fired missiles at Israel, and if we'd left him alone for five years, as I said a year ago and I believe today, with the billions of dollars at his disposal, I have no doubt that within five years, he would have gained access to a tactical nuclear weapon, changing--changing--our strategic position in that region of the world.

In my view, anyone who can't acknowledge that the world is better off without him, with all due respect, I think is out of touch. That was the case against Saddam, and the President made it well.

But then, in my view, his neoconservative advisers took over and made Iraq about something else. They made Iraq about establishing a new doctrine of preemption, which I might note they've never defined. It has never been defined. And in doing so, we lost the good will and support of a significant portion of the rest of the world.

Look, let me be clear. We face, in my view, a nexus of new threats that require new responses. Deterrence got us through the Cold War, but deterrence alone, in my view, is not sufficient for the challenges we face in the 21st century. The right to act preemptively, in the face of an imminent threat, has always been and must remain a part of U.S. foreign policy.

But this administration has turned preemption from a necessary option into an ill-defined doctrine. Iraq, they decided, was going to be the test case. And in my view, Iraq had nothing to do with preemption, nothing to do with preemption. It was about the enforcement of a surrender agreement, drafted by the international community, and signed and agreed to by Saddam Hussein.

Making Iraq a case for preemption, putting that at the heart of American foreign policy, in my view, made it much, much harder to get the world to join us in doing what they knew, as Barry Goldwater used to say, in their heart they had an obligation to do.

Why? Because not one of our allies wanted to validate this new ill-defined doctrine of preemption. Raising preemption to a doctrine sends a message to our enemies that I don't want sent, and that is that the only insurance against regime change is to acquire weapons of mass destruction as quickly as you possibly can. It sends a message to our friends, and others, it sends a message to India and Pakistan, Israel and the Palestinians, China and the Taiwanese, if the United States can shoot first and ask questions later, then why can't they? Why can't they?

Preemption demands, in my view, a high standard of proof that can stand up to world scrutiny. And this new standard articulated before our committee and by others in the administration that all intelligence is murky, and we have to act on murky intelligence, does not meet that standard, in my view.

Instead of preemption doctrine, what we need is a prevention doctrine that diffuses problems long before they explode in our face. I'll be talking more about that in the next couple weeks, but for now, suffice it to say, the administration, in my view, is wrong to make this about preemption, but right to confront the challenge to pose by Saddam thumbing his nose at the world and refusing, refusing to alter his conduct.

Contrary to what some in my party might think, Iraq was a problem that had to be dealt with sooner rather than later. So I commend the President. He was right to enforce the solemn commitments made by Saddam. If they were not enforced, what good would they be and what value those institutions?

For me, the issue was never whether we had to deal with Saddam, but when and how we dealt with Saddam. And it's precisely the when and how that I think this administration got wrong. We went to war too soon, we went to war with too few troops, we went to war without the world, when we could have had many with us, and we're paying the price for it now.

We authorized the President to use force. Congress did it to give him a strong hand to play at the United Nations. The idea was quite simple. We would convince the world to speak with one voice to Saddam, and what we would be saying is, "Saddam disarm or be disarmed." In doing so, we hoped to make war less likely. If Saddam failed to listen and failed, we would act, but we would act, we hoped, not alone or not merely with the British.

But the administration, in my view, misplayed that hand. They undercut the Secretary of State, allowing our military strategy to trump our diplomatic strategy. The world was convinced, the world became convinced, in my view, even some of our best friends became convinced that we were determined to go to war no matter what Saddam did. And the facts are there were some in Europe, and I'll say it, including the French, who said, in fact, they'd never go to war no matter what Saddam did or didn't do.

We insulted our allies and the U.N. weapons inspectors somewhat gratuitously, and we failed to be flexible in securing a second U.N. resolution.

For the price of a 30-day delay, I believe we could have gotten a majority, and I think many believe, including those at the State Department, could have gotten a majority--that's my opinion. No one has told me that--we could have gotten a majority of the Security Council to go along with this. We didn't. We flip-flopped between trying to bully and bribe the Turks, and as a consequence, we lost the option of attacking from the North.

As a result, we bypassed the Sunni triangle, which is the source of much of our trouble today. I was in, in was in Turkey. I was in Northern Iraq in December. It was clear, speaking to that new government, that new Islamic government, that they wanted to participate. I might add, just for the record, it wasn't the new government and the parliament that voted against it, it was the old military thugs who voted against us.

I was looking to you, Hal, not that you're part of that--
[Laughter.]

SENATOR BIDEN: I'm looking at you because I know you're one of the most informed people in this room. That's why I was looking at you. Please don't misunderstand my look.

I'm referring to Hal Sonnenfeld, one of the genuine experts in American foreign policy the last three decades.

As a consequence of all of this, we put ourselves, as some might say, behind the eight ball, and worst of all, we hyped the intelligence. And by the way, this is not an afterthought. I can submit to all of you all of the statements and quotes I made beginning a year ago today about my not believing the intelligence as it's being presented by the administration because I knew there was great disagreement within the intelligence community what they were offering as stated certainty.

I make a point here. They hyped, I am not saying they lied, they hyped. I don't President of the United States lied to anybody. I do not believe that, but I do believe he was incredibly ill served by those in his administration who exaggerated the very pieces of intelligence that they thought could get the most support, cause the most support within the United States.

Some asked me, some asked me, why did they do this? And by the way, it's not just the 16 words in the State of the Union address. That's not what I'm talking about. It's that consistently, speech after speech, TV appearance after TV appearance, the most senior administrative officials left the impression with the American people that Iraq was on the verge of reconstituting nuclear weapons. In fact, Vice President Cheney, on "Meet the Press," said they had reconstituted that capability, that Iraq was a league with al Qaeda, that they were complicitous in the events of 9/11, that they had weaponized their chemical agents in such a way that large numbers of Americans could be killed and were at risk, and that it was developing a missile capacity that could strike well beyond its borders with nuclear or chemical capability.

The truth is there was little intelligence then, and there's little now, to sustain those claims. The truth is that there was an ongoing debate within the intelligence community about each of these claims. Yet the administration consistently presented each of these claims as accepted facts.

Now, people ask me, why would they do that? Well, I said a month ago, and I said six months ago, I believe the reason they were doing that, and did that, was to create a sense of urgency. Their purpose was to create a sense of an imminent threat and to rally the country to war, sooner rather than later.

What was the result? In my view, the result was we went to war too early, before we had done everything we do to get the rest of the world with us. And I might add, I know I'm a broken record in this, and I said that not along ago, and my 10-year-old granddaughter said, "Pop, what's a broken record?" Literally.

[Laughter.]

SENATOR BIDEN: But I know I'm a broken record on this. I've said for the last year, as Senator Lugar and others have said, we don't need, we did not need a single troop from any other nation in the world to defeat Saddam Hussein, but we badly needed, and badly need, other troops, other countries to share the much more difficult burden and responsibility of winning the peace. So we went to this war because of this hype earlier than necessary.

Does anyone in this room believe, and there's a lot of serious foreign policy experts in this room, do any one of you believe that American security would have been in the least bit jeopardized had we waited until September or October or November of this year to go to war? I don't think so. I don't think so. And had we done that, we would have had a considerably greater chance of after the war having the world help us pay the bills, secure the peace and guarantee the credibility of a new Iraqi government.

And there's another terrible result as a consequence of the hype, in my view, and that's the damage it's done to our credibility--not the damage to the President's credibility. That's his problem. That's his concern--the damage to U.S. credibility around the world.

What happens now when we need to rally the world about the weapons programs in North Korea and Iran? How likely are they to believe the detail of what we present to them?

In 1962, President Kennedy sent former Secretary of State Dean Acheson to France to meet with President DeGaulle about the Cuban missile crisis. Acheson offered DeGaulle a full intelligence report to back up our allegations, and the French President said, "That's not necessary. I don't have to read the report. I don't need to see the report." He told Acheson he trusted Kennedy and that he knew that a President of the United States of America would never risk war unless he had the facts.

After the way this administration has handled Iraq, will we ever recover that level of trust? How long will it take, even with our key allies? And what price will we have to pay for the mistrust we have helped create?

Last month, Senators Lugar, Hagel and myself were the first members of Congress to travel to Baghdad since our significant victory militarily. And when we went, we left behind two of our senior staff people for an extra week so they could see more of the country and report back to us.

My staff, by the way, has in the back of the room a copy of that report that we have filed. Those of you who are genuinely interested in this issue, you may find it of some interest.

We met, when we were there, with our military commanders, with officers and with enlisted men and women. We spent time with Ambassador Bremer and the A team that he has assembled. There is no doubt, in our view, that we have the right people in Iraq. This is a first-rate team. Bremer is first rate. Walt Slocum is first rate. Ambassador Crocker is one of the finest foreign service officers I have ever dealt with, and the list goes on.

There is no doubt we have the right people in place, and we have made some real progress. It was clear to us that the vast majority of the Iraqi people are happy Saddam is no longer in power, that they want us to stay as long as it takes to get them back on their feet, but not a day longer, to paraphrase the President.

Much of the country beyond Baghdad is relatively calm, and that's good. The oil fields are intact, although dilapidated from 30 years of neglect. Hospitals and schools are open. The newly formed Iraqi governing council is encouraging, and so are the local councils, one of which we visited for an hour or so, that was like being in a town meeting in Montgomery County or in Wilmington, Delaware. It's real, it's working, it's functioning, and it's growing.

But this very real progress is being undermined by our failure so far to come to grips with some very fundamental problems, and security is problem number one. It's always problem number one. I've seen it the dozen times I've been in the Balkans, I saw it when

I visited Afghanistan, and it's just as true in Iraq today. Without security, little else is possible and not much else will be able to be sustained that is now good.

The problem, it seems to me, breaks down into two parts:

First, we have to put down the opposition forces loyal to Saddam. Our commanding general has finally admitted that this--I shouldn't say "finally"--has admitted this is a gorilla war, this is a gorilla war, and it is. And you remember some of us saying not many months ago it was essential to get Saddam. We were told, no, that's not that important. Now, we all realize it's very important that we get Saddam.

Almost every day that our troops continue to get picked off, sometimes by a lone sniper and other times by roadside bombs that kill two or three at a time, this cannot, and must not, continue.

And there's a short-term fix, not to end all American deaths, but there's a short-term fix. More foreign troops to share our mission and more Iraqis to guard the hospitals, bridges, banks and schools. Some of those troops you saw getting picked off are standing in front of banks, guarding banks, standing in front of schools, guarding schools. We should quickly, and Bremer is attempting to do this, move that security requirement to the Iraqis.

If we add them, more troops and these Iraqis, we could concentrate our troops in the Sunni triangle, where they're needed, and where they can do the type of military job for which they were trained.

The second security issue is the pervasive lawlessness that makes the life of average Iraqis almost unbearable. During the day, many Iraqis are afraid to leave home, go to work, go shopping, even for their most basic of needs. And at night, at night, it makes much of Baghdad a ghost town. Without cops, there are countless reports of rapes and kidnappings. You have read that women and men will take their children to school, and if they're a young woman, they will park their car outside, stay in the car for the entirety of the school day to physically retrieve their child as they walk out the door because of the extent of the kidnapping and raping of young girls and women in that country.

When I was in Baghdad, we went to the police academy, as I did when we were in Bosnia, and as I did when we were in Kosovo, and as I did in Afghanistan. But there's a difference to this academy.

Number one is we have some of the best people in the world, with significant experience that they've accumulated in the last 10 years in the countries I've just mentioned, and it's run by a former New York City police chief, Bernie Kerik, a serious guy with a serious team.

And you know what they told us in the hour-and-a-half or two that we were there? They told us just how far we had to go to get a functioning police force. They also told us our intelligence was so bad that we didn't realize there was never a functioning police force, as we know police forces in Baghdad or in Iraq.

There were 78,000 cops. If there was a murder in a complex of an apartment, they never went and investigated. They demanded everyone come to them. If they didn't show up, they got shot dead. It was very simple. When you have that kind of autocratic rule, no rule of law, it's amazing what an untrained cop can do.

So we're not retraining Iraqi cops, these 30,000 that have signed up. We're training them from the ground up. They do not fit in. They do not have the ability to know what to do in a country that is an emerging democracy, as opposed to a country that is a raw dictatorship. This is a monumental task.

We've got to build back to the 18,000, basic little things like the 18,000 police cars they need. They have 200 now. We have got to rebuild Iraq's major prisons. There are virtually none in the country left because they've been looted and destroyed.

The Iraqi Civil Defense Corps that Ambassador Bremer is talking about establishing, I believe will help and is a very good thing. But all of our experts, every one we spoke to, said it will take five years to train the necessary 75,000 cops and at least three years to field an Iraqi army of 40,000 people. And guess what folks? Until then, it's somebody else's responsibility. And if we're the only team in town, it's all our responsibility.

Let's put this in perspective. You keep hearing about this is a multinational force, 19 nations. It was about 160,000 troops--13,000 of which are foreign. "Bush 1" had over 200,000 foreign troops standing on Iraqi soil. That is a coalition. I'm not suggesting we need anywhere near 200,000 troops.

Meanwhile, the administration has seemed to have lost interest in the very issue that animated their neoconservatives to go to war, and that is weapons of mass destruction. I can't fathom, I can't fathom how we failed to secure the known WMD sites after we took the country, leaving them vulnerable to looting and to smuggling.

I can't understand how the Deputy Secretary of Defense could say just last week that, "He's not concerned about weapons of mass destruction." It's like Alice in Wonderland.

On top of these overwhelming security challenges, the country's infrastructure is suffering from almost 30 years of neglect. That certainly shouldn't have been a great surprise to the administration. Many of the experts in this building, and in other buildings, and conservative think tanks pointed that out a year ago, two years ago.

Even before the war, demand for electricity exceeded supply in Iraq. Six thousand megawatts were needed, four thousand megawatts were available. There were brownouts and blackouts. Today, we're not even back to the 4,000 megawatts, and we

may not get there until September. It will take several years, we are told by the experts, and \$13 billion to meet the need.

The same is true with water. We need, we were told, five years and more than \$15 billion to meet the water demands of the Iraqis. This feeds a gnawing sense of insecurity and paralyzes life in the Capitol. Ultimately, our goal has to be to revive the Iraqi economy because idle hands, rising frustration and five million AK-47s are not a recipe for security.

Finally, we're doing such a terrible job of letting the Iraqis know what Saddam had done to their country and what we are doing to try to help them. When we were in Baghdad--by the way, we now control all of the media--when we were in Baghdad, we were up on the air 4 hours a day, but the programming, I'm told it's up to 14 hours a day now, from 4 to 14, but the programming, bureaucrats reading dry, dull official transcripts, make public access television look lively.

[Laughter.]

SENATOR BIDEN: Meanwhile, no attempt at humor here, meanwhile, Al Jazeera and Iranian television are in there 24/7 with sophisticated programming.

We're the country that invented communications, basically, mass communications. Where's the plan? What are we doing in a country that is rife--rife--with speculation and where urban legends spring up overnight?

The bottom line is simply this, in my view. Iraqis simply can't understand, as unintelligible as this is to us, they simply can't understand how we, as a nation, can come in and in less than three weeks crush this tyrant who controlled the totality of their lives for three decades and not have the capacity to get their faucets providing water, not have the capacity to turn the lights on, not have the capacity to have air conditioning available in 120-degree heat.

It is an unrealistic expectation, but, nevertheless, somehow we've got to bridge this gap, and the only way to do that is to communicate to them what we are doing.

In short, Iraqis have high expectations, and we're not coming close to meeting them, and some of this is totally out of our control, but we brought a large part of this on ourselves. And that's because the problems in Iraq today were compounded by the false assumptions the neoconservatives in this administration made going in.

In fairness and honesty, Mr. Wolfowitz acknowledged some of the assumptions were mistaken. So this is not meant as, you know, "we told you so," but it's important to know what the assumptions were and why they were false in order to know what we should be doing now.

These assumptions the administration made going in, and the failure to listen to people and outside experts have caused us additional problems. They fail to assume or they

assumed, wrongly, that we would be greeted overwhelmingly as liberators. They assumed our favorite exiles would be embraced as the new leadership. They assumed, and they told us repeatedly, that the civil service would be stood up. All we had to do with the civil service, the military and the police is decapitate the Baathist leadership.

As a matter of fact, in one of the hearings, when I questioned that, it was implied, which is a new tactic in Washington today, it was implied that didn't I understand Iraqis were smart? Was I prejudiced against Iraqis? Was I degrading their capability by suggesting there would be no infrastructure able to be stood up immediately? That's how certain they were that we would be able to immediately have an army from which we could draw quickly to secure the borders and peace, along with our military, a police force that would restore order, and a bureaucracy that would function and provide that basic services for the people of Iraq.

These assumptions were wrong, wrong, wrong. And the most fundamentally wrong assumption was what you continue to be told, that there's enough oil revenue and reserves to solve all of these problems. Our administration experts now acknowledge that if everything goes perfectly well over the next 18 months, the amount of revenue gained from export may be as high as \$16 billion.

As Senator Lugar said, when that was raised the other day, he said, "We're told by the Hamre Report that the operating budget for Saddam was \$30 billion a year. He said, "I don't know if that's right, but where do we fill in the gap?"

Where do we fill in the gap? Well, it's real simple, folks. The American taxpayers pay for it, if necessary, or we get others to help us pay for it. It's real basic. This is not rocket science. This is pretty basic, and the American people should be told.

The result is the administration failed to begin planning for post-Saddam Iraq until just weeks before the attack. And lest you think I'm exaggerating that, remember we sent a general first who said part of his problem was they didn't start planning until January? Forgetting that we began to plan for post-World War II three years before the war ended.

They failed to plan for looting and sabotage. They failed to account for the decay and destruction of Iraq's infrastructure. They failed to secure commitments from other countries to help pay for the reconstruction. They failed to see the critical importance of putting more boots on the ground, both ours and those of other nations.

You know, back in 1999--people forget this--the military planners at our Defense Department ran an exercise, and they concluded that we needed 400,000 troops, not to win in Iraq, but to secure Iraq. They may have been wrong, but that's what the report said.

Just before we invaded, the National Security Council prepared a number. The number was more like 500,000 they said. General Shinseki got basically sacked for saying before the Armed Services Committee it would take 200,000. I don't know whether the

President read any of these memos. I wish he had. We might have planned differently. We might have thought twice about trying out Secretary Rumsfeld's theory that the U.S. should put fewer boots on the ground in military conflicts.

And all of this has led us into a box, where we have not many good choices left. If we don't change course, if we don't bring others along with us, if we don't get 5,000 foreign cops to train and patrol with the Iraqis, if we don't bring in the 30,000 troops to help relieve, as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff says we must, if we don't get the water running, if we can't make sure that women can leave home without being raped or their children, if we can't get the lights on, if we fail to bridge the expectation gaps by better communicating with the Iraqi people, if paralysis of progress continues for more than a couple more months, if all of this happens, we'll lose not only the support of the Iraqi people, as the Hamre Report suggests will happen, but we'll lose the support of the American people, as the discontent and the death toll rises.

And at that point, I predict there will be some in the administration who will counsel, be tempted to counsel, that we leave Iraq. They'll hand over power to a government that's not ready. They'll dump the security and reconstruction costs on the U.N., and in my view, we will lose Iraq, and imagine if we lose Iraq.

The worst-case scenario if we lose Iraq, there will be chaos, the threat of an Iranian and fundamental domination of the country, the Middle East peace process, I believe, would be basically derailed. Iraq would become a failed state and a source of instability. It would cause a reconsideration on the part of the Egyptians, the Jordanians, and the Saudis as to any positive moves they may have in mind, and we'll be far less secure than we were before we went in.

So, folks, that leaves us three options in my view. We can be put in the position where we decide we have to get out and lose Iraq. That's a very bad option. We can continue to do what we're doing now--provide 90 percent of the troops, 93 percent of the money and nearly 100 percent of the death toll. That's another very bad option--or we can bring in the international community, empower the Iraqis to bolster our efforts and legitimize a new Iraqi government which requires, in my view, international blessing.

To me, the choice is clear. We have to bring in our allies, and by the way, you may ask, why would our allies bother to come in now? Why would they want to help? The answer is quite simple. It's in their naked self-interests. Most European countries have large Muslim populations and significant economic interest in the region. Stability in Iraq, for the vast majority of the Europeans, as well as those in the Middle East and the Arab states, is essential for their interest. They need to get as invested as we are invested.

So what do we do to bring the international community in and to sustain the support of the Iraqi people, as well as the American people?

First, in my view, we need a new U.N. resolution. We may not like it, but most of the rest of the world needs it if we expect them to send troops and to help in Iraq.

reconstruction. Let's keep in mind the President of the United States, to his credit, personally--personally--attempted to get the Indians to provide 17,000 troops, and there was a high expectation they would do that in the near term, but they said, no. They said, no, not without a U.N. resolution.

With such a resolution, I think we could persuade, not only the U.N., but NATO to play a larger and official role and possibly even France and Germany; at a minimum not stopping it, and at a maximum finding ways to be of assistance. But without a resolution, I don't think it's possible.

We have to understand that those leaders of the people who oppose the war need a political rationale to change the position of not having gone in, but being willing to go in now when things don't look so hot.

We have to understand and be willing to accept that giving a bigger role to the United Nations or NATO means sharing some of the control, but I think it's a price worth paying if it decreases the danger to our soldiers, increases the possibility they can come home sooner than they otherwise would and increases the prospects of stability in Iraq.

Secondly, it's time for us to act magnanimously towards our friends and allies. We are the superpower. As my dad, who just died, would say, only a big man can bend very low. We are the superpower. We should do this, not simply because it's consistent with our values as a nation, but because if we don't make the ongoing war on the ground the world's problems, it will remain our problem alone.

The truth is we missed a tremendous opportunity after 9/11, in my view, to bring our friends and allies along with us, and to lead the way that actually encourages others to follow. You all remember, it's overspoken now, but the headline in Le Monde, "We Are All Americans," after 9/11.

We also missed an opportunity, in the aftermath of our spectacular military victory in Iraq, to ask those who were not with us in war to be partners with us in peace. Indeed, we served "freedom toast" on Air Force One to celebrate our victory. Wasn't that cute? [Laughter.]

SENATOR BIDEN: And the American people get it. The American people get it. They intuitively understand that we can't protect ourselves from a dirty bomb on the D.C. Mall, from a vial of anthrax in a backpack or a homemade nuke in the hold of a ship steaming into New York Harbor without the help of every other intelligence service and customs service in the world, without INTERPOL, and, yes, without the French, and the Germans, and the United Nations.

The third point I will make, and most importantly, I said a year ago, and I'll say it again, no foreign policy can be sustained in this country without the informed consent of the American people, the informed consent of the American people. I think we learned that lesson in Vietnam, but we haven't applied it in Iraq.

I cannot overstate the importance of keeping the American people fully informed of the risks, the costs, to the extent we know them, and the importance of staying in Iraq to get the job done.

In my view, this administration has been very good at projecting power, but it hasn't been nearly as good at staying power, nor has it been good at convincing the American people that securing Iraq is a necessary, if costly, task and a doable task.

I've learned one thing last year, and if we learned one thing last year, it should be that the role of those of us in positions of leadership is to speak to the truth to the American people, to lay out the facts as best we know them, to explain to the American people exactly what we're going to be asking of them, in terms of time, money, and commitment.

Our role, as leaders, is not to color the truth with cynicism or ideological nostrums, but to animate that truth, with the same resilience, the same integrity, the same decency, and the same pragmatic approach the American people have applied to every task they've been asked to accomplish.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is long past time for the President to address the American people in prime time, to level with them about the monumental task ahead, to summon their support, and I believe most of my colleagues will stand with them, and I guarantee you I will, when he does and if he does.

And, yes, when it comes to foreign policy, as you can tell, I have a fundamental difference of opinion with some in this administration, and I'll be talking more about that in the weeks and months to come, but that's okay, because I'm reminded of the words of former Senator Vandenberg, the great Republican foreign policy specialist. He said, and I quote, "Bipartisan foreign policy does not involve the remotest surrender of free--"
[Tape change: Side A to B.]

SENATOR BIDEN: "--determining our position. On the contrary, frank cooperation and free debate are indispensable to ultimate unity. In a word, it simply seeks national security ahead of partisan advantage. Every foreign policy must be totally debated, and the loyal opposition is under a special obligation to see to it that it occurs."

I think that's my obligation, to articulate an opposing view, and that's why I'm here.

Thank you.
[Applause.]

MR. MANN : Senator Biden will take a few questions. I'd like you to wait for a mike to arrive and to identify yourself before your question--

SENATOR BIDEN: And why don't you recognize the questioner, so if you don't get them all, it's your fault, not mine.

MR. MANN: Shall I do that for you? Okay. It'll be my fault, yes.

Yes, all the way in the back standing up.

PARTICIPANT: Senator, if you knew a year ago that the intelligence was hyped, why didn't you use that to get the informed consent of the American public?

SENATOR BIDEN: As a matter of fact, I'd be happy to, and anybody else here, send you a copy of every one of the statements I said on every major Sunday television show and every place I appeared.

As a matter of fact, to give you one example, the last time one of the finest people I serve with, Secretary Armitage, was before us talking about the relationship of al Qaeda, I looked at him and said, "Why don't we just stick with what we really know? Why don't we stick with what we know? It's fully sufficient to justify our actions. Don't go there."

And I'm paraphrasing, he said, "Message understood. Message taken."

So it is something I've said for the last six months, the last eight months, and I'm sorry that it occurred, and I think the damage from having hyped it is real, but repairable.

MR. MANN: Yes sir. Right here, please.

PARTICIPANT: Mission in Afghanistan had yet not been completed.

SENATOR BIDEN: You're exactly right.

PARTICIPANT: Al Qaeda was still not liquidated, so was Osama bin Laden. What was the hurry in attacking Iraq? And even the United Nations resolution was not introduced, the troops had moved to the assembly areas.

SENATOR BIDEN: That was my speech.
[Laughter.]

SENATOR BIDEN: I could have done it much more quickly.

MR. MANN: Yes, sir. Mike right here.

MR. BYRNE: Yes, I'm Jim Byrne with Community Development Publications.

What is your information at this point on what we are doing to try to build back the coalition and get the kind of cooperation you say is fundamental?

SENATOR BIDEN: My information is there, and again, what I'm telling you now, I am giving you my best judgment, and where I know something based on being told by someone I'll tell you, and where I don't know, but all of the signs are that this is happening, I will tell you that. Let me tell you what I know.

I know that there was a debate early on, beginning in Afghanistan, about engaging--engaging--NATO and a number of our allies in extending the security force beyond Kabul, and I know there was a debate about how far we should go to make sure we have commitments from other nations before we go into Iraq so that they were with us afterwards. That was a debate lost by those arguing that expansion should take place of the security force, international security force in Afghanistan, and that it was worth waiting to increase the prospects of getting more nations to be with us after. That was lost. That's what I meant when I said the neoconservative view won the day in that debate.

It is my understanding, based on my discussions with members of NATO, including Lord Robertson and with Javier Solano, of the EU, and others, that the answer that Secretary Rumsfeld gave was absolutely accurate when asked by the Armed Services Committee a week or 10 days ago, "Have we asked the Europeans? Have we asked NATO?" And he said, "If you'll give me a moment, I'll find out," or something--I'm paraphrasing.

By the way, I misquoted him the other day, and I should set the record straight. I went on the basis of a New York Times article saying high administration officials were saying we could be doing to 30,000 troops by the end of this year, I attributed that, unfairly, to the Secretary of Defense. I thought it was him. When I was told it was high administration officials, I made the assumption it was the Secretary of Defense.

He pointed out to me he never said that. He has never said that, but apparently, to the New York Times and others, high administration officials said we'd get down to 30,000 troops.

The fact of the matter is that the statement that the Secretary of Defense made about not asking NATO or not knowing whether we had, knowing only that Colin Powell and Wolfowitz had gone to NATO months earlier before we went to war, was corroborated to me by the Secretary General of NATO and by other Europeans.

So that leads me to believe that we have not been pursuing very, very strongly any NATO involvement, and there is an ongoing debate now about whether or not Powell should go back to the United Nations to seek a second resolution, as you know. That is confirmed to me not only by statements from within the administration, but the testimony of Mr. Wolfowitz yesterday when he said he wouldn't oppose, when asked by one of my colleagues on the committee about a U.N. resolution, he said he wouldn't be opposed, that it depends on what the resolution says and how it says it.

I would assume he would have assumed the administration would not go back to the U.N. unless they knew what they wanted, and obviously that reflects to me that there is a disagreement within the administration of who is going to get to convince the President what resolution should be sought.

So I think there's an ongoing debate about the involvement of Europeans, an involvement of NATO, and the involvement of some of the Arab countries. But obviously it's clear from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the President of the United States himself that they're trying very hard. They understand they have to get more troops from someplace, more troops from someplace, into Iraq--into Iraq--for two reasons:

One, to change, if you will, the color and composition of the force. So we are not an occupying force. If we're 160 to 13,000 or 148 or whatever the numbers are to 13-, that's a U.S. occupying force.

If we're in there with 30-, 40-, 50,000 other nations, including, in the minds of the Iraqis and others, if we're in there with an official NATO command, even though they wouldn't be able to provide probably more than 8- or 9,000 troops immediately, if we're in there with 17,000 Indians and Bangladeshis that we were told they were seeking to get, it changes the composition. It makes it very much harder to argue that our intent is different than it is.

Our intent is not to occupy, but it matters the message we send, and it also matters to be able to concentrate our forces to deal with what is a gorilla-type operation now. And I also know there has been no real effort to get the 5,000 police that are needed. The CI-- help me out here, staff. The CI--the organization, the--

PARTICIPANT: CSIS.

SENATOR BIDEN: CSIS, excuse me. I'm getting tongue tied here. The CSIS filed a report. The Council on Foreign Relations filed a report. I did a verbal report before we went in saying you should be in the process of gathering up 5,000 or more police officers. Nothing was done. Nothing was done.

We have, what, 300 [inaudible] in there now. We have about, and the problem, folks, is this, look, we have a new military over the last 10 years, last 15 years. It is an integrated military, including the Reservist and also the National Guard. The vast majority of our MPs, people trained to be cops, are Reservists and National Guard. They can't be told to stay there another year. It's not practical. We're going to have a mini revolution out there in the countryside if that's the case.

I think they're getting the message. Senator Lugar likes to use a different phrase. I don't want to associate him with my speech, but he has a phrase. He used the phrase in one of the hearings, he says he feels like we're outside the glass with our nose against it looking in trying to find out what they're planning.

So, to the best of my knowledge, there has not been a full court press, let's put it that way, to get NATO involved and/or--at least up to a couple of weeks ago--significant amounts of trained police officers from other countries to move in now and train and establish security on the streets of Baghdad and other places.

MR. MANN: The gentleman back here with the glasses.

PARTICIPANT: Senator, thank you for your remarks.

What can Congress do to enhance post-conflict security? And I refer to that in the sense that prior to 9/11 the experts knew we needed to do something about homeland security; after 9/11, everybody else knew we needed to do something.

Following the difficulties in Iraq, is there something that Congress can do, and you mentioned the Hamre Report, and that's where I'm going with that, that they've produced some interesting information about what we need to do.

SENATOR BIDEN: The answer is, yes, we must do a lot, and that is the subject of a paper I'm trying to put together right now. Let me state very briefly, we should have known, and the experts knew, and some of us who are not experts have spent a lot of time in this area knew, after the Balkans that needed a different way of dealing with post-conflict. Dick Lugar has been way out in front on this, Chairman Lugar.

Let me give you an example. It is estimated that we could use 300,000 civilians, not military, who would be available in post-conflict resolution around the world, which will continue to do the functions that now soldiers are doing. It's suggested that our Army Civil Affairs Divisions should be increased; it's suggested that MPs should be increased; it's suggested that, and I believe we should, ahead of time be putting together coalitions that will commit police forces to be available for future, and there will be future, future conflicts, where the world signs on to deal with the post-conflict resolution.

And there are a number of things, and one of the reasons why it hasn't come forward is, in a sense, it's been trumped by homeland security, number one, and remember, and I say this as an observation, not a criticism, this administration ran on not being nation-builders. Remember that? I'd remind everybody of that. One of the assumptions of the neocons is we don't build nations.

That's not fair. One of the assumptions of the administration, as they ran, I want to be precise, is we don't build nations. That's not the function of our military. That's not what we need to do. So there's been no intellectual horsepower or energy on that side of the equation trying to figure out how we deal with post-conflict resolution, and we better get about it. It is the first of the significant issues of the 21st century.

MR. MANN: One last question. Gary, please.

MR. MITCHELL: Gary Mitchell, from the Mitchell Report.

Senator, you have outlined the broad strategy for multinational support. You've talked about the tactical steps that you think are needed to get there. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the domestic political calculus that you think would be needed to actually make that happen here.

SENATOR BIDEN: I think that's a very good question, and it may be above my pay grade to do it well, but let me give it a shot.

I start off with the proposition that the American people, intuitively and intellectually, understand the world has changed after 9/11.

The second premise on which I operate is the American people are tough as nails, that they will do whatever they become convinced is required to guarantee our security.

I'm further convinced that the American people understand there is nothing easy about this undertaking, which the President rightly has said from the beginning this is going to be a long, protracted war against terror, and he could have folded in not just terror, but failed states and the prospect of failed states.

I think they understand that, but we have sent them conflicting messages, as a nation. We have told them we're about to go to war, but they're going to get the biggest tax cut in the history of mankind. So there's no sacrifice. What's the sacrifice? We're going to war. We're going to spend tens of billions of dollars and hundred thousands of American troops. We're going to accumulate a \$450-billion deficit this year, and not to worry. It's like that Calypso song, "Be happy, don't worry." I'm serious. I'm being serious.

How do you communicate to the American people that this is deadly serious, that the costs are consequential, and the failure to succeed would be monumental? How do you do that, when you don't tell them up front that this is a big deal? This is going to cost them billions of dollars, and they should be willing to pay it. The case should be made.

But I really believe, in the interest of time, I'll just touch the surface from like 40,000 feet here, we're sending conflicting messages. We're sending conflicting messages. We're telling them the mission is accomplished. We're telling them, don't worry, we can have the most gigantic tax cut, and the wealthiest among us will pay no price.

By the way, I think if we went to the American people, I come from a corporate state, a lot of wealthy people in my state, we're one of the wealthiest states in the nation, the rich people in this country are as patriotic as the poorest person in this country.

What do you think would have happened if the President stood before the American people and said, look, we're about to go into a war, the cost of which is going to be unknowable, but we know it will cost. We know the last war cost us, in today's dollars,

\$75 billion, of which we only paid 15 percent. We're going to go into this war probably basically alone, picking up the cost. And by the way, the pols we have in there, we're paying for them to be in there. So, even if we get in other people in, we're still paying. And the cost is going to be unknowable, but consequential, and so I'm asking the top 1 percent of this country to forego for two years the tax cut that's coming to them; or instead of having a tax cut that is literally 100 times the average American, only 10 times the average American.

I believe every single wealthy person in my state would have said sign me on, no problem, none, none.

So what happens when we don't do that? Those who love class warfare on my side of the aisle paint every wealthy person as just a greedy so and so, and those on the other side of the aisle say we don't need that additional money to wage this war. Be happy. Everything is okay. Everything will be okay. If we tell the American people what we need from them, they will support it, we will succeed, we will be safer, we will be more secure, and we will lead the world again, not be the "Lone Ranger" in the world.

Thank you all very much.
[Applause.]

[Whereupon, the proceedings were adjourned.]