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A Brookings National Issues Forum

BACK AT CENTER STAGE:

FOREIGN POLICY AND THE PRESIDENCY

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THIS IS AN UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT.

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. HESS: Good morning, and welcome to a Brookings National Issues Forum, this one entitled Foreign Policy and the Presidency. I'm Steve Hess of Brookings, who will be the moderator.

This is an occasion here at Brookings. We like to think that we're honoring a new book that we care a lot about. It's called "America Unbound," and its two authors are members of our panel. They are, to my immediate left, Ivo Daalder, who's a senior fellow here at Brookings, and one of his claims to fame is that he was on the National Security Council staff during--or at least part of President Clinton's administration. He's also one of the authors of the Brookings book on homeland security, along with his colleague here James Lindsay.

James Lindsay was, at the time he wrote the book, also a senior fellow at Brookings, but he has deserted us. We miss him greatly. He's gone to New York where he is director of studies and vice president of the Council of Foreign Relations. He also had been on the National Security Council during part of the Clinton administration.

The other two panelists are among my very favorite journalists in Washington, in part because they have been everywhere and done everything. Karen DeYoung, on my immediate right, is at the Washington Post, although I have to tell you that at the moment she's on sabbatical next-door with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. We won't ask her about her scholarship at the moment. Anybody who's in the midst of writing a book would just as soon keep it quiet for awhile. She has been, among many things, the Washington Post's bureau chief in Latin America, also in London. She was the national editor. She was the foreign editor, too, at one time--the

foreign editor, the assistant managing editor. And if that isn't everything, I should tell you that she and Jim are also contributors to another recent book which is called "The Media and the War On Terrorism." So you start to see the networking that Washington is so famous for.

And finally, Steve Weisman, on my far left, is presently the chief diplomatic correspondent of the New York Times, but he, too, has had bureaus abroad as the Tokyo bureau chief, as the Delhi bureau chief. He was the deputy foreign editor, if I remember correctly. He's been on the editorial board of the Times. And importantly for our discussion, he has also been the chief White House correspondent of the Times during the administrations, or part of the administrations, of President Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan.

That's our panel. When asked to moderate a panel on foreign policy and the presidency, I thought maybe we would start with George Washington's farewell address on entangling alliances, a little bit about the Versailles conference and Woodrow Wilson, Marshall Plan and Harry Truman. And then, of course, about a week ago, all things broke loose in the process of foreign policy and the Bush administration, and I thought obviously we'd better cut to this chase right away and find out what's been going on over at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

The chronology, if you'll remember, was that Monday a week ago, on the front page of the New York Times, David Sanger wrote an article that was entitled "White House to Overhaul Iraq and Afghan Missions." It starts, "The White House has ordered a major reorganization of American efforts to quell violence in Iraq. The new effort includes the Iraq Stabilization Group, which will be run by the national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice." And "this appears to be part of an effort to assert more

direct White House control over how Washington coordinates its efforts to fight terrorism, develop political structures, and encourage economic development." And then a senior administration official, who of course, as is usually the case, is nameless, says, "This puts accountability right in the White House." And that means, of course, it was a direct effort to diminish the authority of the Pentagon and Mr. Rumsfeld. It goes on to show the four ways that this is--groups that are going to be part of it and the very impressive people on the NSC staff who are going to run that effort.

Well, the next day, Mr. Rumsfeld said that he didn't really recall what Condoleezza Rice had said and involving him in it at all, he wouldn't know how to comment on it, "I was not there for the backgrounding," meaning the briefing for the New York Times. And that was about as close as you get to a cabinet officer having a temper tantrum since Alexander Haig left the State Department.

We then get, one day later--and by now, of course, they have made nice--the White House and the secretary of defense have quickly moved to tell everybody that this is nothing at all unusual. And we leave that until Sunday's Washington Post, where on the front page we get a very long piece about Condoleezza Rice, which is based on over four dozen interviews and conducted over several months. And it's tough. "Rice has proved to be a poised and articulate defender of President Bush's policies, but her management of the National Security Council has come under fire from former and current administration officials." And "many officials with first-hand knowledge contend that Rice is weak at forging those decisions, sometimes attempting to meld incomparable approaches that later fail. She is also perceived as not resolving enough issues before they reach the president and doing a poor job of making sure his wishes are carried out." And that's the good part of the article.

And then we get to the Sunday broadcasts, of course, the morning shows, and we have Richard Lugar, the chairman of--Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who is telling us the president has to be president. Which is starting to sound an awful lot--when we used to hear people say let Reagan be Reagan.

Lady and gentlemen, what is going on here? I think I will turn first to the august Council of Foreign Relations and get their vice president. Jim, we're going to go around and bat it around awhile, and then move forward and see how this relates, or move backwards to past experiences and administrations.

MR. LINDSAY: Thank you very much, Steve. One of the great virtues of living in New York is you don't get the Sunday Washington Post, so I'm not really sure what was said about-- And I must say, my case, [inaudible] far more concerned not about whether Secretary Rumsfeld is having a temper tantrum or not or having good sandbox skills with Condoleezza Rice, but how the Boston Red Sox are doing.

In which case, I must note that Timothy Wakefield is quite a stellar baseball player. Thank you very much, Timmy. If I fall asleep in the middle of speaking here today, it's because I was up very late last night both watching the game, then Sports Center, then the local New York channels whining and moaning over it. It was just too delicious to go to sleep. And then the car arrived to take me to the airport to come down here.

I'm not interested in the tick-tock about what's happening in the Bush administration right now. What I think it's important to understand here is, really, sort of two things. One has to do with people's perception of who Bush is as president, where he fits in in all of this. And the second thing is the attitude of journalists covering this particular story. And I think--let me take the second one first.

What I think is everyone has been--and the journalists have been spoiling for the opportunity to write these kind of stories, because up until this point this has been an administration that's been very good about keeping all disagreements in-house. And I think what has happened right now is finally something that occurs in almost all administrations--infighting, back-biting--has, in this case, finally spilled out in public and so you're getting a great deal of commentary on it. Which is understandably so. And I think for many journalists--Steve and Karen-- the impression is it's been a tougher administration to cover than normal because of it's ability to control its message, to keep its disputes in-house, and not let people sort of get a peek inside the control room and see the food fights that go on.

But I think the bigger issue is sort of where George Bush is in all of this. And I think that what runs through most of the coverage you get right now is that George Bush is, in some sense, a bystander to all these events. That's clearly the notion of let the president be the president, let Reagan be Reagan. And I think it gets back to sort of a broader issue of George Bush, and I'd sort of like to move the question back.

And that is, is this a man in charge of his own administration or not? And I think when it comes to foreign policy, the assumption is, the conventional wisdom is Bush is not in charge, that Bush has been--I mean, if you go back all the way to December of 1999, he was the candidate who flunked the foreign policy pop quiz. He didn't know enough to be president. I think, you know, the old saying is you don't get a second chance to make a first impression. That's been particularly true of Bush. And he's seen as somehow a prisoner of fighting among his subordinates.

I think, even when I argue in our book "America Unbound," that this gets the basic logic of the Bush administration wrong. George Bush actually has been in

charge. And I think to some extent he likes having his subordinates fight. He doesn't particularly like it when that sort of spills out in public and it gets to be a problem, but I think that what's really interesting is, is that Condoleezza Rice, to a great extent, reflects what George Bush wants.

And I think it's important to keep in mind that I think if you read Sunday's Maureen Dowd column, which is this notion--she refers to him as Junior, and the problem was that daddy sort of created this Cheney regency for Junior and now it's sort of gotten out of control. And I think that's really the very common thing. And I think it's actually--it's both wrong and actually helps Bush politically, because it insulates him in a very real respect for any responsibility--it's not really his fault, it's the fault of his subordinates.

So I would actually argue that focusing on whether Condi Rice runs the inter-agency process the way some people would like or not is not--it's an important question; it's not the most important question. The real question is to what extent is George Bush in charge? And I would argue he's very much been the master of what Ivo and I call a foreign policy revolution.

MR. HESS: Steve Weisman, you're seeing it, presumably, through the State Department and the way it must look to Colin Powell. Does that ring true to you that this is the way the president wants it and that Colin Powell is not losing or winning, but just playing the game?

MR. WEISMAN: It's a good question. I became chief diplomatic correspondent about a year ago, and when I took the job, we tried to figure out what my title would be And rather than chief State Department correspondent, I asked to be chief diplomatic correspondent because the State Department is only one player in making

foreign policy in any administration, and obviously more than is the case in this administration.

From the perspective of the State Department, there's a foreign policy--I think, as one State Department official close to Powell once said to me, it's not as if the secretary of state opposes the agenda of this administration, but this is not his agenda. He came into office with other things that he wanted to do. And, especially after 9/11, the priorities changed and the country went on a road that even those who thought that President Bush was in charge from the beginning might have suspected--ended up being surprised that that was the road that we took.

You're right, and I think and hope Karen will bear me out, this administration has been unusually disciplined in discussing openly its internal divisions. And I agree with Jim that this is a president who has been more in charge than is commonly perceived and likes debate and internal debate, and likes options. Like any politician, he may not sort through the decision to go to war--for example, earlier this year, he may not have sorted it through in a policy sense, but as a politician he wanted options. He wanted an exit--a way of choosing something else even up until the last moment.

But the press policy of this administration, commonly among Republican administrations, is what one friend of mine in the administration, who's also served in Democratic administrations, calls the patrician gate-keeper approach, that they, more than most administrations, tend to reward favorable sympathetic coverage with access. The Democrats have a more anxiety-driven, panicky approach. They look out, as this friend said, at all the reporters and go into a wave of panic and say, oh, my God, we better go and try and influence what they're going to write.

This administration has had the first approach until now, when it has a policy that at least is beginning to be perceived as a--I won't say a failure, but as filled with all of the problems that we read about every day in Iraq. And it was inevitable that, as the policy generates recriminations, those recriminations become more public. And that's where we are now, and I don't think we'll see the end of it.

And as a journalist, I can even hope that we don't at least see the end of aggressive investigative journalism into what went on in the planning that went into this war, what were the disagreements, what did people really know and when did they know it about the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and what was the true role of the Iraqi exiles in forcing the decision to go to war, what were the roles of the important players? And my suspicion is that as the months and even years go on, we're going to be rethinking lots about this war and about the administration's policies. And I think we're, at last, in my view in a healthy period, where we're examining things that until now, because of the tightness of the administration and the climate after 9/11, haven't gone as examined as they might otherwise have. I'll stop there.

MR. HESS: Okay. Well, assuming you agree with Jim on what's in your book, and therefore--

MR. DAALDER: Most of the time I do.

MR. HESS: --and therefore Ronald Reagan--"Ronald Reagan" [laughs]--George W. Bush is playing this like Itzhak Perlman in a concerto--has everybody playing their roles and so forth--does that mean, assuming that the Post had it even close to being right on Sunday, that he wants Condoleezza Rice to be weak at forging decisions and doing a poor job at making sure that his wishes are carried out? There are players in this of which his personal player is the National Security Council. It this

player not playing by this concerto that he--that you say he has stretched out in his special agenda?

MR. DAALDER: Well, first, I don't think that George W. Bush or Condoleezza Rice would characterize her management style in the way that the Washington Post did on Sunday. And it's not clear that they would recognize themselves in the way it was characterized. And one of the questions one has to ask is why the criticism of Rice right now. I think there are two foundation reasons.

One is that there is in fact some basis of fact for the criticism, that there are reports, including in the Washington Post and in other places, that there have been times that she hasn't cracked the whip as much as past national security advisors have done, that people walk away out of meetings not clear what the decisions are and then basically go on and do their own thing.

My favorite story remains when the Washington Post--in fact, I think Karen wrote the story--in early April announced that Mr. Chalaby was being flown into Iraq one Friday morning. Led to a major meeting at the White House and Powell went over and said this is outrageous, we're not going to support the INC. And Condoleezza Rice, that evening, even went publicly and said I just want you to know we are not going to support any exile interim government, we are--we want to have an interim government that includes people from Iraq. And the next day, the Pentagon flew in the 700 freedom fighters, plus Chalaby, even though the official position stated by Condoleezza Rice and the president was that that was not what we were going to do. It's a clear indication that sometimes the Pentagon wasn't paying attention to what may have been decided at the White House. And I think you see part of that reflected in the commentary that is now coming above water.

There is also, I think, the very decision to begin to centralize the post-war planning for Iraq in the White House is a recognition that the president's decision back in January to hand this all over to DOD was a major mistake, that in fact the way one has to plan, the way one has to formulate and conduct policy on post-war situations like Iraq, is to have as many of the players who are important, whether it's the State Department, whether it's the Justice Department or the Treasury Department or AID, as well as DOD, coordinating and cooperating together. And the only place that can happen, the only place you make sure that these people all work together is if you coordinate it from the White House. If you give it to DOD, they're going to ignore, as in fact happened in the past 10 months, the equities and interests and expertise and indeed the people and the voices from other departments.

So what you're having--bigger point here--is a real discussion about how do we get out of the mess that we have created. And we are finding an administration that is looking for ways out of this mess. They recognize there is a mess. They have been trying in a variety of ways to get out of it.

The president gave a major speech in early September, and two weeks later at the U.N., saying let's have the U.N. become involved, we have said we're really serious about post-war Iraq, look, we're asking for $87 billion, we're reorganizing our efforts here at home, and we have gone on the PR offensive with Bush, we're giving three speeches and radio addresses, advice, and all of them going out there in order to basically say we're still in charge, we still have this policy, it's our policy, we're very much trying to drive the process. But the problem is, the policy ain't working. The reality on the ground--today again, another bomb; we're having bombs every day, we're

having Americans killed. The story coming out of the region just doesn't fit the framework within which the policy is being set.

And I think that's the issue, and Steve, I think, rightly put it. When--things are easy, to portray yourself publicly and to make the players work cooperatively, when the policy seems to be going all right. But when the policy seems to be getting off track, then the back-biting starts and then the questions that are bedeviling the administration are coming to the fore. Does that mean the president in not in charge? No. The president is very much in charge of the policy. But if the policy's not working, a lot of people are going to start raising questions.

MR. HESS: I want to get back to [inaudible]. But first I want to bring in Karen, and particularly on the question of the press. Because at least there's some sense here--Jim doesn't quite say it--that the press is in a snit because this is an administration that was keeping things pretty close, and now they have an opening and they're going to run with it so that, in a sense, the article in the Post on Sunday is a bit of payback.

So what is the proper role and how--I shouldn't say "the proper role." How does the press operate when you have these sorts of very serious foreign policy crises and they're happening, importantly, among the players in Washington?

MS. DeYOUNG: Let me--I will get to that. One of the advantages of speaking last is you get to talk about what everybody else has already said.

I would agree with Steve that the foreign policy agenda that the administration set is not the policy of its primary spokesperson in Secretary Powell. I think if you read the major speech that Powell gave at George Washington University about, I don't know, six weeks ago now, a month ago, six weeks ago--you can see it is

very definitely Colin Powell's foreign policy--it's not George Bush's foreign policy--although he pays lip service to the White House.

At the same time, using the example of the INC and flying Chalaby and his people into Baghdad--or south of Baghdad, Nasaria, I guess--I'm still not clear whether this was a disconnect or disobeying within the administration. This administration has a great habit of making statements and assuming that they serve as policy or what people are going to believe. In some cases, it's--if you take AIDS policy, for example, they seem to think that just by saying something it makes it so and that they get the credit for it without ever having actually to do it. In other cases, I believe that they say things for public consumption in full awareness that that is not what they're actually doing. In other words, to Oh, gosh, it looks bad to fly the INC in here even though that's really what we want to do, so we'll just make a statement and say this is not our policy even though we know full well that it's actually happening.

One of the premises of this discussion was to try and examine whether what this administration is doing vis-à-vis foreign policy and its dominance within the administration is a departure from other cold war administration. I'm not sure that's the way I'd look at it. Obviously, there have only been two post-cold war administrations. And certainly under Bush I, there was the Gulf War and the administration was fairly closely focused on events in the Mid East. But the buildup, obviously, to the first Gulf War was relatively quick and it was over relatively quickly and it was successful. In the Clinton administration, when you had Somalia, the Balkans, Iraq, and the Arab-Israeli dispute, they became the focus of White House attention.

Obviously every president says they like argument within their cabinet and their principals, organization. The stories always about Clinton were that he like for

these arguments to go on forever, and the frustration of some people, certainly the frustration of Powell the one year he was in the Clinton administration, was that the president tolerated these endless discussions without coming to a decision.

But obviously, what's happened during the last two years is different because the situation itself is different. It combines issues and cabinet departments across a wide spectrum of government, not only foreign policy and intelligence, the military, but law enforcement, the judiciary, the Treasury Department. And it was clear from the very beginning to the administration, no dummies, that if they didn't get this right it wouldn't matter what they got right in a lot of other areas.

From a journalistic perspective, I think maybe the best way to look at it is how we covered the president vis-à-vis foreign policy in previous administrations. And my own experience as a foreign correspondent through the Carter and Reagan presidencies and as the senior editor running the National staff under Bush I and Clinton, was that reporters that covered the White House wrote about foreign policy only in the most cursory way. They covered major speeches on foreign policy, they covered foreign trips of the president. In fact, that was considered part of their turf, which they guarded very zealously. But in terms of relations with the rest of the world, analyses, tick-tocks after events had occurred, big take-outs on strategy, they were done by the State Department correspondents. Even at the Pentagon, reporters wrote about weapons and war fighting and they actually paid very little attention to foreign policy.

When the current president was elected--or selected--we had two very talented political reporters who were assigned to the White House. They both covered Bush's campaign. The assumption was that this president would concentrate on domestic priorities and we basically wouldn't need to have foreign policy experts.

Obviously, that changed the way a whole bunch of things changed on September 11th. Immediately following the attack, it seemed like everybody in the newsroom was writing on some aspect of that story.

But by the time we all came up for air, it was clear that foreign policy and everything else about the war on terrorism was going to be the primary focus of the White House and the Washington Post national staff for the duration of the current term. And at the Post, we added another full-time reporter at the White House to concentrate just on foreign policy. And that was me. Fortunately for me and for readers, I wasn't expected to know about tax policy and the environment and education or, really, any domestic issues.

As Steve said, it quickly became apparent that the administration, even after its initial tendency to hold all terrorism-related information very tight, was going to treat foreign policy the same way it had treated domestic issues; that is, with the politics of the issue foremost in mind and with no real sense of obligation to explain itself beyond its own terms--that is, not to answer questions, not to engage in any real discussion of its actions or its strategy.

And it attempted to control information far beyond Pennsylvania Avenue. And officials at the State Department and the Pentagon were instructed to limit their dealings with the media, and they were very closely monitored. A centralized office was set up at the White House to control the foreign policy message on a day-to-day basis.

So there were several results, some of which have already been mentioned. First, I think, not initially but eventually it made us all a bit more energetic and creative in the way we approached the White House itself. We had to work diplomats and embassies and officials in foreign capitals, revive old contacts on Capitol

Hill, make new contacts in the Defense Department and the Treasury Department, where some of us had had no contact at all, and the intelligence agencies and domestic law enforcement. Eventually, we were there to provide an outlet to those in the State Department and elsewhere who resented not only the policies themselves, but the tight lid that had been imposed by the White House.

The second result, of course, as has been mentioned, is that, just as in every other administration, officials in one department who wanted to promote their ideas over those in another department, those who felt they were being slighted, those who were just upset at the way things were going began to talk. And, as in every other administration, this didn't make the White House very happy and they began blaming the press.

But it is something, I think, for us to examine ourselves, as Steve has mentioned. Did we do a very good job of telling people what was going on inside the administration and giving them the information they needed to make judgments about the lead-up to the war and the war itself? I think the answer is yes and no. Yes, in the sense that there were a lot of things written prior to the war and during the war that really had very little resonance in Washington or elsewhere. Basically, nobody wanted to hear it. Just as Congress rushed to pass its own resolutions supporting the war in every aspect and only now is looking back and saying, well, we should have asked more questions, I think they didn't want to hear it then and people didn't want to hear anything in particular in the media that went in the other direction.

But obviously there's a big no there, in the sense that we, I think, like everybody else in this country--most people in this country--were completely focused on the danger to the United States, looking to see what the government was doing to

alleviate that danger, and writing about it in terms that the administration presented to us.

But at the same time, I do think we have to do a lot of soul searching that would lead us to examine, I think, why it is, so far after the fact, that we are only now asking questions that were certainly very obvious inside, I believe, pretty much every newspaper, newsroom in this country and were constant subjects of conversation among all of us, and yet we didn't see them at the time as our primary mission. Granted, it was very difficult to do. It was very difficult not only to get people to talk, but also to look beyond this kind of deluge of information that was stated in very, very certain terms and to come out and say, well, maybe this isn't quite true.

I'll stop there.

MR. HESS: Yeah, well, we've seen something about two players in the game and have--and there's another one, and one that's going to be particularly important this week when the question of $87 billion has to be decided in Congress.

Jim, it's an area in which you know about as much about as anybody, having written the book, and that's the relationship of Congress and foreign policy. Throw that into the mix for us as we try to figure out how the president gets from here to there.

MR. LINDSAY: Happy to, but I can't resist saying I didn't say that the journalists were in a snit. I'm sure that to some extent there was glee to be able to write food-fight stories because they're one of the staples of journalism. But I think also if an administration has had very, very good news management for close to two years, and all of a sudden a spat breaks out in the open, that would strike me as being news, which is what journalists are supposed to write about. So.

And I appreciate Steve and Karen saying that journalists have to go back and reflect on what they've done and go out and do better. But I actually don't think they did that bad a job in the past two years. We can argue that in a different forum.

In terms of Congress, Congress basically stepped aside on September 11, 2001, and left the playing field. Many of you had--let's face it, you had the Congress that is controlled by Republicans, so one thing that naturally happened was the Republicans were going to clearly rally behind their representative in the White House. It's hard to imagine in most circumstances, let alone after such a grievous attack, you're going to have a party not follow the lead of its incumbent in the White House.

And that left most of the burden for any sort of criticism to come from the minority party, in this case the Democrats. And the reality was Democrats, I think, decided very early on that it would be politically improvident for them to criticize the president--improvident particularly because of the assumptions average people bring to the table. If you go out and you look at all the polling data, both before September 11th and after September 11th, and you ask people the following question, Which party do you trust more in foreign affairs and national security, the answer is Republicans by--depending upon the poll--anywhere from 20 percentage points to 40 percentage points. That is, Democrats, when it comes to national security issues, have not won the trust of most Americans.

And I think that has made most Democrats relatively reluctant in the fall of 2001, spring of 2002 to be critical. Because their concern was anything they said would be seen as being unpatriotic, would be politically suicidal, and to boot wouldn't change the policy at all. So in those circumstances, why not simply step aside?

Now, over that time a few brave souls on the Democratic side ventured out into the thicket to say something--most notably, Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, who in late February of 2002 came out and said, well, the war on terrorism is going--I'm paraphrasing more or less--the war on terrorism is going reasonably well, but he was concerned that the future of the war on--lacked a clear focus and direction.

Quite honestly, looking back, I thought at the time, looking back at it 18 months later, seemed to be relatively innocuous remarks clearly within the bounds of reasonable, responsible public debate; in fact, you could even say a bit timid in the way they were phrased. What was remarkable was the reaction on the part of the Republican leadership, which wasn't, gee whiz, this is America, let's debate, it's important to air out all competing ideas so we don't choose badly. Rather, it was a full-court press to get Tom Daschle.

I recall Tom Delay, a man who can be one of few words, issued a one-word press release, simply said "Disgusting." Tom Davis, who's the member of Congress from Northern Virginia, who I think at the time was head of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, issued a press release condemning Daschle for providing aid and comfort to the enemy--which happens to be the legal definition of treason. And what was remarkable is very few Democrats came to Senator Daschle's defense. They realized that Daschle basically was no going to become sort of Velcro for all anti-patriotic sentiment.

And I think that largely kept up through the fall. I mean, you can talk, I think--Karen's quite right. This is an administration which, as it pursued its policy, had very much its ear attuned to politics and how to use politics to advance its policy and how to use policy to advance its politics. And I think the--whether you look in the

homeland security reorganization debate or you're looking at the vote on Iraq, they played their cards remarkably well. And they basically--

If you go back to late summer 2002, there are Democrats saying we should debate whether we're going to go to war in Iraq, we should have a debate, we shouldn't let this go unremarked, we want to have a vote. And the White House initially said, no, we don't need a vote because we have preexisting U.N. authorities. And the Democrats thought we have an issue here, and they said at the time we want a vote, we want to debate this. And the White House all of sudden said, okay, let's have a vote. And all of sudden, Democrats are horrified by the ramifications of what it meant to have a vote. It would be very hard to vote no, in part because the president would make the case--in fact, he made the case--that, really, if you were going to vote against authorizing him, you were voting to keep Saddam Hussein in power. Because now all of a sudden the issue becomes one of--framed by the White House, and presidents have tremendous ability to frame public debate that isn't matched by the Washington Post or the Senate minority leader, let alone senior fellows at Brookings. It's not a fair world out there.

Then what happens, of course, is Democrats realize, gee whiz, we can vote no or we can take really what's the easy way out and say I'm going to vote for this resolution because I want to empower the president to go out empower the president to go out and do good things.

Now, the history of executive-legislative relationships on the war power attests to the following, which is once Congress gives the president that authority, it has no more say. It is a use-it-and-lose-it power. And so here you have Congress in October of 2002 voting to authorize the president to fight a hypothetical war under circumstances over which it has no control. Indeed, it authorizes the president to go to war before the

president, according to his public statements, has even made a decision to go to war. It's a decision that has no analog in American history. And I'm willing to go through all the other previous votes, if anyone wants to do it in Q&A.

Now, what's really interesting as we go forward in this, of course, is that I think many Democrats clearly thought they had--particularly those looking to run for the White House--thought they had positioned themselves properly in this debate because if war came, they could say I didn't make the mistake of 1990, '91, when I didn't authorize the Gulf War; this time I was in it with the president. And that's why you had these sort of tortured speeches during the vote, particularly John Kerry's, which, if you read the text of John Kerry's speech, you would think he's going to vote no on the resolution, then all of a sudden he says, we gotta vote for it because we gotta give the president the authority so he can go to the international community and work with them.

And to all the political [inaudible] at the time in the Democratic Party, it's my impression, that was a smart thing to do. Okay, but all of a sudden, six, eight, ten months later, it doesn't look as smart, it doesn't look as principled, it doesn't look as courageous, what have you.

What's happened now is--and this is, again, a general law of executive-legislative relations--during times of crisis, the country and Congress rally to the president, and that rally will last until either the crisis passes or the president messes up. And I think what you're having now is all of a sudden the policy doesn't look as good. All of a sudden you're in a situation where they're telling you don't worry, things are going swimmingly. And my colleague at the Council on Foreign Relations, Max Booth, comes back from a tour of Baghdad and says, hey, in the south it's going wonderfully, in the north it's going wonderfully. Okay, there are some problems in Baghdad, but it's

going great in the north and great in the south. Okay, then you say, well, but wasn't the whole deal, one of the great fears is how could you knit all those together? Are we even going to be able to knit those together? Don't worry, it's going well in the north, going well in the south, we're sweeping up Baathist remnants.

And so I think then you get in a situation where when you get sort of a disjunction between what journalists are saying, relying on what they see with their eyes and the death toll, and what the administration is saying, then all of a sudden Congress gets a little bit bolder. And of course when the president came out and said 87 billion, most people sort of took a deep breath--that's a lot of money.

Now, of course, what's interesting is if you had listened to Democrats who were talking about Marshall plans and things like that, they should have been willing to spend $87 billion. They're the ones who have been always talking about the importance of getting it right. But I think the politics now are irresistible to say we're going to spend more on sewer systems in Baghdad than in Des Moines and Minneapolis. And the temptation to think about it politically becomes overpowering, which means Congress all of a sudden is going to get more fired up.

And it's not just Democrats now. I think it's a lot of Republicans who are worried about how this issue's going to play, who haven't been--who were never really big fans of nation building or whatever and have been sort of swept along with the president's revolution.

MR. HESS: Steve, when you go here last time, at the White House, Zbig Brzezinski was the national security advisor, Cy Vance was the secretary of state. When you left us, Cap Weinberger was the secretary of defense, George Schultz was the secretary of state. And you come back with a different cast of characters, but is it deja

vu all over again? Are there some things institutionally and otherwise? Or maybe after awhile these folks just don't like each other. Tell us from your long experience how this relates to previous battle royals between these players, all of whom are advising the president on foreign relations.

MR. WEISMAN: Well, it's--hard as it is to remember, those of us who were here remember that there were questions about whether Reagan was in charge because the battles raged so fiercely in his administration. And I don't think they liked each other, either. Right? And of course you could go back to the--every time I read the histories, such as Richard Reeves's book about the Nixon administration, my jaw always drops in reading about the fights between, you know, Melvin Laird and Kissinger, and of course Rumsfeld and--later on, and --what was his name, secretary of state, Bill Rogers, who-- I mean, but back then, Kissinger and Nixon authorized the bombing of Cambodia, not only without informing the State Department, but even without informing the Pentagon, according to history as it is now being understood many years later with documents coming out.

And that's why I tried to say before that we will reconsider and rethink these years in the years ahead and probably learn to our amazement that the fights were even worse then we think they are now.

The Reagan years are remembered as this pastoral assertive time, and yet my recollection of the Reagan years, in covering the first term, was an administration at war with itself, where national security advisors came and went and where the CIA director was not even on speaking terms with the White House chief of staff.

So--and every time I try and report about the internal divisions in this administration, and as Karen so eloquently said, that some of us have had to reinvent our

reporting techniques and kind of--you remember the outside-in, inside-out strategy with Iraq. And I consider the journalistic strategy in this administration has been kind of an outside-in strategy. You have to go and interview people in the penumbra of the administration, people on the Hill, people among diplomats. But whenever I try to do that with former administration officials, like George Schultz, who's a very close advisor, we're told, especially to both Powell and Rice and even Bush, I get lectures about how, hey, this is nothing, don't you remember what it was like in the old days?

And that, Steve, if I can make one more point related to that and jumping off something Karen said which I found very interesting, because in spite of what you think, colleagues and competitors don't necessarily compare notes, so I found it very interesting, now that Karen is a scholar--temporarily, I hope--to hear her say this, that we, the extent of the fights internally in this administration are, frankly, not known by any of us. And I sometimes wonder, for instance, how much the State Department has asserted itself in the months leading up to the war. And frankly, I'm not sure how much those who on the inside are criticizing policy right now and maybe even taking a certain amount of perverse pleasure--I won't attribute maybe that to people in the administration, or senior people. But I wonder how much they're really fighting to try and get control of this mess in Iraq and, you know, those at the State Department who, frankly, know the most about this part of the world.

The State Department, which has--they did a survey recently--something like 400 and some--correct me if I'm wrong, any of you--Arab-speaking Foreign Service officers, and they've all been told that they should have to expect to rotate into Iraq. But since the occupation began, they have been rotating in and out so fast, there's been very little continuity among the people in this administration who supposedly know the turf,

you know, who are dealing with the very reconstruction that everybody is second-guessing right now. Someone just came out in order to go to the Red Sox-Yankees playoff from Baghdad, and I heard he's not going back. And you know, at the beginning of--

MR. : Only Brookings scholars can do that.

MR. WEISMAN: What we have now is, you know, we're--as my colleagues here on the panel have said, we are doing nation building, obviously, in Iraq in a way that not only was not contemplated in the year 2000, but has never been contem--I mean, we, the nation building that we're undertaking is nothing like any of us have seen in our generation. You'd obviously have to go back to the occupations after World War II. And I think back then you did have the phenomenon that you have a bit of now, which is army majors in their 30s going all around Iraq organizing town councils and the tissue and the constituents of democracy. And are these the people who-- I mean, some of them might be good at this. I'm sure some of them are. None of them have had training for this. None of them speak the language to be able to do this. And yet, frankly, just to bring this to a close, I don't see the people who have the expertise and the specialty and--you know, really champing at the bit to do this.

And so it's the--it's something much more subtle that's going on than just a clash within the administration. Now that we're in this phase of a very troubled situation in Iraq, I don't see necessarily people rushing in to take control of it, even in the administration.

MR. HESS: You know, when I read the article about the Iraq Stabilization Group being set up in the NSC, I guess my antenna must have quivered more than yours, from what you're saying. Two things happen in troubling times at the

White House. First, White House aides say to the president don't just stand there, do something. And second, as time runs out, they start to bring more and more operational responsibilities--you better do it because these are your people and they're people you control. And yet we know, from things like the Tower Commission reminding us after Iran-Contra, that there's no room at the NSC to be--or there shouldn't be--to be operational.

You head a group with the University of Maryland working on the NSC. Should I relax and say, oh, yeah, this is just another simple coordinating effort? Or are there not possibilities that this is a move toward operational because, as Steve believes, things aren't happening on the ground and as they should be? Where do you fit this in, and what should be the appropriate role?

MR. DAALDER: Let me make a distinction between what I think this is about and what may happen. Because Steve has made a very important point, which is this is becoming a tar baby that nobody wants, nobody wants to get a hold of. The Pentagon doesn't really want it because they want to take the troops out. They've always wanted to take the troops out. The State Department doesn't want it because they think they can't do it, that this is a--it's a job that can't be done, frankly. And the White House maybe doesn't want it, but it has to, because politically, this president's future is tied on tight directly to what happens inside Iraq.

And so the question of the operationalization of what--the reorganization, of whether the White House becomes more and more operational, in which Condi starts getting on the phone to Paul Bremer and says, Jerry, you gotta do this, you know, here's $55,000, you have Josh Bolton now doing the budgeting of Iraq, you have the White House becoming basically the government of Iraq--is a real danger and a real possibility,

because of the politics driving the president to say we need to be able--and Karl Rove saying we gotta get those numbers down of Americans being killed, we gotta get the numbers of bombings down, we really ought to do more in order to get this off the front page. Exactly that kind of danger leads to operationalization of the NSC. And it's a natural tendency to have that happen, particularly if nobody else wants to take a hold of it.

And frankly, I think Steve's absolutely right. The State Department certainly doesn't want to take a hold of it. They said we didn't believe in this policy in the first place, you wanted Don Rumsfeld to run this thing, fine. He can have it. You do it. And Rumsfeld, of course, has never wanted to do nation building. He's never been part of this idea of the way we solve the world's problems is to create great democracies. He believes in killing bad people. He's very--you know, he's very good at it. And he does it with a military that has become very proficient at it. But the notion that you use this military not just to kill bad people but also to build up good people, that's alien to Don Rumsfeld. So he wants to get out. He wants to get rid of what is happening.

So that's, I think, that's the danger. Are we there yet? No, not yet. I think the reorganization that was announced is the kind of thing that, frankly, the Clinton administration did all the time when it came to--you know, in Somalia, they screwed up, they didn't do it. But they did it in Haiti, in Bosnia, in Kosovo, and everything else, which is you have central White House organized effort to coordinate the inter-agency process on complex humanitarian emergencies, as we called them at that time. So that AID was there and the budget people were there and the Defense Department people were there and the diplomats were there and the law enforcement people were all on the table, and, you know, we wrote plans, six-month plans, we want to have these following

benchmarks and here are the strategies and all of the--I spent a good number of hours with these things on Bosnia.

That's what you do. You coordinate the inter-agency process. You don't get your hands dirty in the operational sense. You still have agencies do the actual work implementing the policies. But you have a coordinating mechanism.

Remarkably, this administration decided that the coordination of its planning process would not be done in the White House, it would be done at DOD. That was the national security presidential directive, and it's PD-24, signed in January 2003, in which the president said you do it, Don. And there was no coordination. And now for the first time, we're pulling the coordination into the White House. That's what I read the Sanger article as saying. That's I think what the one--you can't get more in a one-page memorandum other than to say there's now going to be an Iraq Stabilization Group--which is basically the principals group renamed--for the purposes of Iraq, and more importantly, these four subgroups headed by the NSC. We're going to run this thing with our agendas, our priorities, from the White House, because this needs to be coordinated from the White House.

That's, I think, what is on paper. What will happen in practice, we will have to see as the politics of Iraq become a greater issue and as more and more of the agencies say not my job.

MR. HESS: Karen, let me ask you. In 2000, the out party had a presidential candidate. He was a governor who had had no notable experience, or any experience, in dealing with international relations, with the exception of some dealings with a country that bordered his state, Mexico. In 2004, the out party at the moment seems to have a front runner, one most likely to come out of Iowa and New Hampshire

strongest, who is a former governor, who has no previous foreign policy experience, with the possible exception of some dealings with a country that borders his state, Canada.

What should a candidate and a new president know, and when should they know it? I mean, if you look back at the most experienced presidents of the modern time, that would be the two that could have been chosen secretary of state, who would be Richard Nixon and George H.W. Bush, one of whom had to resign and the other of whom was defeated. What really can we, and what we know through the press and what they tell us, know and when can we know it? It's a difficult question, in our judging, particularly when the next election is going to be held in very complicated, complex international times.

MS. DeYOUNG: Well, I think that in the case of Bush, you know, we had his sort of public statements in debates. I think in the debates with Gore, you had one that was supposed to be devoted to foreign policy, and even then only about a third of it actually was because everybody got bored with it and they moved back to the same domestic issues that had dominated the other debate. You had a couple of speeches that Bush gave, which, if you look at them now--and I think you guys say it in your book--if you look at them now, remarkably consistent in terms of what he's actually done.

But I think, you know, you look at the people he surrounded himself with, the Vulcans group, and many of them had very strong ideas about foreign policy, regardless of whether he did or not. They had long histories, written histories, spoken histories, policy histories in office, and it was not that hard to discern what they wanted and what they were going to do.

The Democrats, not only in foreign policy but in a lot of other issues, obviously, across the range of candidates right now, but even in terms of the party in general, it's very hard to see that kind of firm policy commitment and set of goals in terms of specific parts of the world, in terms of specific issues.

So I think that regardless of who the candidate is, whether it's somebody who is perceived as being experienced in foreign policy or just a regional governor who doesn't have any experience in it at all, I think it's going to be very, very difficult beyond the sort of general Democratic, you know, this is what we do in foreign policy--we're going to be more energetic in the Middle East, again, with all the caveats so you're going to keep them from saying anything very firm about it, we're going to--things are wrong in Iraq. Well, what are we going to do about it? We're going to be more multilateral, without saying specifically what that's going to be. With North Korea, we're going to be more open to dialogue, again, without having to make concrete what any of that actually means.

Can I go back and say, on the previous question, it's not clear to me what this so-called reorganization actually means. And you touched a little bit on this, Ivo. You know, that's what the National Security Council is supposed to do; it's supposed to coordinate the views of the other cabinet departments on national security. I don't believe for a minute that Condi Rice is going to sit and have a meeting and say, okay, Don, you do this, Colin, you do that, and they're going to scurry out and relay those orders, say Condi says today we have to do this. I think it's just not going to happen.

On the other hand, it may be that these groups--I mean, Bob Blackwell is a guy who doesn't mince words and doesn't suffer fools and tries to put his foot down. And so it's not--I think they will have to be operational in some sense in terms of having

their own contacts with Bremer and other people on the ground there if they're going to accomplish anything, because I think that the actual principals are--they don't care what--

MR. HESS: Yeah. Jim, go back a bit to the question that I asked Karen. Now, of course we elect a president. It's for the next four years, it's a fixture. And we don't have a crystal ball. We don't know whether Americans are going to be taken prisoner in Tehran. We don't know whether two planes are going to fly into the World Trade Center. But we still need to know something.

Now, part of your thesis--yours and Ivo's--is the president had a pretty good idea of--this president--of what he was all about. And yet, it's very clear, I think, to most people that they didn't feel that way in November of 2000. Now, is it just that the press screwed up? Or you see something that none of the rest of us see because you read the fine print and nobody else did? But I mean, if you--it could well be that the press screwed up. I mean, the studies that I've done of the network evening news programs show that you can hardly see any coverage of foreign relations. But then again, you could contend why should they? They report on what the candidates were saying, not what the candidates weren't saying.

So where--go back to that question. Because it's--that's what's ahead of us, and it's going to worry us in the next year as we choose either to continue this president or to choose another president.

MR. LINDSAY: Let me begin by saying I wouldn't blame the press. Okay. And I wouldn't necessarily blame Brookings senior fellows. But I think I blame all of us, because I want to go back to sort of the question you originally asked Karen, how she answered. You said how much should he know and when should he know it.

Karen answered by talking about beliefs. Knowledge and beliefs are distinct things. And the conceit in this town is you can't have beliefs unless you have lots of knowledge; or that somehow, if you have lots of knowledge, you will add up to a belief. Neither is true.

And I think what's important to understand about George Bush and everything you need to know about George Bush is contained in the question--I think this is the Vanity Fair article in which he was--it was a question asked and he was quoted as saying, "I may not know where Kosovo is, but I know what I believe." And I think part of the problem we sort of got hung up very early on the campaign because of that very unfortunate Anthony Hiller, WHDH Radio thing, was the pop quiz--name the presidents of these countries.

Now, I should point out that several of us here at Brookings went around and quizzed some others of us here at Brookings and--let's just say I couldn't find anybody who went four for four on that question. But the focus is always on how much you knew rather than what you believe. And they're distinct. Because again, if you want to know do people believe things without necessarily having a lot of knowledge, the answer is yes. Turn on talk radio any day and you'll have very concrete evidence of that.

The second thing is, is that having firm beliefs become important in new situations because places where you don't know lots of knowledge, because they orient you, they tell you what to look for, what's likely to be important, what's unlikely to be important. Every single person in this room operates with a world view. They had that world view long before they got to college and took International Relations 101. You

don't have to write a book or be able to dictate a book to someone to have beliefs about how the world works.

I think George Bush was pretty clear by the time he reached the age he reached to run for president, had some ideas about the way the world worked. Now, maybe we could argue and say they really weren't idea, they were instincts. Whatever, okay? The fact is he had some basic assumptions about the world. Ivo and I discuss it at some length in "America Unbound." It's pretty simple: The world's a dangerous place, there are bad people out there, states matter, particularly states with lots of power, the United States is the most powerful country in the world, it should be willing to use its power, international institutions aren't necessary to the exercise of American power and they'd probably get in the way of it.

Those are a bunch of beliefs. Now, you talk about his advisor and the assumption is--again, this is an assumption very popular in this town, I think, because there are a lot more advisors in this town than there are leaders. The notion is that leaders don't know anything, advisors tell them what to think. Okay? Then you've got to go back to how did these people get to advise George Bush? He picked them. It wasn't a random draw from Republican thinkers. One [inaudible] the Vulcans is that they didn't reflect a lot of moderate Republican thinkers, and they do. They are out there. They didn't pick the moderates from his father's administration; he picked a mix of hard-line conservatives.

And let me say it very clear here, he didn't--they weren't all neoconservatives. In fact, I think, as Ivo pointed out, there's a difference between a hard-line conservative and a neo--a hard-line conservative and a neoconservative. Don Rumsfeld is a hard-line conservative; he's not a neoconservative. This notion that Bush

has somehow been taken over by neocons is wrong on two fronts. Number one, most of his advisors--Condoleezza Rice, Dick Cheney, Don Rumsfeld--aren't neocons.

And number two, I don't think it's the case that Bush was [inaudible], but he chose them because he chose people who, when he asked questions--and he auditioned people. He picked people who, when they told him things, basically said things that resonated with his gut sense of how the world worked. And I think it's important.

And I think we're playing the mistake today. We mentioned the--I assume you were making the reference about the governor with the state to its north, Howard Dean--he went on Tim Russert. And what did Tim Russert do? Tim Russert played sort of Gotcha. He asked him a bunch of factual questions. Can you tell me how many people are in the American Army? What's the exact troop strength in Iraq? Okay, those are nice things. And I would expect a senior fellow at Brookings, Ivo, to know them. And it's all well and good. It's not really clear to me that if a candidate can go on and simply spout facts that he's answered the real question, that is, what do you believe? Where do you think it is worth expending American power, risking American blood and treasure? And those we tend to not get because we get caught up on these sort of things. And I think it would behoove all of us to sort of try to lock down the question, at least the problems that can be lot harder to get at.

MR. HESS: Very good. I think I'm going to turn it over to questions now because of two things. One, we ran out of time and we want to hear from the audience. And the other, that was a nice place to stop. For one thing, Jim answered my question, and for another, he told us a lot about what was in the book that we're here to honor, "America Unbound."

So we have a few moments for questioning. There's a microphone here. Please keep your question short so that we can have as many questions as possible. And then please introduce yourself when you ask the question. There is a hand right there, first.

QUESTION: My name is Barry Jacobs. I work for the American Jewish Committee. I'm a retired Foreign Service officer. Steve, you and I were in India together when I was public affairs officer.

I thought Mr. Lindsay's final statement was brilliant in summarizing--

MR. LINDSAY: Oh, thank you. You're a very nice man.

QUESTION: No, I'm serious. It was worth missing an hour's work this morning. Even the coffee was okay.

That seems to be the world view that Mr. Bush brought to the office. I spent 28 years in the Foreign Service. My wife's still a senior officer. I think it accurately--I think personally it accurately reflects what the world is like. Do you all agree or disagree?

I heard a lot today in discussing the White House about process. But when it gets down to it, the American people really are less concerned with how the National Security Council works than with what the president actually believes and how he translates those beliefs into actions.

MR. WEISMAN: Could I say something?

MR. HESS: Would you like to respond, Steve?

MR. WEISMAN: Yeah. Hi, Barry. I also thought Jim's summary was excellent, and--

MR. LINDSAY: Oh, I better quit now.

MR. WEISMAN: But--and I don't especially want to address whether or not the world is exactly the way George Bush sees it. But I completely agree about that set of instincts that you, Jim, described. And I'm always puzzled, having covered both--a lot of presidents, to see, you know, a president like Bush or Reagan, presidents like Bush or Reagan, who have those instincts that guide their foreign policy, and then President Clinton, who famously read so many books about the Balkans that at one point he confessed that he read the wrong books and--you remember that--and then was overly influenced by one book and then he kind of changed his mind about the possibility of getting peace in the Balkans.

But I think--I wanted to add one more thing to this set of beliefs which I think is going on here in the mind of President Bush, because--and in this, I think it's fair to say that his amateur status is a factor--and that is the sense of this presidency being a kind of what-if presidency, or a worst-case-scenario presidency; and analyzing the world not on how it is but on the basis of what if the worst that we can think happens, happens, and let's plan for that.

What, irrespective of Saddam Hussein's current capability, happens if he gets these weapons and uses them or gives them away to people? Or what if North Korea proceeds along this course? Let's act on the basis of the worst thing happening, and then, without going through a process in which you try to imagine whether or not that set of actions will make things worse than they otherwise would have been.

And I think he has surrounded himself with people, especially the vice president, who not only feels this way, but also, after 9/11, kind of went over even into another realm where, I think we can see from his recent speeches, is creating this desperately gloomy, dangerous--working this administration up into a lather over the

most dangerous possibilities in the world. And it is there that I wonder--and I won't assert this, but I--and I've wondered--my colleagues may disagree--whether or not President Bush's lack of experience as an executive, as somebody handling these sets of issues, is being pushed by those conservatives and those kind of doom-saying, you know, people in his circle a little bit more than a more experienced executive might otherwise be.

So it's not that I don't agree that he has instincts that are guiding this country and him, or even that those instincts are wrong. I think they, as you suggested, have a lot of basis for viewing the world that way.

MR. HESS: Steve, you know--Karen, too--if indeed you agree so wholeheartedly with Jim--by the way, I do--what we're talking about are beliefs, if we're to get at anything--well, then, isn't it true that you're asking all the wrong questions? And you spend every day, as I pick up my daily newspaper or television, asking all the wrong questions. And that who are asking these questions? You say who, then, would be asking the question, or who did ask the question, what would you do if the Soviets put offensive missiles in Cuba? You don't ask that question. What do you--

In other words, the questions it strikes me that you're asking--

MS. DeYOUNG: They would say we don't answer hypotheticals.

MR. HESS: Well, maybe they would and maybe they wouldn't. You know.

MS. DeYOUNG: They would.

MR. HESS: At any rate, the questions you're asking don't sound like the questions getting at what Jim thinks we need to know.

MS. DeYOUNG: Look, I mean, I think it's fine to have a belief system and obviously everybody has one, and the president has a very strong one, but I think it misses the mark somewhat to say process doesn't matter and we focus too much on process. I mean, a belief system would be great, and the president's belief system would in fact be the correct one for this country, if the rest of the world cooperated in fulfilling his beliefs. It's fine to say we've got to go after Iraq and this is what--as long as things turn out the way he would like them to. Then, obviously, carrying out his belief was the correct policy to have. If there's not another terrorist attack on this country, obviously their belief in how to go about the war on terrorism in fact was the correct one.

But at some point you have to look at policy and you have--you know, it's not a static thing. It's not just the president says I believe, has a policy based on that, goes and carries it out, and his belief in fact proves to be the correct version of reality. Things happen. People react. Other events come in and interfere.

MR. HESS: Okay. Ivo, you wanted to jump in.

MR. DAALDER: Three points. One, on the dark and gloomy side of it, I was struck one day to be in a meeting with a very senior person dealing on homeland security questions with a foreigner, who said, you've got to understand, Mr. Secretary--of the foreign ministry--this is a war town. And there are a hundred people in this town who daily get the information about the threat. The president and his major people are one of them. And there is a sense--I don't believe I live in a war town or a war capital. I don't think most of us here believe that. But there is a sense of these people who get inundated with threat information on terrorism every day, the matrix. Eight o'clock they sit there for half an hour, spend their time talking about the threats that are out there. It's got to affect you in one way or another.

Second point. There's one part of the belief system of George Bush that Jim did not mention, which I think is important to mention--which is the final part. George Bush believes that the United States is a uniquely just power and that everybody in the world agrees that it is so. He believes we are good people, to use his favorite phrase, and that the rest of the world knows that. I think that is a flaw in the belief system. Not that we are not good people, it's just that the rest of the world may not necessarily agree that we are good people. And that has consequences, including the ones that Karen started to lay out about how other people react to our actions, and that it is the reaction to that reaction that in fact has an influence on our ability to get our way.

Final point. I don't agree that his view of the world is the correct one. I think it in fact is fundamentally mistaken in a very important aspect. This is not a world--this is a world in which not just power is the thing that matters, but globalization matters, which affects our ability to use power to get our way. What is fundamental to understand is it's not just states that are competing like billiard balls, in which the biggest billiard ball by volume gets to direct everybody else--which is the George Bush view of the world. It's that the states themselves are breaking down, that the power of states is being affected by transnational and global forces, from economic to political to military to environmental. And under those circumstances, it isn't just American power that gets things done. It is America's ability to work with others to deal with the challenges and threats that we face.

And if you believe that that is part of the world in which we live, you have a very different foreign policy. And in that sense, I think believing that it is states and power that matter in a dangerous world misses a fundamental aspect of that world, which is that part of the danger--as well as part of the good things in this world--come

from forces that we don't control, and that the only way we have any hope of controlling is to work with others. That leads you to a foreign policy view and the kind of policy direction that is fundamentally different from the way that this administration has conducted itself.

So if you believe that other people may not believe that you're good people, and if you believe that the forces in international politics go beyond power but include globalization, you're going to have a different foreign policy.

MR. HESS: The lady there. There's one last question. I'm afraid this is going to be the last question.

QUESTION: Thank you. I'm Mary Krizmagawa [sp] from USBA [ph]. I have a question. Given that at this moment what we need the most is the support of other countries in rebuilding Iraq, do you think the way that our press is communicating what is happening in Iraq is hurting or helping these efforts to get other nations to work with us?

MR. LINDSAY: I want the press to know for themselves here.

MS. DeYOUNG: I didn't hear the first part of the question, I'm sorry.

MR. WEISMAN: I think the question is, is the press hurting or helping the effort to get international support for reconstructing Iraq, or providing troops, I suppose.

Well, the short answer is, of course, that the press cannot care about whether it is helping or hurting, but rather reporting the situation as the press best can see it on the ground.

And the second short answer is it doesn't seem to be helping right now.

MR. HESS: Do you want to get in on that?

MS. DeYOUNG: No, I think that's--

MR. HESS: Let me add just one other thing, because it's not quite as neutral because it depends how much press and where they are. Tory Clark [sp] has been making the argument, and I think quite powerfully, that as soon as the war was over, all of--much of journalism left. It was expensive and that there are really very few at least U.S. news organizations in Iraq at this time. And then if you look at where they are and what they cover, you may find a very different picture than if indeed they had not chosen to pull back.

MR. DAALDER: You mean, we're in the middle and not in the north and the south. We're covering the--

Let me just--I mean, this argument which has been going on now, which is you're only reporting the bad news and not the good news. One isn't true. Just read the newspapers. It's just not true. There's lots of information in newspapers and on the TV and in the radio about what is good about Iraq. There's a problem, however. There are lots of things really bad in Iraq. And that is competing with the image that the president and the administration would like to convey.

Let me just give you the following example. Every single CoDel--congressional delegation--that goes to Iraq, the overnight in Kuwait. They fly in every day and they fly out every day. Is that because there are not enough hotel rooms in Baghdad? Or is it perhaps because the safety of the CoDel is best guaranteed if they don't sleep in Baghdad or in the south or in Mosul in the north?

So the military itself doesn't believe the situation is secure enough for people to overnight there. That is an in--you know, just a little, tiny fact that suggests that the wonderful progress about the wonderful schools that are all opening all over

there and that we now have enough electricity, the same level that we had in the pre-war--I'd certainly hope so; six months, $10 billion--et cetera. But things are moving well; they're not necessarily moving as well as we would like.

MR. HESS: Let's do one more question then.

QUESTION: My name is Kelly Jo Berry and I'm a master's candidate at America University and I've spent the last five years working in Africa, and I'm wondering how Liberia fits into looking for the "bad guy" and getting the "bad guy" and Bush's influence in making that more of a success story than it is at the moment, compared with finding Osama and finding Saddam, and having Taylor, and not really emphasizing it.

MR. : I think that the administration, for a long time--and I use the administration writ large, the Federal Government, law enforcement--paid very, very little attention to what was going on there. I think they're still paying very little attention to it. What they miss by not paying attention to it, in terms of the war on terrorism, was the change in the way al Qaeda and other organizations finance their activities.

The diamond business in West Africa has had a huge effect in terms of allowing them to launder money, allowing them to park money the same way everybody else does, in commodities that are not going to lose their value and are harder to find.

So in terms of the actual war on terrorism, I think that they missed out by not paying any attention, even with that little part of what was happening in West Africa.

In terms of foreign policy, feeling it's important to engage and to have an influence, and to try to make that situation better, I think they're paying very, very little attention.

I think that although, you know, the President took his trip to Africa, the President gives lip service to Africa, I think that anybody, certainly in the State Department, who works on Africa issues, would tell you that except for the extent that it relates to terrorism, and even then, again, if you go back to what I said before, it's had very little effect, except for that particular area, I think that they're not--

MR. : And also I would say the interesting thing about watching that situation unfold, and I wouldn't even pretend to know as much about it as you, or so many others, was the extent, though, to which American policy was hamstrung by being overstretched, militarily, because there were those who said that even a small number of American forces sent into Liberia at a critical time would have paid enormous dividends for American support for multilateral efforts in Africa, and there were those who pointed out, everybody said, maybe you disagree, that if we had sent forces in there, they would have been welcomed and it would have been a stirring image to present to the world at a time when the opposite was happening in Iraq or close to the opposite.

But it just couldn't be done, evidently. I think that part of the administration really wanted to do it. I think it would have earned a lot of good will among members of the United Nations Security Council, leaving aside Africa policy. The Europeans, you know, the British were, and French were involved in Africa.

They would have appreciated that America stepped up to the plate in Africa, in terms of sending in forces. It would have, leaving aside the Africa, the narrow situation of what was happening in Liberia, it would have been a tremendously helpful step for American foreign policy, and it just couldn't happen because the Pentagon was so adamant, perhaps for all the right reasons, that they just couldn't spare the forces, to be able to use them in a way that would have really helped serve Americans' interests.

MR. : I think Liberia is a classic case study of this President's foreign policy. This is a President who came in office with very clear priorities. Liberia wasn't one of them. Africa wasn't one of them. He had a trip to Africa, it was long-planned, he had to go, and Liberia broke right before, and every single commentator thought that therefore he had to make the decision to go in, to do what the Pentagon didn't want to do. Everybody. Every newspaper. We had panels here at Brookings. we were all predicting that they were going in. Jim and I, writing the conclusion to our book, in which we were thinking--should we put Africa in there or not? said he's not going to go in. It's not a priority for him. It's not important. He'll just deflect the issue until it is off the front page, and then he won't go in. Exactly what happened. He walked through Africa, asked every reporter at every stop: Are you gonna do Liberia? He said: We're looking at it.

And it was a very important--you know--and he got away with it. He got away with it. He said it wasn't important and it isn't important, and we're not in Liberia, and the result is up to the Liberians.

MR. : I want to put an exclamation point on what Ivo just said because it's very interesting, because much of the press covered this as the Pentagon was adamantly opposed to it, rather than as the President wasn't really interested in doing it, and I think after the end of the day, the America government tend to do what the President wants to do, and if it doesn't do it it's probably because the person elected by the American people isn't interested in doing it.

MR. HESS: Well, then let me say one last thing and that is as one President said of another President: He can't walk and chew gum at the same time. You remember that.

This applies to administrations and Presidents and also to the press, whether we're now talking about Africa or we're talking about Latin America, we're going to see happening the same thing that we saw in the Cold War coverage. Everything is going to be framed in terms of the war on terrorism. It has to do with resources, it has to do with energy, it has to do with the way you put out a daily newspaper, and if we're all making predictions, just look for how little of the world outside of something that can be framed as al Qaeda terrorism, and so forth, you're going to see in a world that is increasingly complicated and dangerous.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you. It was a wonderful panel, we're already over time, and we loved having you here today.

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