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WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE U.S. TRANSFERS POWER TO IRAQ?

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**QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION**

## **PROCEEDINGS**

MR. STEINBERG: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Brookings. For those of you here, and those of you out in remote land, we are back again to talk about Iraq in an expanded session today, which is expanded both in the size of our distinguished commentators and also in the length of time that we're going to devote to it this morning, given the range and the importance of issues that the country, the region and the world is facing in Iraq.

It's been a very eventful and difficult period over the past several weeks. Each day brings more news, both in terms of the military efforts on the ground of the Coalition forces, the political efforts to build a transitional government in Iraq, heading towards the June 30th deadline, and the broader question about the long-term role and mission of the United States.

And we have with us today a distinguished group of scholars who, in various ways, are affiliated with Brookings and the Saban Center here on Middle East policy.

We are going to begin with Amatzia Baram, who is one of the most distinguished and most knowledgeable commentators on the situation in Iraq. Amatzia is a former visiting fellow here at the Saban Center and now at the U.S. Institute of Peace. We'll follow that with Ken Pollack, Director of Research here at the Saban Center, a senior fellow at Brookings. Michael O'Hanlon will talk about the military challenges, another senior fellow here at Brookings. We are fortunate to have Shibley Telhami here at the University of Maryland and a nonresident senior fellow at the Saban Center, and then finally Ivo Daalder from Brookings.

As I say, we're going to take a little extra time today. We'll give each of the scholars time to talk about the range of issues, beginning with the political situation in Iraq and looking to the challenges that the United States is facing and the broader international community.

So, Amatzia, over to you.

MR. BARAM: Thank you. I want to say it's wonderful to be here again. I had a fantastic time at Brookings and the Saban Center, and I am grateful for the invitation.

I'll try to talk about two different issues within the very limited time we have: A, what's happening right now in Iraq, as far as I can tell, and, B, what are people's expectations of the post-June 30th period, until the general elections in January 2005, and so on, this kind of window of, what, 6, 8 months.

What's happening right now is a bit baffling, but again Iraq is always a baffling issue. In Fallujah, the Coalition bought time, certainly successfully bought time. I understand very well the strong reservations many people have about the compromise in Fallujah. It is a problematic compromise, both in Iraq people object to it and here in America, obviously, but I understand it. I can hardly criticize it because my conclusion is that the U.S.-supported Coalition simply couldn't fight on two fronts. It simply was becoming impossible, unmanageable, not for military reasons, for purely political reasons, and for what's happening inside Iraq. Sunni and Shi'a mosques started cooperating, which is a very good thing, except it is against America, which is not a good thing, and I felt that that was not a bad solution, but there is a saying in America--I've never heard it, by the way, in Britain ever--something like I think, "There is no such thing as a free lunch." In Britain, they never heard about that.

[Laughter.]

MR. BARAM: But the free lunch is what you did. You froze the situation in Fallujah, but you haven't solved it. The Fallujah problem is not solved. I'll just say that. And, who knows, hopefully not, but we might have to see Fallujah revisited or Fallujah Volume II and so on. I won't go into details. It's a problem. But at least I would say it allowed the Coalition to turn to Muqtada al-Sadr, who was a much more serious problem.

About Muqtada al-Sadr, I must say, while I don't think the idea of closing down the newspaper was the best way of dealing with the problem, it's clear that the problem had to be dealt with. And, again, as the last few weeks showed that patience and consultation with Sistani almost all the time, through intermediary, of course, and a sensitivity and military prowess, military expertise, really proficiency, basically, very gradually eroded Muqtada al-Sadr's position. The military battle is, as we all know, is not the main problem. It's the political battle. But on the political level, there was some important achievement.

First of all, at the beginning of the movement of Muqtada al-Sadr's revolt, he used Sistani as a cover, the Grand Ayatollah Sistani, the single most important maybe political personality in Iraq today. And he said, "I am Sistani's striking arm." That was not exactly the case. In fact, he was using Sistani's position against the Constitution against Sistani himself, but Sistani was embarrassed because he did object to the Constitution, and he did come into a clash with the administration, with the CPA, and with the Iraqi Governing Council, and this enabled Muqtada to put his foot in the door. And people in Iraq didn't understand Sistani very well. It's a sad fact, but it's true.

Sistani criticized the Coalition forces ferociously for their military operations in Fallujah and in the South and criticized Muqtada no less ferociously, but without mentioning his name, for the havoc he was throwing everywhere in the Southern part of Iraq and Baghdad. He criticized him in no uncertain terms, but people didn't understand because he never mentioned Muqtada by name, while he did mention the occupation forces by name, and so that strengthened Muqtada al-Sadr even more.

Today, it's very different. Sistani dissociated himself from Muqtada as much as he possibly can. He cannot go any further. He said, "All armies should evacuate Najaf, Karbala, and Kufa." Now, I'm sure that the Coalition forces would be delighted to evacuate Najaf, Karbala and Kufa the moment Muqtada al-Sadr does. Of course, Muqtada al-Sadr's response to that was Sistani should leave Iraq.

That is good news because I think that he lost Sistani, and the public now understands that he lost Sistani. It's not sufficient. Muqtada is today quite desperate, and there is a growing number of people who are still supporting him. I would just say that this is not the hard core that he had had. These are all these young men unemployed, little education, no jobs, who are attracted to him and probably wouldn't die for him, but in terms of sympathy you have some of it, and you have some other circles. So this is not enough.

Sistani and the four grand ayatollahs that support him are against Muqtada. It's very clear today to everybody. There is a lot of political work to be done to continue this political momentum and not stop there and just wait for Muqtada to feel that he is lonely and call for mama or something. That won't happen.

Militarily speaking, I think Karbala today is already in Coalition hands. It's a very important achievement. Kufa will be soon, I believe. Najaf is the main

problem, and Muqtada simply decided to concentrate the effort in Najaf, which is really the heart of the Shi'a world.

I don't think, who knows, but I don't think the Coalition forces can go into Najaf, into the main part, the center, the heart of Najaf, into the Shrine of Ali, I doubt it very much. Personally, I wouldn't even recommend it. What I would recommend: use the tribes.

And Sistani, in his latest communique, "By Ahn" [ph], said Najaf, Karbala, and Kufa should be controlled, secured and so on by two forces: the Iraqi police, which the Coalition has been coaching, and the tribes. So Sistani already provided some kind of a key component, which I think may be used in the future--tribal army or whatever.

Amazingly enough, Muqtada even lost his mentor, his, if you wish, "muqallid." Muqallid is the grand ayatollah or the marja, the source of emulation that you follow. Each religious Shi'a person has to follow a source of emulation, "muqallid." And he lost him, Kazem al-Haeri, Grand Ayatollah Kazem Haeri, in Qom. He's an Iraqi Arab, but he's in Qom, in Iran. He also dissociated himself from Muqtada in a gentle way, but he did it.

Unhappily enough, I would say, for the Coalition, and for the Iraqi Governing Council, and for Iraqis, in general, the Iranian top-notch leaders--especially Ali Khamenei and Hashemi Rafsanjani--started now supporting Muqtada, which means Iran, as always, is split at least down the middle. Khatami, by the way, the President, has never supported Muqtada, refused to see him when he visited Tehran. So we see a split in the Iranian top leadership. We don't know what's going to happen next, but at least until now, and we do see in the Iraqi senior leadership of the Shi'a community basic

support or let's say not supported the Coalition so much or not at all, but supported the idea that Muqtada withdraw his forces from Najaf and Karbala. This is good, but we are only halfway through this crisis. Still, the signs are not so bad.

What can happen, there are all sorts of ideas, either solving it militarily or reaching some compromise, but I would say, if a compromise can be reached, according to which Muqtada would be contained, say, the tribes offered him shelter, which means really detainment, until his trial--and everybody agrees a trial can be conducted by the next government--and his army is being disarmed--not really disarmed.

In Iraq, nobody is really disarmed. You just don't carry your weapons in street, in daylight. That's basically what disarming in Iraq means. That could be a solution, but of course a military solution that does not affect the main shrine and does not kill Muqtada is also acceptable.

What do people expect? Very briefly, again. I would say people don't know quite what it means, a partially sovereign government. It's not clear to people in Iraq, and it's not clear to many people in America, and of course nobody knows yet who is going to be in that government. There is a tug of war, a tug of war between two options, and it's not something that, if I can trace what's happening in the administration, it's not something that one part of the administration is saying A, the other is saying B, and now there is an Armageddon battle in D.C. That's not the case. People are really thinking and sort of contemplating what's the best solution.

Brahimi, Lakhdar Brahimi, as we know, the U.N. envoy, is demanding a government that will be of professionals and nonpoliticians, bureaucrats, experts. This, to me, seems like the best idea. I don't go into it but for historical reasons, Iraqis are viciously critical, really vitriolically critical, of governments that do two or three things

together: A, they serve a superpower-- anybody who is not Iraq; B, they are corrupt; C, they are inefficient. This is very dangerous. And the most important, they are ex-grinders[?]. So the next government has to look different from that.

So the government I would say, eventually, okay, so a government of experts is not--is, to my mind, a good idea, and in that respect, I think Lakhdar Brahimi has got the right idea. But--and there is a big but here--there are substantial pressures from the Iraqi Governing Council and other parties in Iraq who would like to--politicians and political bodies who would like to partake in this government.

It's not the best solution because then you are preparing for the elections and you already are established in some kind of power center, and you can use your ministry in order to gain support to create a pyramid of entourage and so on, but maybe a compromise is possible. I would say probably a compromise will be reached. I doubt that the President will say today who is going to be the next government because I'm not sure, at least I don't know anybody here or maybe somebody here knows better, I'm not sure that already the decision was made who, what and which position. There are pressures from the Kurdish side, and so the whole thing is now still in the making.

But I would say a few things that people expect, and that's very important, maybe the most important. Whoever is in the government, they need not be seen as American lackeys. They don't need to be, god forbid, enemies of America. That would be a disaster, but they have to be people of independent minds and to be seen to be people of independent minds.

Second of all, they have to be able to provide a strong leader, as most Iraqis want to see, is, in the first place, somebody who is not clear-cut American lackey and who is capable of providing, and what is needed mostly is, of course, to complete

the repairs of the infrastructure to provide many jobs in order to dry that swamp, literally and figuratively speaking, swamp of Sadr City, where you have 2 million people, and the men there are about 60-, 70-percent unemployed, but also in Basra, in Nasiriyah, in Amarah, in Kut, to provide jobs.

Funnily enough or strangely enough, in Najaf and Karbala the problem is less serious. It's there, but not very serious, and the only thing is peace and quiet so pilgrims can come again from Iran. Every day thousands of pilgrims are used to flocking into Najaf and Karbala. This has to be resumed, and I don't see many problems there.

One more problem which has to be resolved: the new government -- Prime Minister, government -- will have to make sure that there is more safety, security in the streets. I'm not talking about political crime. I'm talking about ordinary crime. This is a major problem still in the largest cities, mainly in Najaf--sorry, my mistake--maybe in Basra and in Baghdad. In other places, much better. So my advice would be pour all of the police that you manage to train by now, the army units and so on--the Iraqi army units--that are already more or less trained, pour them into the streets of Basra and Baghdad and have a massive police presence in Basra and Baghdad and create some kind of sense of security.

Another problem which is much more difficult is ending the terrorism or reducing it. That, of course, is something which people know is going to take time.

And, finally, they'll have to prepare for elections. So these are basically, I think, the expectations in Iraq, and who knows I'm not saying it's going to succeed, but it has a chance, a certain chance of success.

MR. STEINBERG: Amatzia, before we turn to Ken, let me just ask you, you've talked a lot over the last several months about the role of the tribes. And your suggestion again today that the tribes provide the security in the Shi'a South, do you see that as a transition to some kind of arrangement with the tribes towards a national government or is there a risk that, at the same time, as you say in Fallujah we did a bit of a deal with the devil, that if we give the tribes this role, that that will lead to a risk of division and fractionation in Iraq?

MR. BARAM: The difference between the Fallujah case and the tribes of the South case is that in Fallujah you did make a deal with the devil. It's very true. This is the devil. The tribes are not. The tribes, you are paying a price, but again, if you need a militia that will keep Najaf, Karbala and Kufa safe, commerce will come back, people will come back, life will go back to normal. And the tribes can help, plus the police-- you also have police--joint units, not separate, but jointly. I don't see this as such a tremendous concession to tribes at the expense of the central power of the state. I feel that the tribes can be a part of the solution, at a price. Everything is at a price, again-- lunch and all of that.

[Laughter.]

MR. BARAM: So the price will be not with the British. It's very important to understand. When the British conquered Iraq, they went totally berserk, and I mean it as an historian, I couldn't believe it when I saw the British documents, in addition to books that were written, some good books beforehand that I read. They gave the tribal sheikhs total power over their tribesmen. They gave them all the land. They turned the tribesmen into serfs. It was disastrous.

And in addition to all of that, they forced the peasants to pay the government--forget about the tribal sheikhs who got their share and now the British would impose it--they forced the peasants to pay to the government taxes 30 times as high as the Ottomans actually levied on them. I don't know how people in D.C. would react if you tripled them. You cannot because it's the end of the economy, and the tribes went--the tribes went berserk, and that was the reason for the tribal revolt of 1920. And after that when they crushed it, they gave again the tribal sheikhs all of the power. They were dictators. That's a terrible mistake. They created tribal sheikhs who were actually artificial, as they were the government agents really, but they were really destroying the countryside.

The way to deal with the tribal sheikhs today should be totally different. You don't give them land. You don't give them money. Why? You help them with development. You consult with them a lot. You have to consult because, first of all, you still have in Iraq two kinds of tribal sheikhs. You have a tribal sheikh that was nominated by Saddam, ruled as an extension of Saddam's power, and these sheikhs are not at all popular in most parts of the Shi'a area. In the Sunni area, it's different. They are also, but not so bad.

These guys are not your interlocutors at all. I mean, why should they? If they are unpopular with their own tribe, don't worry about them. Find somebody else whom the tribe likes because you really would like people to like their sheikh and to follow them, and that's a traditional way. So that's number one.

Number two, you take those sheikhs with whom you can work and should work, you create sheikh's councils. You help them with what they need. You ask them what they need. Now, usually, they know very well what they need, but not what they

need personally, but what the tribe needs. Why not use them as sounding boards and as advisers to you what the tribe needs, in terms of infrastructure support and so on, not to their pockets, to the tribe?

And I'd say one more thing, as I can talk about it for us, but I would just say one thing. The border, that's my idea at least, and I think it makes some sense, the border between Iran and Iraq is completely open today. People can come in and out. It's just unbelievable--actually, only Iranians, not Iraqis. Iraqis, when they go to Iran, they are being immediately apprehended. But Iranians who go into Iraq and back into Iran, it's like totally open. You need to somehow close it and open gates, as in every normal country, and have the border controls. You don't have enough soldiers to do that. You just don't have it. And the Iraqi army is not yet ready for it.

Why not hire a few Southern tribal young men, who are on the border anyway on the Tigris, the Iraqi-Iranian border, in Amarah, in Kut, in Majarra [ph], Arbil, in Basra? Why not hire these guys? Pay them \$150 a month. They have their own rifles. Don't worry. You don't need to provide them with any weapons. Some of them are World War I Turkish rifles, but that's--and tell them, if you do the job well, we pay you a salary. You'll have a band here, and you are a militia only for border control. If you don't do it well, we revoke the agreement. So you can turn the tribe into a part of the solution.

I'll just say one more thing. Almost all, well, let's say 80, 85 percent, 75 percent, but certainly a vast majority of the tribal population of the Shi'a, south of Iraq, are not pro-Muqtada al-Sadr. They are pro-Sistani, and that's not such a bad thing. So, politically, too, you can work with them.

MR. STEINBERG: Ken, Amatzia has laid out one view about what should happen for the post-June 30th government. How is the United States looking at this, and what do you see?

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Jim. I always wind up with the short end of the stick or the short stick in the deck. What does the U.S. do now?

I want to start by saying that the honest answer, and I think we all have to be very humble about making these kind of prognostications, predictions, and recommendations because the honest answer is none of us really knows any more. The fact is that I think we had a pretty good sense going into the war what needed to be done, and I would argue that, looking back, the recommendations were right on the money. And if we had done them, I think we'd be in a lot better state than we're in today. But the simple fact of the matter is that those things weren't done, and we are where we are.

And a lot of the recommendations that I and other people all around Washington, all around Iraq, all around the world are making are mostly extrapolations from those early recommendations that we had. But the truth is that we've really lost our bearings. We are in a situation now in Iraq where we are terra incognita. We don't really know what the right answer is. And we all have different theories, but that's all that they are. They are theories. So, as I talk about my own thinking on this, please understand that I come from a sort of very humble perspective of I don't really know what the answer is, and I don't think anyone really knows.

About the best we can do is offer what seems to be the best prescription, given the different problems that we see out there. But given how far off the reservation, off of where we intended to be at this point in time as we are, it's very difficult to know exactly what the right answer is.

Let me start by talking about June 30th because there are two issues in June 30th that are starting to loom large for me, in terms of what's important out there, and the first one is going to be who determines who this new government is? Who determines what the actual composition of the new Iraqi government is? Some of you who come to these press briefings on a regular basis have heard me say this before. I will say it again. My biggest concern is that it be people who are acceptable to Brahimi and to Sistani and that the U.S. stay out. And one of the most disconcerting things that I have been hearing over the last few days is that the United States is deeply involved in trying to broker deals about who is or is not going to assume these new positions inside this new transitional government. If that is the case, that is very disconcerting to me because right now we have a bit of a "poison" touch. And if we are in there seen as manipulating the process and trying to bring this person or that person to power and keeping this person or that person out, we will contaminate that process.

Let's remember how we got to the stage that we're in today. The reason we are where we are is because we picked an Interim Governing Council that most Iraqis believed was illegitimate. It was illegitimate because we put many people on it that Iraqis don't care for and because we were seen as choosing our people. And that association itself became an element of the poison over time. The whole reason that we are being forced to select a new Governing Council, a new transitional authority, is because the one that we created last year was a failure, and we've got to remember that.

Therefore, the best thing that we can do is keep out of the details and continue to say to Brahimi, and to Sistani, and to all of the other mainstream Iraqi leaders, "Whatever you accept will be fine with us. But this new government has to be acceptable to you, and that is our only consideration."

A second issue out there on June 30th. Some of you who have been to these briefings before have heard me talk about the need for some kind of a U.N.-authorized High Commissioner. I want to unpack that logic a little bit more because I think it's something that's getting underreported. One of the dirty little secrets of June 30th is that the United States is not going to simply allow the Iraqis to control their own destiny. You hear hints of it here and there, when people talk about limited sovereignty, when we point out the fact that there are still going to be thousands of Americans in country and probably still over 100,000 of our troops in country.

The fact of the matter is that everyone--we, our allies, the United Nations and most of the Iraqi leadership--understand that this new transitional government will not be able to handle all of Iraq's problems by itself. They are going to have to have help of some kind. And what Ayatollah Sistani has said on a number of occasions is that because this is not going to be a purely democratically elected new transitional government, they will not have full legitimacy, and therefore they cannot be allowed to make all kinds of decisions for Iraq that might be binding on Iraq's future. He has made it very clear that an interim government can only have partial authority, partial control over Iraq's destiny.

What that means is there's going to have to be someone else out there who sets parameters, who sets boundaries within which this new transitional government is going to operate. And the big question out there after June 30th or one of the big questions, as far as I'm concerned, is who is that going to be? I think, in the administration's mind, that person is going to be Ambassador Negroponte. That's what they want to do. I think it is why they continue to resist a larger United Nations' role, because they want the United States to have the ultimate say. This is something that

they have been adamant about from the beginning of the occupation, that the United States must have full, ultimate control over Iraq's political destiny.

And I think that that was always a dubious assumption, but I think that the course of events have demonstrated that that is an increasingly dangerous path to take. And, in fact, it subverts their larger goal, which is to create a new Iraqi government which Iraqis will see as actually representing their goals and being independent. And if there is a U.S. person who, at the end of the day, is the one who has to step in and say, "No, you cannot do that. That is not within your purview," that is simply going to undermine everything that they've been trying to accomplish with this new Iraqi transitional government. And that is why I think that the figure who is ultimately charged with maintaining those boundaries has got to be some kind of international figure. Whether it's a new special representative of the Secretary General or someone anointed by a group of other powers, I think that's less important. The key is it shouldn't be an American.

Now, that point brings me to some longer-term issues and, for me, those really are the important ones because, as I said, none of us really knows exactly what the right answer, especially the right answer in the short term is. So many of these different developments are going to be determined by how the Iraqis react to them, and different actions could have different impacts on the Iraqi people based on a whole range of things that may be entirely beyond our control: things like terrorist attacks, things like what others Iraqis will have to say or things that will be under our control like how we present it. And if we present it badly, that may simply poison the Iraqis against it.

That is why, for me, the most important things are these longer-term trends. Now, I think the administration would agree with that point. I think that they are

looking at the Iraqi public opinion polls exactly the way that I am, and they are seeing some very disturbing trends in those polls. And what they are seeing is an erosion of confidence in the Iraqis that the United States knows what it's doing and is willing and able to make reconstruction work.

Now, I think we need to take those polls with some grains of salt, and it's very important to do so. First, there are a lot of good things going on in Iraq. We should always remember that. When we talk to Americans out working in the fields, they consistently will tell you about all of the good things that are going on in their particular neighborhoods, and you can also see that reflected in the polls. So that on the one hand you will see Iraqis saying that the U.S. should get out and saying that the United States is not helping the situation and, on the other hand, you will see them saying that they all believe that a year from now they're going to be much better off than they are today. And that optimism is a sign of the positives that still exist there in Iraq.

The other grain of salt to take about the public opinion polling is that much of what the Iraqis are registering is protest. They are trying to express their anger and their frustration, and this is something that we have heard from Iraqis consistently. They have no way of telling Americans what they want and how unhappy they are because, unfortunately, U.S. presence out there is much too insulated, the CPA has cut itself off from the Iraqis too much, and average Iraqis don't feel like they have a way of speaking to the United States.

And so I think many Iraqis are using these polls as a method of protest of saying, of expressing their anger. And when they say, "We want you out of the country," I don't think they really mean it. Because when I speak to Iraqis, and when you look at other aspects of these polls, they all are very frightened about the kind of

security circumstances that could arise if the United States were to actually leave. But I think that we should take these as a sign of their anger and their frustration, and this is the only way that they have to express it, by saying you should just get out of our country. It shows their anger. It's a way of saying to us, "Hey, pay attention to us. What you are doing is not what we want."

But I think the administration has a particular theory about how you deal with the erosion of Iraqi public confidence, which is the most important thing out there. If the reconstruction is going to succeed, it is because the Iraqis remain committed to it. And if the Iraqis don't remain committed to it, it is going to fail. There are just no alternatives.

I think the administration's theory is that the real problems here are that the Iraqis don't like seeing an American face on this and that that American face is making it possible for the terrorists to come after the United States and to come after Iraqis associated with the United States. And so the administration's theory is that June 30th is the short-term solution to the problem. If we take the United States out of the mix, put a bigger Iraqi face on this, A, take the Americans out of the Iraqi faces, so we get rid of that aspect of humiliation which so many Iraqis feel and, B, we make it impossible for the terrorists to keep attacking this government because it will no longer be an American government, it will be an Iraqi government. Now, that's, I think, the administration's theory, and I don't think that that's entirely wrong. I think that there are aspects of that that are really actually quite perceptive, but I also don't think that's all of the problem.

And when I look at the problems out there, and when I listen to Iraqis and look at the public opinion polling, what I continue to focus on are the Iraqi's complaints

about what Amatzia mentioned in terms of basic security, in terms of the inability or unwillingness of the United States to provide the Iraqis with security on a day-to-day basis to make their streets and their homes safe; and, second, on our inability to get their economy going. And, for me, those are the crucial issues. And while I do believe that June 30th is important, and while I do believe it's important to take the U.S. face off of reconstruction, and that's one of the reasons why, as I said, I want the U.S. out of this process of picking the new leaders, and I don't want the U.S. ambassador being the one who has to keep the new Iraqi transitional government in line because both of those things I think undercut the administration's own theory about how you deal with this problem.

I think that the longer-term issues are far more important. As I think the administration's theory is, we get to June 30th, that eliminates the basis for the terrorism attacks, it eliminates the immediate problems that Iraqis see of Americans controlling their destinies, and that will allow all of these good forces, it will give that the time to manifest themselves and to build this country into something tangible, something that's sustainable over the long term.

As I said, I'm afraid that that's not quite correct. Because when I look at the polls, when I talk to Iraqis, what I consistently hear is this slow erosion of Iraqi confidence because of the security problems, because of the economic problems. And so my solutions, my answers, short term, in addition to my points about June 30th, are that we've got to put more troops in there to get control of the security situation because the Iraqi troops are not ready to handle the job themselves. We absolutely must take this responsibility on. And 135,000 troops is not enough to get the job done. It's just enough to keep the lid on, but it's not actually solving the problems.

And, second, we have got to make a much greater effort on all of the economic sides. And here one issue that I will mention is the fact that we've got \$15 billion of the \$18 billion appropriated by the Congress that has still not been disbursed. And I've not gotten a really good answer from anyone as to why it's not been disbursed, but I hear of all kinds of problems within the bureaucracy.

I don't know what the answer is, but my solution to the problem is a very or--sorry. I don't know what the problem is, but my answer to the problem is a very simple one. This administration, which has made such an effort on Iraq, which has put the reconstruction of Iraq four square as the centerpiece of its foreign policy today, has got to make the bureaucracy and the Congress--a Congress which, of course, its party controls--get this money out there.

To me, it is absolutely criminal that we have not disbursed more of this money, that there is not more money flowing into Iraq, starting up job programs so that we get the unemployed off the streets, so that we deal with this 60-percent unemployment rate which is killing the popular support for the reconstruction of Iraq.

We have got to reach long-term sustainable development so that the Iraqis see that there is something on the horizon that is going to support them because, if there are obviously lots of other problems, there are lots of other things that we can do, and many of you in this room have heard me say them, but that's another big one out there that I don't think that we're focusing on enough. There is money out there, and it is simply not being employed, and that money is desperately needed in Iraq.

As I said, with a 60-percent unemployment rate, doing things like Amatzia was suggesting with the tribes, creating jobs, work progress administration-type programs in Iraq, doing anything to give Iraqis a sense of livelihood, a sense of

responsibility, a role in their future, a role in reconstruction and some money in their pockets will be an enormous help.

MR. STEINBERG: Ken, you've suggested that we should get out, that we should let Brahimi help pick people. You suggested a U.N. High Representative. What leads you to think that a U.N. figure, an external figure like Brahimi or somebody else, would be more acceptable to the Iraqis? There are obviously sectarian confessional issues with Brahimi. Anybody else in the outside is going to be carrying a certain amount of baggage.

Is there any kind of concrete reason to think, okay, yes, we understand the problem with the Americans, but that this other figure is going to be more acceptable, given what Amatzia said about the Iraqis' own sense of wanting ownership for themselves?

MR. POLLACK: Yes, it's a really important question, Jim. And, first, let me answer it with what is ultimately for me the bottom line, which is at this point in time there is probably no one worse than the United States in terms of picking the new government. I mean, it's an unfortunate reality, and I think that there are lots of problems with the U.N. and with Brahimi, although I want to talk about that in a second, also. But the simple fact is he is not the worst option out there. The worst option out there is for the United States to pick who this new transitional government is going to be for all of the reasons I've already laid out.

I also want to talk about Brahimi as a person. The fact of the matter is that most Iraqi groups are being willing to deal with him, entreat with him. Sistani is no longer willing to do so, but he nevertheless has his people willing to talk to Brahimi, and

they are willing to sit and talk with Brahimi in ways that they are not willing to sit and talk with us.

In all honesty, most of the people who are making insinuations about Brahimi and the fact that he is a Sunni, and therefore should not be allowed to do this and is playing favorites, are Ahmad Chalabi and the INC, and they have their own agenda in this. And Brahimi has made it very clear that he is no friend of Ahmad Chalabi's. And we have seen consistently that when Chalabi is opposed by someone, he reaches for any tool in his kit to discredit them, whatever it may be. Since he probably doesn't have files that indicate that Brahimi was on Saddam's payroll, he's reached for this instead.

MR. BARAM: May I just say one sentence; that as far as I understand, Brahimi is not willing even to stay in Iraq and to be the permanent representative, but it will be very important to have a permanent representative in Iraq, maybe a European, maybe somebody Japanese, somebody who is not an American and who is not either Sunni or Shi'a, totally divorced from the local environment. I think that could be useful.

MR. STEINBERG: Russian Orthodox.

[Laughter.]

MR. STEINBERG: Thinking about the military situation, Ken has raised the problem of who is going to say no to the Iraqis. But there is also the flip side, which is, as the Iraqi authorities become empowered, are they going to insist on saying no to the Americans when it comes to military operations, and how far can we go in terms of giving others a voice in dealing with the insurgency, the military challenges that we face?

MR. O'HANLON: Thanks, Jim, and thanks to all of you for being here. I also want to thank Congress for going home so that C-SPAN would be available to cover this event.

[Laughter.]

MR. O'HANLON: One other quick word is that, and I'm sure that we all feel this way, but of course Congress is home because of the Memorial Day break, and this is a Memorial Day that many of us will be thinking about the men and women of the Armed Forces even more than in a usual year, many of whom have sacrificed so much, 99 percent of whom are doing a great job in Iraq, despite all of the recent scandals. And I know we all, in this room, undoubtedly feel that way, and so I just wanted to make that explicit of those military personnel who may be feeling a little demoralized these days.

But to answer your question, Jim, I feel that--maybe let me take a quick step back and talk about broad trends in Iraq just for a second and then get to your question. Broad trends are that, as Ken has indicated, there is not enough employment yet. There is some debate about whether the figure is as bad as 60-percent unemployment, and we're having some ongoing discussions with CPA and others trying to get better information on this. But overall, President Bush I think surely exaggerated a bit when he said in his May radio address, and also in his April press conference, that most of Iraq was generally stable and that the country is a world apart, a world better than it was under Saddam Hussein.

Unfortunately, by most economic metrics, the country is now about to where it was under late Saddam Hussein. There's some good news in that. It could have been worse, and it was worse. It was worse last summer and in the immediate aftermath of the invasion. On the other hand, Saddam Hussein in 2002 is not a very impressive

metric against which to measure progress. Obviously, he was a terrible leader. On top of that, of course, by 2002, the world had sanctions on Iraq for 11 years, and living standards were not what they had been even 12 years before.

Therefore, it's a measure against Saddam's latter years and to say that's about where we've gotten back to is frankly not very good, and we're certainly not much better yet than in that time period. As Ken points out, the money is being spent very slowly from the congressional appropriation. Other facts are at work as well. But there is at least hope because the trends are gently positive, even if they are very, very gentle.

On the security front, now getting closer to Jim's question, and here we all know that most of the headline news is obviously bad, and it has been bad for the last several months, frankly. March, April, May has been a very difficult time period. I was just looking over the statistics for May. May has already become now the third deadliest month for American forces in Iraq since the invasion was complete. Only April and November were worse. There's still a chance that May may wind up as deadly as last year during the March-April invasion period on a per-month basis. So it's still very, very bad.

Unfortunately, even below the level of headlines things are not great. We may be making some progress in dealing with Mr. Sadr. You heard about that earlier this morning. I think we at least avoided a worse tragedy in Fallujah with the decision to go to the Fallujah brigade, however mixed of an approach that may be for its overall politics and other things it signifies but, nonetheless, security in Iraq today is not good. Crime rates are still very high. They are perhaps a little better than they were last summer, but they are still several times what they are in most other parts of the region, as best we can tell. The Iraqi security forces are only about 5- to 8-percent trained, if

you look at police and army, in particular. The Civil Defense Corps is a little further along. The Facility Protection Service doesn't need to be held to quite as high of a standard. They are basically guarding infrastructure, other things, where broader skill sets are not as important. But the core institutions--the Army and the police--are each less than 10-percent trained a full year into this stabilization effort. That's another statistics that confounds me, in addition to the ones that Ken has mentioned, for example, about only a billion or two of the \$18 billion being spent up until now.

So, even if you look below the headlines to casualties among Iraqis who are just trying to live their lives and not safe to walk the streets to the quality of Iraqi security forces, there is unfortunately not much good news to hang onto. And this brings me to Jim's question which, as you can see, I have been trying desperately to avoid for five minutes because I don't have a very good answer--

[Laughter.]

MR. O'HANLON: But I'll just give a couple of broad principles. One is that I think if we're going to do any major Fallujah-style attacks, we obviously do not want to do these in the face of direct opposition from the Iraqi transitional government. I think, for all intents and purposes we don't want to call it a veto, but we should be thinking in terms of their having a veto.

If they really think that kind of an operation is a major mistake, we should not do it. It's really become just that simple because we are in a counterinsurgency, where the hearts and minds of the indigenous population are critical. There is nothing more important than that view of the Iraqi people towards what we are doing. And if they fundamentally oppose a major raid of that sort, unless we could be assured of getting 90 percent of the top resistance leadership and 90 percent of their

arms in any given major raid, which we're never going to have the intelligence to be confident about, we simply shouldn't do it.

On the other extreme, hot pursuit after a direct Iraqi insurgent attack or self-protection missions for our own forces we should always be able to do without permission. And I think any reasonable Iraqi government would come to the same conclusion. So I think those two extremes for me are fairly clear.

Going more into the middle, in the tougher zone, I think it's also clear that Iraqi security forces should not be asked to undertake big raids with us unless they feel confident they're up to it and that the politics of that operation are doable for them. It's not to say that they have the option to opt out of American command willy-nilly, but if we're talking about a major operation we think is necessary, the Iraqi political government has blessed, but Iraqi security forces either don't feel quite up to it or worry about the politics of having this be seen as one of their first big moves, as they're trying to create new institutions that enjoy the trust of the population, I think we need to give them, in most situations, very quietly an opt-out clause.

Most of these things are better not written down on paper because you don't want to imply the Iraqi security forces are a separate institution with separate decision-making working at cross-purposes with the United States. You don't want to send that message, but you do want to avoid situations where they feel forced to fight on our behalf and, frankly, I think that in the Fallujah episode of April, the outcome we saw there was the only outcome you could have expected. And a few of us, I think including Ivo and others at the last press briefing made that point. It's not surprising that there was some difficulty in asking them to take on that mission, and I think we have to be realistic about what their first jobs are.

So I'm covering some of the points along the spectrum, Jim, not everything, but there are going to be some missions where you're just going to have to work it out as you go. And for us to sit here in Washington and fully answer the question would of course be presumptuous. There are going to have to be some things done on the ground that are an evolution of a chain-of-command arrangement that is appropriate to the circumstances at hand.

I think we can set out these broad principles. Don't expect them to do everything that we do. Give the political institutions in Iraq close to a veto over any major intensification or escalation. However, preserve American forces' ability to do hot pursuit and individual small-scale raids more or less whenever we need to, based on the fact that you can't let intelligence perish. And if you have information on who you need to try to arrest or kill or if your troops have just been fired upon, you cannot have a big political discussion under those circumstances about what to do next.

I think those are the broad principles, and they are fairly commonsensical. And beyond that, I probably can't answer too much from this 7,000-mile distance.

I will just make one other broad point and then wrap up. Jim, it's something you have a stake in, too, so you may want to add a word or correct me if you don't like the way I portray it. But a week ago Jim and I argued in an op-ed that the United States should think about changing at least the broad symbolism of its mission in Iraq and declaring that the current military mission or the military mission as reconfigured in these next few weeks by Security Council resolution and agreement with the new Iraqi government this current mission should end at the end of 2005, when the Iraqis have their own government, have their own elections, and have their own

Constitution. We do not suggest cut and run. This is not a prescription for leaving Iraq at the end of 2005, unless of course the Iraqis ask us to leave.

In fact, I think Jim and I are concerned that there is a very high probability we will be asked to leave, unless we send a message to the Iraqis that more and more of these kinds of decisions are your own to make, certainly in consultation with us, certainly under conditions that we would find acceptable, but more and more you will make the decisions. Therefore, we try to mitigate the anti-Americanism, the almost anticolonial feelings that many Iraqis are now associating with the American presence, however unfair that may be to us and to our forces.

So the idea would be, try to develop a plan for the next 12 to 18 months that would train the Iraqi forces much more quickly and rigorously and plan to give the Iraqis a real choice at the end of 2005: do you want us to stay or not?

In one sense, of course, they already have this choice because Secretary Powell has said, "If you want us to leave, we will leave." We want to change the dynamics a little and say to the Iraqis, "We are going to plan to leave. We are going to plan to end this mission unless we come up with a mutual plan that will be effective and supersede the current mission after 2005. We are open to that discussion. Our own view is you probably are going to need that kind of help. We are not going to impose that expectation upon you and put all of the onus on you to kick us out. We are going to try to define this mission to end by that point. Afterwards, we can talk about a different chain of command, different rules of engagement, hopefully a smaller force, greater role for the Iraqi security institutions, with no presumption about any particular arrangement lasting beyond the end of next year."

So it's partly a question of managing perceptions and giving the Iraqis more ownership in what comes next, not trying to get American forces out by a specific date. In fact, it's our fear, largely, that American forces will be kicked out prior to that kind of a date, which drives this whole proposal in the first place. So I just wanted to add a couple of words on that. I'll stop for now and look forward to the discussion later.

MR. STEINBERG: Thank you. I want to now widen the aperture a bit with Shibley and Ivo. Shibley, it has not been exactly a great couple of months for the views of the United States in the Arab World. We've had Abu Ghraib. We've had the continued violence in Gaza and uncertainty about the Israeli pullout in Gaza, which has a kind of echo-chamber effect. We've got the Arab Summit. Where do we stand, and what's the strategy for the United States now to get the Arab World more on side and as a partner potentially in support in trying to deal with the continued instability in Iraq?

MR. TELHAMI: Well, Jim, things you've just mentioned were significant events, except for the last one, the Arab Summit. I don't think anybody really takes that as an important variable in what happens in the Middle East.

I think if you look at the attitude in the region--I would argue in much of the world--you have a collapse of trust in the U.S. I think that is the bottom line. A lot of people are raising questions about whether the Abu Ghraib horrible episode is just a public relations issue for us, whether, in fact, we're more obsessed with it than people in the region, given the fact that we know torture takes place in many of the prisons in the region, that people are not so naive as to think that that doesn't take place.

I think that's a mistaken analysis. I think it's a profoundly important episode, and I think it's profoundly important psychologically in the way people look at the U.S. Let's put it this way: I think people in the region, from the beginning, 90

percent of them, oppose the war in large part. They believe the war was for oil and for Israel, but not for democracy, not for weapons of mass destruction, not for any of these things that were stated by the U.S. That's what the surveys showed on the eve of the war.

Then, we said, okay, it's about the link between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. It didn't materialize. Weapons of mass destruction didn't materialize. We said it's about democracy. Well, we haven't seen any in the past year and certainly not in the rest of the region, not just in Iraq. Then, there was one moral argument we could make, and it was a reasonable one, and I think it resonates with some of our liberals here in America, which is at least we got rid of a horrible dictator. We're saving people from the torture chambers of a horrible dictator. It was a moral argument that was the last thread in the credibility of the argument as to why we're there, and that thread has been severed I think in a way that is etched in people's minds. It's very difficult to remove, and there is no trust.

And I think that no matter how we formulate things, how we say it, people aren't going to trust. And we haven't learned the lesson in the past couple of weeks since this horrible episode to deal with that psychology. When the images that broke out from a supposed wedding party, over 40 victims, our military continued to absolutely deny that it was a wedding party. And even though they had assumed it may be a party, they said bad people could have a party. But up until yesterday, there was a complete denial that it was a wedding party. Today, we have a video that supposedly shows that it was a wedding party. You can imagine what that does to people's faith in our story at this time.

So I would start with the assumption that there is absolutely no trust. This is not an issue of trust. And I don't think we can revive it in the short term. I think when you have it collapse, when you have it break down at that level, anything that we're going to say, anything that we're going to do is not going to be trusted. I agree with Ken, for example, when you say, what's the worst option? Anything that we're going to bless is not going to be trusted now. We have to find something other than that.

That takes me to the issue of how people are likely to see the transition. I think most people in the region don't see this as a genuine transition. They see it as just another way for the U.S. to extricate itself from its responsibilities in the region, that this is an American occupation that is likely to continue. And I think that you can mitigate that by doing certain things like having a bigger U.N. role, and I think that could help.

But the bottom line is, most people in the region are assuming the following: that we went in there because we wanted to have forward positioning for oil--forward positioning for oil--and what we're trying to do is, in their minds, to find the easiest way for us to bring about that objective, to make it safe for our troops to stay there for the long haul, that we're not there to just pull out. It's not about cutting and running, it's just that this is part of our aim is what most people believe.

I think, frankly, one of the things that should come out of the Abu Ghraib issue and the transfer of sovereignty is a debate here as to why are we there? What are the ultimate strategic objectives beyond not appearing to cut and run? I don't believe in cutting and running. I agree with practical convention wisdom here, that it's a mistake to cut and run. It has strategic implications.

But beyond that, particularly as many people are asking for more troops, which may be wise, if you're going to stay, you may as well do it well. If that is the case,

there has to be an articulation of why we're there. We have to force the issue of whether, in fact, there is already an *a priori* decision that we're going to stay for the long haul, that all of these things that Ken said, that we are really trying to keep control even as we're transferring authority, are we trying to keep control for that reason? Are we just trying to do that for that reason or is there something else?

I think we need to debate that, and the region frankly is going to believe that is the case unless we do a little more than what Mike suggested, which is not just say we're, of course, going to be dependent on the governing authority, but say we intend to pull out as soon as--link it up directly to certain events. Not to a time table that is superficial but to particular events, that we don't intend to stay. Unless we state that, I think we're not going to have trust.

Second, I am far less optimistic about--I consider this panel being so far optimistic about the prospects of what might happen when you transfer authority. Let me tell you why I'm very troubled by the actual transfer of sovereignty, and I see more problems in a way than answers to problems. I see certainly some positive. I think the symbolism is important. Similarly, these Iraqis that are going to be at the U.N., they're going to vote, they're going to make decisions, they're going to be representatives of Iraq. That's going to have an implication.

But in the end, you've got a real problem. No matter who selects these individuals, these individuals are going to be seen to have been selected under American occupation, even if Brahimi selects them. But more importantly, they are going to be entirely dependent on the U.S. If you pull out the American forces, they can be slaughtered the next morning. They're dependent for their own security on the U.S.

We say all of the things that we need to do, such as pouring money and policing. Well, who's going to do the policing? There is no police force that is capable of doing any policing on their own at this time. What would happen if there are attacks on the U.S., and the U.S. wants to do another attack into one of the cities in Iraq? Will we really allow them to veto this particular decision?

There is no question they are going to be entirely dependent on the U.S. And so in that sense, their decisions, their actions, particularly pertaining to security, are going to be connected with the U.S., and our own military, our own public opinion, particularly when their attacks on Americans are not going to be limited by what Mike suggested, which is let's act as if there is a veto from that governing authority. Because when there is an attack on Americans, when you have horrible scenes like we had in Fallujah, the mutilated Americans, the public wants a response.

And with or without a veto from a Governing Council, from a government, the government cannot have its hands tied when you have so many troops. We're spending nearly \$200 million a day. that is not something that the American public is going to accept.

So I think we're up against a big problem, and it's going to become bigger because I think security in Iraq is going to be harder for Iraqis. It's going to be harder to maintain after the transfer of sovereignty than it is now.

And more importantly, we haven't talked about the justice system. We talk about being prepared. What's the police going to do when they arrest people? Where are they going to take them? Do they shoot them or do they release them? Do they take them to court? What court? We have a judicial system that has been in awful shape. And, in fact, if there is an improvement in the judicial system in Iraq over the

past year, it has been actually the American military system that has sort of improved the justice in Iraq. You pull that out--

[Tape change.]

The United States had a big priority of making Iraq the fulcrum for democracy in the Middle East. Our success here was going to create pressure on the other Arab regimes to move forward on democracy. We had one summit cancelled because there couldn't be an agreement. We now have a summit going forward.

Where does the United States stand in terms of its influence with the rest of the region? How do they see the reform project now? And are we able to get any traction to try to achieve this broader U.S. objective?

MR. TELHAMI : Jim, I mean, going to this war, I mean, there was an assumption that after the war, we're going to be so powerful because it's going to succeed, we're going to be victorious? Are we going to turn around and tell people in the Arab world, "Reform"? Or are we going to tell them to do Arab-Israeli peace? Are we going to tell them to--it's going to empower us. And, of course, Iraq is going to start looking better and better, and their people are going to pressure them as well as us.

Well, right now, unfortunately, it's the other way around. We need them. We need the Saudis for their oil. Don't underestimate that, given the prices where they are. We need them to legitimize whatever government emerges in this transfer of sovereignty. We need them for keeping some kind of peace in the Arab-Israeli issue now that that's out of control. Certainly the Egyptians are heavily needed for that. And certainly no one believes that we're about to embark on another way in Iran, so the Iranians can do whatever meddling they want to do in this environment. So we're far weaker today than we were before, and those governments are not unhappy. They see it

and they're doing exactly the minimum they have to do to give us some kind of fig leaf that all is well. But they know they're in the driver's seat, and the public doesn't take them seriously and doesn't take the U.S. seriously. So, in a way, we lost both governments and publics. It's not a good place to be.

MR. STEINBERG: We're at the UN. We're trying to come up with a Security Council resolution. There's also a question about who's in the driver's seat there in terms of what the demands are. What's the U.S. game plan? And what's the chances of our getting there?

MR. DAALDER: Well, let me start off with echoing what I think everybody else on this panel said, whether you take the optimistic version that was expressed earlier or the pessimistic version that was expressed at the end. The reality is that we are now part of the problem rather than part of the solution in Iraq; and, second, because of that, any thought of hoping that internationalization is going to resolve this issue, even if credible before, is no longer credible today. And that's the context within which the United States now has to approach two fundamental issues: one, a new UN Security Council resolution; and, two, the question of who and how to fill the security gap that everyone knows is there.

So let's start with the resolution, which has to be done by June 30th. Today, the United States and the U.K. are reportedly circulating their first draft of a resolution. That will do one important thing that wasn't clear it was going to do even a couple of weeks ago, which is to give full and complete sovereignty to Iraq and the interim government that will be hopefully emerging sometime before June 30th.

There is no more talk, publicly or privately, of limits on the sovereignty of that government. In practice, you will find a resolution that, if it doesn't put it in

writing, will imply that the Iraqi government will have complete and total control over its own security forces; that the Iraqi government will be given, in the words of a British document leaked to the Sunday Times yesterday, an "effective veto" of major operations in the way that Mike talked about. That may not be in the resolution, but I think everybody will understand that is, in fact, the case. And the Iraqi government will also have control over its revenues, including oil revenues, which, as the price of a barrel of oil goes up, continues to increase.

However, there are a number of important issues that are not resolved, quite apart from the question of whether this interim government will, in fact, have the capacity to govern, an issue that the UN Security Council is not going to address. There are other specific issues that will need to be addressed: First, will there be a time limit for the multinational force? The French and the Germans, one with veto power, the other with a vote on the Security Council, are pressing for a date certain by which the MNF's mandate would end. The United States and the U.K. oppose a date certain. Exit strategies tied to exit dates generally don't produce welcome results.

The second issue that needs to be resolved is: What are the limits of the interim government's powers at least until the point of elections? The focus of the interim government will be short term. It will be on preparing the country for elections, hopefully by the end of the year or by January 2005 at the latest. There will be an understanding--but the question is whether it will be written down-- that this government cannot bind Iraq in the longer term, which is clearly not acceptable to vast sectors of Iraqi society.

Another issue to be resolved is the role and authority of any UN or international political authorities, whether it is the United Nations, whether it will be a

new UN special representative or not, what the powers and the role of that special representative is and indeed what their mission is going to be.

And, finally, an issue not resolved yet is the relationship among the new Iraqi government, the MNF and whatever international political authorities come about, in terms of deciding who does what and when within that time frame prior to elections. The British government has proposed the creation of a council, a national security council, of the multinational force, the Iraqi government, and perhaps the UN international authorities. But how that will work is an issue that needs to be resolved.

I think one of the ways--and I'm echoing something that Mike said earlier-- in which you may be able to resolve many of these issues is to make elections the fundamental focus of the international presence for the foreseeable future. And whether that is the election in late 2004 or early 2005 or the second one in late 2005 is a debatable one. But if you make the focal point of the international presence those elections, you get the benefits that Mike talked about, and you might be able to resolve some of the international differences that now exist on the UN Security Council resolution within the Council about what it is that we need to do.

But if you tie the mandate of the international political authorities and the military authorities to the preparation for and conduct of elections and that mandate then ends when those elections have taken place, you have a sense of finality. You would put, I think, the UN in charge of assisting the Iraqi government in conducting those elections. You would put the multinational force in charge of training Iraqi security forces to fill the gaps that exist now in the security side and to provide security for elections. And you would insist that a new mandate, if any, for an international presence,

both military and political, after the elections have to be negotiated with the newly elected government.

Again, we can debate whether that's the end of this year or early next year or at the end of 2005. But this concept is the same one Jim and Mike have written about.

But the key then is how do you fill that security gap between now and then. There is a general consensus that more American troops, especially more American troops visibly present in Iraq, may not necessarily solve your problem. In fact, it may enhance the degree of opposition to the international presence rather than reduce it. So the question is: Can anybody else fill that gap?

Don Rumsfeld has talked about 15 other countries coming in when we have another UN Security Council resolution. That was just a couple of weeks ago. Frankly, I'm not sure which 15 countries, which he did not identify, would come in, but if it's Palau and Micronesia, we're not going to solve it that way.

Let's be blunt. It's going to be very difficult even to keep the international troops that are there beyond the time limit that they have set. We have three countries besides the U.S. and the U.K. that are providing major forces: the the Netherlands, Poland, and Italy, all of whose mandate ends soon — in the first two instances by the end of next month. And there are huge debates in these countries on whether or not to extend that presence.

That presence, by the way, is about 7,000 troops. It's not peanuts. And in the South, it is a significant part.

France and Germany have announced yet again, for the 18th million time, if we didn't understand it yet, they ain't coming. Only the U.K., as far as we can tell, is

seriously thinking about sending more troops in order to fill the gap that was created by the Spaniards and the Hondurans and the Dominicans that left.

There is some suggestion and talk within NATO circles that hopefully by the time you have a UN Security Council resolution sometime next month, that when the NATO countries meet at Istanbul for their annual summit at the end of June, that NATO will, in fact, take over part of the responsibilities, either take over the Polish sector, or, marry the Polish and the British sector under a new British command.

Even if that happens--which I don't think it will, nor do I think it should--but even if it does happen, it doesn't mean necessarily more troops. At most what it means is an extraordinary confusion in command and control where you have a NATO sector that has a political authority in Brussels and a U.S. sector that will have a political authority in Washington. Not likely to be a very salutary way to resolve your problem.

So what's the solution for this? You know, sometimes there aren't any solutions. This may well be one of those times. The only way in which you're going to fill the gap eventually is to accelerate the training of Iraqi forces, and that ought to be the number one--should have been and now has to be the number one security priority. Luckily, and fortunately, we finally, after--what is it?--14 months there, have decided that we ought to have one person in charge of this effort, and we put a person in charge, General Petraeus who is extraordinarily capable and extraordinarily successful when he led his division up in the North. And it is a good thing that he is taking over.

We also, I think, ought to make the training of security forces the actual focus of any NATO involvement. Rather than having the Germans training 300 police in the UAE, why not have the NATO alliance as a whole take on the immense job of training the police, not just the 3,000 or 30,000, but the 100,000 that need to be trained

within the next year, and to do it in an as accelerated way as possible. It's one way in which you can try to get some international presence in a situation that otherwise, and even then perhaps, is pretty hopeless.

MR. STEINBERG: Before I turn to questions, I just want to come back with a brief comment on Shibley's last point, which I think is enormously important. In some ways, you can see over the last 13 years that we've come a full arc in terms of the U.S. role in the region. Thirteen years ago, at the end of the first Gulf War, the United States stood at a position of really unparalleled influence and respect in the region. We had won a great military victory with great prowess. It had been done in connection with the fantastic diplomatic effort that preceded that victory, pulling together an almost unprecedented international coalition in support of broadly accepted international principles.

We had an environment in which the Soviet Union had collapse and there were no rivals to the United States influence, that the United States had used that influence to convene the Madrid Summit and launch an effort to be involved in the issues of trying to find a resolution of the issues between Israel and the Arab countries. And it really seemed like the potential for the United States was almost unlimited in the region, almost no enemies. You still had the problem of Iran, clearly, to deal with at that time, but, nonetheless, really a position of great political, moral, and obviously military power.

We are today, I think, confronted with having come and really lost almost all that we had gained at that time, questions about what the U.S. role is, what our objectives are, whether we can be a force that others can rally behind around the region.

I'll be a little less pessimistic than Shibley in saying that I think that there are still strategies and opportunities available to us, but we face a real conundrum, as some of the discussion today has suggested, because, on the one hand, there's this sort of fear of a cut-and-run, in which the United States creates a mess and just leaves it for others to have to pick up. And we haven't touched on today all the challenges that that would represent, not only in Iraq but for the neighbors and the potential for broader instability. At the same time, our continued presence also creates a dilemma for the United States, uncertainties about why we're there, what we're trying to achieve.

And so trying to square that circle in the months ahead of, on the one hand, restoring our credibility and our sense that we have a long-term stake in the region, that we're not going to just abandon it to its fate, at the same time being seen once again as being supportive of the broader goals and aspirations of others is a big challenge for the United States. Mike and I have obviously taken a stab at trying to define at least the beginning of the way forward, but I think it is an important issue that we need to debate, and hopefully the administration and Congress will begin to debate, as we look at these tactical questions leading up to June 30th to understand that the stakes are just enormous in how we proceed from here and that we, on the one hand, can't afford to fail, on the other hand, we can't define not affording to fail in a way that's going to produce the very results that we fear.

Okay. So let's turn to questions. As always, we have microphones and I'll call on you, and once I've called on you, just state your name--stand and state your name, and we'll start with Findlay(ph) over in the corner here.

MR. LEWIS: Thank you. The President is going to be going to Rome, Paris, and Normandy, and then on to Sea Island for the G-8. Obviously, in Rome he'll

be meeting with the Italians and in Paris with the French. What can he do at this point to rally international support and figure out a way out of the conundrum that you've just outlined?

MR. STEINBERG: Let me take a first shot. Let me just say, we'll talk about it a little bit here. I hope that we'll have a chance either later this week or the beginning of next week to do a preview of the upcoming summits, because there are a set of issues, in addition to this very important one, that are going to be discussed. And so we'll have more to say on this to come, but let's take a first stab at it now.

MR. DAALDER: What he will do and what he should do are two different things. Let me focus on what he should do.

I think the President needs to--and he needs to start today--make clear that he recognizes that how we have engaged this problem has been a failure and that the most important reason it has been a failure is because we have insisted from day one to be in total and complete control of the effort; that the way in which we're going to resolve the issue is to get other people invested in the problem, and the only way you get them invested in the problem is to give them responsibilities. And he ought to use the fact that he is now going to Europe, and, meeting with the Europeans four times within the space of just one month, and he ought to sit down and say: I want to solve this problem with you, not against you, and the way we're going to have to resolve this problem with you is for, one, you to step up to the plate, you, the Europeans, you, the French, you, the Germans, to understand that this is a problem in Iraq. It is not just America's problem. It is now your problem. We may disagree about how it became your problem, but it is your problem. And, therefore, you need to step up to the plate. It

may not mean troops, but, for example, why not take on the mission of training 100,000 police over the next 12 to 18 months, to just throw out an idea.

But, secondly, the United States will have to say that means we will not be in control of this effort. We want others to be in control of this effort. Whether that is the United Nations, whether it is NATO, whether it is the idea of an Iraqi contact group which would include those who are most capable and most willing to be participating in the efforts, including the Iraqis themselves, is an issue that can be debated. But he needs to use this opportunity to say that shedding American control, sharing responsibility and authority for the mission is going to be the absolute key to getting other people invested sufficiently so they will contribute, because without it they're not going to contribute, they're not going to provide the troops, the money, and the expertise that is necessary, frankly, to succeed.

MR. : You know, I think some of us believe that there was an opportunity in the fall with the Europeans when, in fact, we had a UN resolution, rather than get them to agree to a resolution, just to vote for it, not wholeheartedly, and then essentially try to defeat it. The time would have been then to challenge them to put their own resolution, just to do what Ken says now about Brahimi, do what--you know, put your own resolution, whatever you want in the Security Council, we'll support it, make it your resolution. The European resolution on the table, we'll support it. In essence, you need to have people have a stake in the success.

I think the problem right now, while I still think that's something like you should do that might mitigate the problem, not address it, in large part because I still believe that at this point most Europeans and others around the world not only are worried about paying for the cost from now on--they see it as that--for something they

opposed, but, more importantly, they honestly don't want this administration to succeed. I mean, part of the problem is they don't want it to fail, and I think that argument resonates. No one wants to see Iraq collapse. They don't want the militants to win. They know it's going to affect them.

So, in that sense, they're going to do the minimum to prevent disaster, and they're going to continue to do the minimum to prevent disaster. But no one is going to do enough for this administration to say, Ah, it worked, let's do it again. That's the problem. And I think that is really the issue right now why a lot of other governments around the world are just not going to be persuaded to join wholeheartedly, no matter what we say.

MR. STEINBERG: Amatzia?

MR. BARAM: I think that even if you take the lower level of European or French and German expectations, namely, just to prevent the failure, even then they need to do much more than they have done until now, even though they have done something. I am a bearer of bad news and good news. The bad news is already out. The French and the Germans will not send soldiers to Iraq. This is absolutely certain. Not one soldier. At the same time, however, they can be expected and I think they might be willing to send more economic and technological help. Training the police is one aspect.

I can provide the example of the Japanese in Samawah. The Japanese are now concentrating on Samawah, development, jobs, whatever. It's difficult, but it's working. And in Samawah, you had less problems. You had some problems with Muqtada al-Sadr just recently, but much less than you had in Nasiriyah, than you had in Amarah, than you had in many other parts of Iraq, the southern part of Iraq.

So I think that this example is not a bad example. It's a very good example. The French and the Germans, who have resources--nobody has too much money nowadays, but, still, they're major powers--should be encouraged to take over responsibility for part one of the 18 governorates (?) and to spend there and to invest there. If they want to be also given the full responsibility toward the political process in that (?) in that governorate, I don't see any problem with that. But that could be a tremendous help because it would show that there is a much wider international shoulder, and it will produce results, which is very important.

MR. : Thank you. There seems to be considerable agreement we shouldn't cut and run, and my question is: Why not cut and run? Either having the people of Iraq vote on whether we should stay or not. But if we get out, then this problem is not ours alone, and other nations are going to have to come up with some solution. So why isn't that a strategy?

MR. STEINBERG: I'll speak for myself and then others can respond. I think it's a strategy because I think it's profoundly irresponsible. We created this problem, and we have some responsibility to try to put it in a position that the Iraqis themselves can recover from it. We can argue whether we disbanded the army, we caused the army to be disbanded. We basically decapitated the levels of authority in the society, but didn't provide anything else in its place. So that even if the international community decided tomorrow to replace us, there would be a vacuum for a period of time and people would struggle for power. That's what happens when vacuums are there, particularly when the vacuum is sitting on a couple million barrels a day of oil.

So I think that we have an obligation to try to define a trajectory that allows us to say that we have a limited mission here; our limited mission is to create the

circumstances for the Iraqis to take over and that we will accept largely whatever they choose to do once they take over. But we can't simply hand either them or the rest of the world this essentially chaotic situation and say, well, we messed up, now you take care of it.

I do think--and I think a number of us have said this--that unless we define an endpoint in functional terms, it will seem that our objective has to do with what we would like to do in Iraq rather than what the Iraqis would like to do with Iraq, and I think that's unsustainable and will end up being pushed out.

MR. POLLACK: First, I actually think that's a perfectly reasonable question, and I think it's perfectly reasonable because I think that the administration has done a terrible job of explaining to the American people why Iraq is important. You know, I can excuse a lot of things from the administration. I can even excuse a lot of the things that the President said in his last press conference where I think he ducked a lot of the hard questions. But I think that the one thing that the administration absolutely has a responsibility to explain to the American people is why is it that we need to keep 135,000 troops in Iraq and why is it that our sons and daughters need to keep sacrificing their lives there.

And I'll tell you that when I was out in Iraq, I was stunned by how many American personnel did not know the answers to that. I wound up giving basically a pep talk to one of the military units out in Iraq along the lines of why are you here and why is what you're doing important. And my feeling was I shouldn't be doing this; that's no longer my job. There was a time when that was my job, but this is a new administration, and they have not done that.

And let me answer the question this way: The problem is, whoever created the mess in Iraq, the problem is that right now the most likely outcome, if we do pull out, if we cut and run, is that Iraq will become a failed state. Okay? There is no other alternative power center out there in Iraq. There is no military dictator waiting in the wings who can easily take over the country and run it in a brutal, albeit stable fashion, which someone might suggest might be better than what we have now or just more acceptable to us. None of that is an option. Afghanistan is not an option. Iraq is a failed society. It's a failed society for a whole variety of reasons, not least among them because Saddam Hussein set out to turn it into a society that couldn't function except with him at the top, at the head of it.

But the simple fact is Iraq is a failed society today, and if we walk away from it, it will become a failed state. And the problem with Iraq becoming a failed state is we have seen failed states before. They create enormous chaos not only within their borders but in the entire region that they are part of. We saw this in Bosnia, in the Balkans. We've seen it in Afghanistan the way that it's affected its neighbor. In Congo-- just look around the world. Lebanon is another perfect example.

The problem with Iraq is not just that it will become a haven for terrorism--and I know that this administration is obsessed with terrorism, and, yes, that is a good reason to prevent Iraq from becoming a failed state. But the problem is if Iraq becomes a failed state, it is surrounded by other countries that are also very fragile: Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, even Kuwait, certainly Iran; Turkey has its own problems. The world cannot afford to allow the chaos that a failed state in Iraq would create to spill over into all of these other countries.

And that's why I would argue with you that even if we had not been the ones who brought down Saddam's government--and I actually buy Jim's argument. This is another variant of Tom Friedman's, you know, Pottery Barn rules, you break it, you bought it. Even if it weren't the case that we were the ones to break it, I would say the United States would wind up taking on this problem because this is a problem that affects the security of the whole world.

MR. STEINBERG: Can I just say, before you go further, in the interest of the good people at Pottery Barn [inaudible]--

[Laughter.]

MR. STEINBERG: Brookings understands that this is not, in fact, a Pottery Barn rule.

MR. POLLACK: I agree. I knew that. But it's also free advertising for them, so I figured they would accept that, too.

But, anyway, again, this is a massive (?) problem, and, you know, Ivo's certainly right. I think the Europeans do understand this problem. And if we go and reason with them, I think that they can be brought around on it. But the problem is if we don't lead, they will not follow. This is too big a problem for the world to handle without the leadership of the United States.

MR. : May I just add one--I agree with what Ken said, and I think that's the problem, what happens after. But I think the single most important decision that put us in that space where there is no possibility of anything else filling the vacuum right now is the dismantlement of the Iraqi army, the complete dismantlement of the Iraqi army. And I think in our own accountability, there may have been good reasons, but we haven't heard them. And I think we need to get to the bottom of how that

decision was made because in the end it is the most complicated decision in terms of building anything at all in the short term that can fill the vacuum of security or create an infrastructure for any possibility of a state without an American presence. In fact, the singlehanded dismantlement of the Iraqi army made it impossible to envision the possibility in any foreseeable future of an Iraq without American forces.

MR. : Thank you. My name is Paul (?) . I'm going to try and get back to one of the comments earlier on that there's this widespread perception in the region, a view which I endorse, that this war was about oil and Israel, whether or not that's true at all. And I'd like to try and make it a bit of a time-limited question. Is there anything that this administration can do between now and November on the second of those issues, that is, Israel and the whole question of perceived progress towards peace or Palestine, between now and November that could change that view amongst governments or the Arab street?

Thank you.

MR. STEINBERG: I'll take a shot and then I'll let Shibley--I think given the current constellation, there is one thing the administration could do, which is it should make clear to Prime Minister Sharon that they take him at his word, that he's serious about getting out of Gaza and that he should proceed with that. You know, I think you can debate as to whether the administration did the right thing in the letter and all that, but we are where we are. Sharon is the Prime Minister.

I think that the test of seriousness now is whether, notwithstanding his own political problems within Likud, that he is willing to heed the voice of the majority of the Israelis who think that this is the only way out of the current conundrum. It may not be the best of all solutions, but it moves things off the dime and at least potentially

moves us out of the situation we're in now, which is--in Gaza, which is now in some ways even worse than before the initial effort began.

MR. TELHAMI: I think Iraq, of course, has its own dynamic, and whatever happens in the Arab-Israeli conflict, we're still going to have the same challenges within Iraq itself. The real issue where the Arab-Israeli question matters is how the rest of the Middle East is going to see it, whether--the degree to which they're likely to cooperate or not. I still believe that's a central issue through which people in the region evaluate the United States and its intentions.

In the short term, given that this is an election year, there really isn't much more that this administration could possibly do beyond what Jim suggested, and I agree that's about it.

MR. STEINBERG: Back there?

MR. WINOGRAD: Jeffrey Winograd. I'm the editor of [focusisreal.com](http://focusisreal.com), and this is a question to Professor Telhami and perhaps a reaction from Professor Baram. I thought you said, sir, as I heard you, that the Saudis and Egyptians are not unnecessarily happy with the current situation and that they're in the driver's seat. If I heard correctly, could you elaborate on that? And what are the implications for Israel and the Palestinians?

Thank you.

MR. TELHAMI: First, I was referring to the degree of the leverage the U.S. has with them from Iraq, not on the Arab-Israeli issue. I think no one is happy about the Arab-Israeli issue, but I was referring to Iraq. I think what I was speaking about is the expectation the administration had that, after the Iraq war, everyone is going to see American might, this will be a victory, American forces will be there, Saudi

influence will diminish. Other governments are going to say to themselves, well, if we don't cooperate, this is what's going to happen to us, the fate of Saddam is our fate, that we're going to have leverage, at least to pressure them on reform, to pressure them on the Arab-Israeli issue. We would have more weight with them.

Well, as it turns out, right now, while we still are a powerful nation--and don't misunderstand that. I think even with our weakness, we're still the most powerful country in the world. Even with our weakness, we still have a lot of leverage with Arab states, and some of them are entirely dependent. But they're far less dependent on us politically right now than we had assumed, and they have more leverage with us for the following reason: In Iraq, they see us as having failed. They don't see us as having the capacity to threaten someone else right now. Second, the United States needs their help in legitimizing whatever the outcomes are in Iraq, ultimately perhaps in debt forgiveness to Iraq, in economic support for Iraq, and certainly with political support for Iraq. It needs the Egyptian government to implement whatever happens in Gaza because its role is going to be indispensable in the implementation of a Gaza withdrawal, if it takes place; and if it doesn't take place, the Egyptian government is still going to be needed to, in essence, pacify the regional attitude toward the U.S.

And, finally, look at the oil issue, where oil prices are—that's certainly that's not what people expected. A lot of people expected with optimism about Iraqi oil capacity you're going to have exactly the opposite of what has just transpired. We have oil prices becoming a political issue in the U.S., and the Saudis are the only country--the only country--that still has the capacity to have an impact on the oil price downward, beyond anyone else. And certainly they're going to be needed politically.

And so in that sense, I think it is obvious to me that they have far more leverage than was anticipated, and the U.S. has far less leverage than what was anticipated.

MS. : My question is for Professor Telhami. I've been attending a lot of hearings and briefings, et cetera, about things in the region, and I have noticed a pattern emerging that U.S. scholars, policymakers, the population at large, generally, though it may differ on execution, has a very optimistic outlook on what might be possible in the region. The Arab perspective--and I've heard many similar to you say, "I have to apologize for my pessimistic outlook that I'm going to give right now." And as somebody who's lived most of my life in the Middle East, I share that pessimistic outlook.

Do you see, aside from the removal of Saddam Hussein, which I think even met with a mixed response from the Arab world, any places where Arabs see some of the optimism that the U.S. has for their region, aside from the mixed reaction to Saddam Hussein's removal?

MR. TELHAMI: Well, first let me clarify one thing. I don't think it's an Arab thing and an American thing at Brookings. Actually, if you look at American scholars, on the eve of the war they were very divided. And, in fact, I come from a school of thought called realism. Some of the most prominent realists signed a letter that was published in the New York Times, including some of the biggest names in my field, and no one--there was no person of Arab origin on that list, other than myself on that list, who opposed the war precisely because they were not optimistic about what's likely to happen. These are the same group of people who supported the Afghan war. It's not a question of opposition to war. It's a question of opposition based on, if I look at what's

likely to happen, I'm not optimistic that the options that we're going to have are going to be good options and, therefore, let's not do it unless there are certain circumstances that can be met. So it's not an Arab-American thing. On the contrary, look at the division in our society prior to the war.

Second, on this optimism, I do think that often we have an outlook here that really doesn't take into account the complexity of any regions, not just in the Middle East. I mean, whether you're doing it in Latin America or--we say, well, let's get everybody employed. It's a nice thing to do. We need to just get rid of the 60-percent unemployment, everything will be nice. We said that even about Gaza, 1.2 million people, after Oslo in 1993, said, oh, that's a small, controllable problem, we'll look at that now. We'll look at the unemployment and where it is.

It's a difficult problem. And when you are in the region or an expert on the region who watches the history of it, the optimism, you have to learn from the past. A lot of people in the region have heard about this issue of democracy. What has transpired? In every single episode, that democracy issue gave way to other national security priorities. If we are supporting Musharraf in Pakistan, we need to support him because he's playing an indispensable role in the war against al Qaeda. But that is our top security priority. We're not going to make democracy as the top priority in that mix.

That's what the public sees in the Middle East, and I think it is kind of sad sometimes when you are--for an expert like me who goes often back and forth, and you go to a place like Cairo, with all its history and complexity, the good and bad--and there's a lot of bad, but there's a lot of good, or Istanbul or any of the Middle Eastern great civilizations that you go in. And then--I come and I hear sometimes a politician who has never been anywhere, who doesn't really know the history or hasn't even

visited, or who says I'm going to just bring democracy to these people. I mean, that's the problem here. And I think there's a lot of it, unfortunately. There is some reasonable optimism. I think there is a legitimate debate. Let's not boil it down to that. I think there are people who believed it was possible. It's still a debate.

I still think under certain circumstances reform is possible, even necessary in the Middle East. The Middle East badly needs reform. It needs economic reform. It needs political reform. But that's a complex issue that's going to take years. It requires a lot of cooperation. We can't do it alone, and we certainly could never succeed if we alienate both governments and people at the same time. I mean, can you imagine a policy that would succeed if you're going against both? It's impossible.

MR. STEINBERG: Assume that the U.S. did back off. We're for this but we know we can't impose it. How do you--what's your optimistic version of a scenario in which leadership emerges from the region to provide that impulse?

MR. TELHAMI: Well, first, I don't think we can back off because we're there. It's impossible to back off. We're there on the Arab-Israeli issue because what happens there matters to us and to our politics. We can't avoid it. What happens on oil matters to us. So it's not a hypothetical question that is impossible to really materialize, because we're involved, whether we want it or not. The question is: How do we use that involvement constructively rather than the other way around?

Second, I think we do have responsibilities as a leading power. I don't think power means that you don't lead. I think leadership is important. I'm not an isolationist. On the contrary, I think we should use our power in the world for good. And I think in the Middle East we have two capacities pertaining to change. One is human rights. I think we ought to take a non-compromise position on human rights.

We've got to do it as--it's different from reform because reform is complex. Human rights, we've got a body of laws, a body of norms, international norms. We know what they are. We've got to hold everybody accountable. For that to happen, we have to have a moral position to do so, and we've got to obviously be in a place that we can make that argument. We can do it if we sustain it. We should make it a priority for our foreign policy, and since the end of the Cold War we've had the capacity to be more consistent on it. With reform, I think realistically we've got to find a way to work with nongovernmental organizations. Many of the governments in the Middle East, in fact, have an incentive to change. They're going to be in trouble if they don't. They know in some ways that it's in their own interest. But the complexity of politics adds more fuel rather than helps.

When, for example, we go to the Egyptians, we say reform, we go to the Jordanians, we say reform, and then on the eve of the war we find out 90 percent of the people say we don't want our government to go to war. But we decide to go to an unpopular war. We tell the Jordanian government, we need your support, with or without your public.

Well, they support the war. That's our national security priority. What's the actual dynamic going to be? You have an authoritarian government that says my public is against me and they're hating me even more for supporting an unpopular policy, so I'm more insecure and, therefore, I'm going to do what I have to do to bring about more security for myself.

So what we end up doing is, in essence, perpetuating the very thing that we want to change, and that's the problem, I think.

MR. BARAM: About the war in Iraq, was it justified, not justified, I agree, it's a matter of major, major debate, was, still is, will always be, I think. But there is one thing which I'd like to point out. Whatever the other reasons, getting the Iraqi people, the majority, probably 80 percent or 85 percent of the Iraqi people, free from Saddam Hussein's rule, I must say to my mind this is a major goal that was achieved. And many Iraqis are unhappy today. The majority of Iraqis are very unhappy today because of the issues we mentioned throughout this hour. But at least most Iraqis would tell you, Thank God that Saddam is gone, because it's not just Saddam, it's the system. It was the most horrible dictatorship in the world, comparable with North Korea, maybe worse, I don't know. I'm not an expert on North Korea. But after Pol Pot was deposed it's--that's a major achievement.

So, again, if you look in Iraq, if you go to various parts of Baghdad, you got to the Muhafa-(?) , to the provinces, you got to Hillah, you go to Basra, life--people live better. People live in a better state of mind, much better.

So I would say freeing the Iraqis from this huge jail, horrible jail, was in itself a major contribution. The question is what's going to happen now; and how well things were done and so on, that's another issue. But, still, I wouldn't so easily dismiss the huge contribution to the well-being of the Iraqi people, and I hope a year from now it will be better.

Again, my information is that out of \$18 billion, true, only \$5.5 billion have now been allotted and signed contracts and everything is ready to move now. Well, that's not a lot, but that's about almost one-third, and that's a lot of money for a starved economy the way the Iraqi economy is right now. So I'm not totally unhopeful. I think there is some chance that the next year we'll see an important improvement.

MR. STEINBERG: We have time for one more. Gary?

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks. Gary Mitchell from the Mitchell Report. It occurs to me--I want to ask a question that's really sort of part vocabulary and part strategic in nature. If we look at the presidential race, we have a candidate who is arguably the stay-the-course candidate. We have a candidate who is the cut-and-run candidate.

If this group were drafted to prepare a speech and position paper for that third candidate, whatever his name is, could we come up with a name? Is there a way to give this thing a name that isn't either cut-and-run or stay-the-course? And I recognize that we've talked a lot about the components of that strategy today. But is there a way--it's so important in public discussions of issues of this significance to develop a phrase and then some simple steps that you [inaudible].

MR. : Cut but don't run.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. : Cut but don't run.

MR. STEINBERG: How about get it right?

[Laughter.]

MR. STEINBERG: It's hard to quarrel with that. I've got two words, which is empower the Iraqis. I think that what--I don't want to speak for others, but I think a lot of what you've heard about here is that--from Amatzia's point about freeing the Iraqis to the argument that Mike and I have been trying to make, is that the problem with a formula, I won't accept or disagree with you necessarily about the position of candidates. I'm not sure that's fair. But, in any event, all the phrases that you use are about us, and we have to stop making this about us. Because when we make it about us,

then people are forming around what their expectations are, what their fears are about the United States, we make it in terms of our own credibility, we know that story. We've been to that play and we know how it ends.

So we need to define this in a way which I think most Americans would feel comfortable with, which is you did have a terrible prison that Amatzia talked about, that there was--whether it was worth going to war or not, it was clearly--there's a lot of virtue and justice in the Iraqi people being in a position to determine their own future. And that our goal ought to be to allow them to determine that future, to empower them both in terms of the legal authority to make those decisions, but also to have the capacity so that those decisions are meaningful. If they have elections but they can't enforce them or they're not secure, that doesn't mean anything. So really empower the Iraqis to make that decision and then support them when they do it and recognize that this is not going to be a government which is entirely to America's liking. Few are. And certainly it would be unimaginable that a government which is popular in Iraq is going to be one that agrees with the United States on each and every issue. That's hard for us. Having gone in and asked the supreme sacrifice of our soldiers, a lot of people are going to ask you: You did that, and now this Iraqi government is voting against you in the UN and not supporting you on the peace process?

But I think we have to accept that the--our own logic should allow us to say that the Iraqis should choose their government. It should be subject to some limitations. I agree with Shibley, they still have to observe basic human rights like everybody else. They can't harbor terrorists. They can't develop their own nuclear weapons. But those are principles that ought to apply to everyone. And beyond that, we

ought to be prepared to say, you know, we've given you the chance to have the government that you've chosen.

I think that's a policy which is about Iraq. Ultimately, it's the policy that's going to give us a greater chance of stability in the region and a greater chance of achieving our objectives in the long term.

Okay. Well, let me end on that. I've taken the last word, which is not terribly fair for the moderator, but thank you all for coming and I thank our panelists.

[Applause.]

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