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IRAQ AFTER THE ELECTIONS

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. STEINBERG: Good morning. Welcome to Brookings. Nice to see such a good crowd on such a windy morning. I can't imagine what brings you all out here this morning—our topic of the day, which is the current situation in Iraq and where we are after the elections and where we go from here. This is not an example of the empty-door policy. Mike O'Hanlon will be with us shortly. He's been going around in traffic somewhere, but he's just a few minutes away. So let me introduce the rest of the panel and we'll get started, and Mike will join us as we go forward.

We're very fortunate today, in addition to having Mike and Ken Pollack, the director of research at the Saban Center here and well-known to all of you, to have our own visiting fellow, Peter Khalil, on the panel this morning. Peter, who as many of you have probably heard before in other programs we've had here at Brookings, served in the CPA in Iraq as the director of national security policy, and has a distinguished career in the Australian government as well. He's been focusing on the issue of security training and building security policy for Iraq.

We also have with us Sheba Crocker from CSIS. Sheba is a fellow there and co-director of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project, which has done some really remarkable work more broadly, not only on the question of reconstruction in Iraq, but on reconstruction strategies. In addition to her distinguished work at CSIS, she had a very distinguished career in the U.S. government, not least of which on the NSC for a few years during the Clinton administration.

And finally, we're also fortunate to be joined by Professor Noah Feldman, who is a visiting professor at Harvard right now. Noah has a very distinguished academic record and a stellar resume, having attended Harvard as an undergraduate and Yale as a law student and clerked for the D.C. Circuit. I leave you to guess why I think so highly of that as a background.

We're going to start this morning with looking at the political situation after the elections and the prospects for moving forward with the creation of a new government and the process leading to a constitution and a permanent government. Then we'll turn to the question of security, to economic and social reconstruction, and then a broader look at some of the options for the United States going forward.

So Noah's going to begin by looking at the political situation in Iraq post-elections.

MR. FELDMAN: Thank you very much. I'm honored very much to be here. The charge is to describe the political situation going forward, in the next five to seven minutes—not the situation going forward in the next five minutes, although sometimes it feels that way. So here goes.

The election results may show the Shia list just passing 50 percent and therefore having a clear majority in the National Assembly, or they may fall just a bit short and just form a large plurality. But I think that what I'm about to say should be of equal relevance under both circumstances.

The Shia really have two major challenges to deal with in the constitutional process going forward. The first they would have regardless of the insurgency, and that is to reach an arrangement with the Kurds, who will have a disproportionate share in the assembly—probably

somewhere in the high 20 percent range in terms of numbers—to reach an arrangement that can satisfy the Kurds and keep them in a unified federal Iraq while simultaneously not entirely selling out the remaining—and they still remain—national aspirations of Arab Iraqis. This will be a very difficult negotiation, particularly because the Kurds see what they conceded in the Transitional Administrative Law negotiations as a floor, whereas the Shia see it as having been far too high a set of grants and would like to push well below that.

This was the kind of dispute that could relatively easily be resolved—I don't mean very easily, but relatively easily resolved behind closed doors in the TAL negotiations, the Transitional Administrative Law negotiations, by intense pressure from the United States that some deal be made. Things are different in a public negotiation, and what we're about to see is a negotiation which, if not entirely public, will have a very large public component.

The National Assembly is going to be meeting, there are going to be more than 40 or 50 Kurds, which means there are going to be Kurdish back-benchers who are going to make speeches in the National Assembly about the necessity of Kurdish independence. It means there are going to be Shia back-benchers looking to gain support by making speeches about the necessity of a unified non-federal Iraq. And although the same elites who negotiated the previous deal are still in place, will still be in place after this election and will be interested in negotiating a very similar deal—to wit: essentially de facto autonomy for the Kurds in their statelet in the northern part of the country, coupled with a reasonably fair sharing of oil revenues—it's going to be harder for the leadership on both sides to make that deal in the glare of public opinion because their constituencies are much, much further apart than are the leaders on the two sides, who are now accustomed to negotiating with each other and in a very sophisticated and rational fashion.

That's challenge 1. Making that challenge into a successful one, negotiating a deal, would be a great challenge for any constitutional negotiators under any circumstances. But these folks are not negotiating under ordinary constitutional circumstances. They're negotiating in the midst of a civil war, or what is on the verge of becoming a civil war. I think technically speaking—I'd be curious to hear Peter's view on this and Sheba's, as well as Ken's—I think that we will have a civil war on our hands only when the Shia begin formally to retaliate. Right now the Shia have shown extraordinary restraint. They have not retaliated from violence against them by Sunnis. When we see significant coordinated or uncoordinated Shia response, then we will be in a civil war. I would like desperately to avoid that, but we're on the cusp of it right now.

Now, that means that the second major task facing the Shia leadership who form the new government, or dominate the new government—and this is true for the Kurds as well, but it's more important for the Shia—is to use the constitutional process to offer a political option for resolving the insurgency. This is a very, very tall order indeed. Let me say very briefly how it might be done.

Peter will speak about the security side of what one does about those members of the insurgency who have no interest in coming to the table. But there are those within the insurgency, especially within the leadership of the insurgency, who are prepared to come to the

table and who see the insurgency as a mechanism for raising the price that the Sunni community must be paid by the Shia and the Kurds for entering the political situation.

The question is who will speak for those Sunnis. I'm not particularly concerned with who will speak for the international *jihadi* Sunnis—some are international, some are not. They can only be fought by violence. I also believe they can only be defeated ultimately by a government that includes the rational Sunnis willing to come to the table.

But who will speak for those rational Sunnis? If the elections had included representation from Sunni areas in significant numbers, then we would have generated a leadership that could speak for the Sunnis. It seems probable that that did not occur. Although there will be Sunnis in the National Assembly, and you'll probably hear a lot in the news about how there are this many Sunnis in the assembly, they will not be Sunnis who speak for the constituency that's broadly sympathetic to the insurgency. That means that proxies need to be brought in directly to the constitutional process even though they will not be sitting in the National Assembly. There will be some candidates for that role, some self-presented candidates, especially Sunni Muslim clerics who have played both ends against the middle in the runup to the election, both saying "I'm not running" and saying "Well, if someone wanted to vote for me, that would be fine, too," and then at the last minutes, when it became clear that no one was going to run, saying, "By the way, I'm definitely not running." All of that posturing signaled a willingness to come in and act as de facto representatives of the Sunni community.

It is risky to speak to these self-appointed clerics, who are a mix of post-Saddam—well, they were Saddam stooges, and some with better aspirations and some whose political positions are probably even worse than those of the Baathists. But it will be also tempting to speak to them because they're identifiable and can claim some degree of responsibility for themselves. Notice that in the absence of elections, we have to gauge the political clout of potential negotiators by just seeing if they can deliver things.

It is also possible to try to bring in, potentially, some relatively high-ranking former Baathists who might be able to make contacts with members of the former regime who are involved in the insurgency, but this strategy is undesirable from the perspective of the Shia parties. Allawi made efforts in this direction; these efforts were largely unsuccessful—I don't want to entirely unsuccessful. But the Shia politicians, for the most part, seem to believe that this is not the right way to go primarily because they see violence as the only language that will be understood by these ex-Baathis.

Final words. Can a deal be reached? In principle, yes. In principle, the Sunni community should be prepared to settle for two things: One, a formal guarantee of an equal share of the oil resources; two, institutional representation in the legislature that will come out of the final constitutional negotiations disproportionate to their numbers. This is the time-honored way for minorities to gain guarantees of equal distribution of resources. It's not just enough to have a piece of paper promising it; you need representation that will deliver it.

There is a potential overlap of interests on this question between Kurds and Sunnis, the only potential point of overlap. The two sides could potentially agree in principle on pressing the Shia to agree to an upper house of parliament, for example, that had appointments by region

to effectuate disproportionate representation of Sunnis and of Kurds. Again, the goal here would be to make sure that guarantees made to minorities would not be simply paper guarantees, but would have some institutional mechanism of being delivered. The Shia will resist this strongly. They are already resisting it. In the end, they will only accept it if they think there is no other way to end the insurgency. And that is the greatest degree of incentive that the Shia could possibly have.

Having said that it could happen, I don't want you to leave with the impression that I've said that it will happen. This will be an even tougher negotiation to take place under the cold light of day than will be the one between the Shia and the Kurds. The Shia are at the edge of their patience, at the very edge of their thousand-year patience. We're talking about a religious and intellectual culture developed upon the idea of patience, and that's why it's done as well as it has. But it's at the breaking point now. And as it reaches that breaking point, it will become harder and harder for Shia—and by the way, for Kurds as well—to be willing to negotiate with Sunnis who are in violence with them.

A final thought on this. We are all familiar, from the Israel-Palestine context most recently, but indeed from other contexts, of the situation where some members of an insurgent group are prepared to negotiate, where others are unprepared to negotiate and want to continue the violence, and in the middle are those who are not certain which way to turn. We are entering that phase of the Sunni insurgency with respect to politics. There are members of the insurgency who want no negotiation under any circumstances. There are those who want very much to negotiate. The radicals will do all they can to disrupt the negotiation of the potential moderates who emerge. And unlike Palestine, where the moderates typically have come from the old established organization, here there is no organization to speak on behalf of these Sunni moderates. So it's going to be a particularly delicate process going forward, but the contours of it will be familiar to you from other contexts.

Thanks.

MR. STEINBERG: There are two questions before we go on. One, you talked about floors and ceilings in terms of various aspects of the negotiation. Where are the floors and ceilings in terms of the role of Islam in the new government and the new constitution?

And second, maybe you could say a word about how you see the likely outcome of the jockeying for the prime ministership, and particularly if Mr. Abdul-Mahdi is the prime minister, what we should expect from him.

MR. FELDMAN: It's absolutely right that I should speak about the role of Islam in the constitution. For me it's sort of funny, because I came to the Iraq issue from a background of having made that my special interest and so far have—I evolved, at least, in the game of realist politics, but I find myself making a presentation that doesn't even mention this obvious and salient fact.

The reason I didn't mention it is that it's actually not going to be so difficult to negotiate. The Transitional Administrative Law process laid out a paradigm that can more or less be followed with perhaps a little bit of change. Islam will be the official religion of the state; everyone agrees on that. Islam will be stated to be the principal source of legislation, perhaps the

only source of legislation. You heard a little flap in the last week as one of the senior members of the Hawza in Najaf announced that it was necessary for Islam to be the source of legislation.

In practice, there will be no discernable difference between those two formulations going forward. Because to say that Islam is the principal source of legislation or is the source of legislation has no effect, in practical terms, on what the future legislature will do nor has it had in other Arab countries with similar formulations. Somewhere down the road, if we're lucky enough to have an Iraqi constitutional court that can do its work, if we're lucky enough to have a stable government where hard constitutional issues are resolved by constitutional courts, if we enter that almost-utopian world then the little difference will matter. There will be constitutional case in the future, and I for one will be thrilled to see it regardless of how it comes out, because it will be a sign of the healthy polity in which these things are dealt with.

I also anticipate there will be a formulation on the constitution that says that no law to be made by the future legislature shall contradict Islam. And again, there will be some jockeying. Should it be those principles of Islam on which there is consensus? That's a very vague formulation that made its way into the TAL. In fact, it says nothing shall contradict those principles of Islam on which there is consensus, or the principles of democracy, or the basic rights guaranteed by this document. That's a very progressive and Islam/democracy-equating formulation. Perhaps we might see something like that again. I don't know. It will be a tougher negotiation, again, to take place in public. But broadly speaking, at the constitutional level there is already significant consensus that the Kurds can live with this formulation and that the Islamists can settle for something like this formulation.

When it comes to the prime ministership, there has been a lot of—"misinformation" is too strong a word, but oversimplification in the general coverage of this. One hears the following message: This perhaps will be a secular government. In fact, today, this morning, the New York Times—I'm sure many of you saw this—called Adel Abdul-Mahdi a secular politician. The word "secular" is now being thrown around in a way that's unfamiliar to me. The best way to understand it is this: The Shia have made it clear that, in the first government, clerics will not be given senior positions. They've also made it clear that, unlike Iran—where, constitutionally, final authority rests not with the people but with the person who is the most qualified recipient of Islamic law, the most qualified jurist in the nation—actually, in practice it's not the most qualified, but in theory it's meant to be the most qualified—unlike that model, which sometimes goes under the name of "theocratic," here authority will rest with the legislature.

Those are the things that have been made clear by the Shia politicians. This does not mean what you and I would call a secular government—nothing like it. Nor is Adel Abdul-Mahdi anything like a secular person, except in that in some technical sense he is not himself a cleric. He and the others in SCIRI—or the Majlis, as they call it in Iraq—and the Da‘wa Party are committed to the belief that Islam must infuse the political values of the society and that it ought to do so in a serious and committed way, infusing the legislative decisions on matters as diverse as family law, testimony law, inheritance law, and other things.

And so they are going to get their way largely, not perhaps entirely, with respect to these issues. But if it is convenient for people there and here to refer to this as secular in the Western

press, I suppose there's no barrier to their going on and doing it. They are talking about a democracy. They're talking about a democracy inflected by Islam.

MR. STEINBERG: Thanks.

Peter, the people are obviously encouraged by the success of the elections from a security point of view. There were obviously a number of attempts to try to disrupt the elections, but they were not—there was a political success, but not a real kind of carnage that kept people away. A little bit of hope in the beginning, now it seems like the level of attacks is beginning to pick up again. How are we doing on the security situation, how good is the strategy, and where do we go from here?

MR. KHALIL: Well, I think, first of all, thanks, Noah, for your comments, too, and I might touch on some of the political comments because I do think that progress in all three areas is actually very telling. You can't separate the them. Progress in a combination of a political transition, economic reconstruction, and security are all something that have to go together to ensure that there's progress in Iraq itself. I don't know if we'll do it justice by speaking about it separately, but I think we'll try.

As far as what you were commenting on, Jim, yes, the security situation during the vote itself was very heartening and that's because the vast majority of the Iraqi security forces did actually have the training to provide very basic fixed-point security at the polling centers, to set up cordons and perimeters. It was static top security. And the vast majority of the Iraqi forces—there's, I think, 136,000 that are operational and in uniform and trained—have that kind of basic training. The police and national guard do train to protect buildings and do basic patrolling and so forth.

What they don't have, of course, is the more advanced training in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. And that's the real problem, because the bulk of the security responsibility at present—the burden, if you like—is being carried by the U.S. and the coalition forces. And as to the question as to when the U.S. can hand over this sort of security responsibility, the offensive operations against the insurgents to the Iraqis is a very volatile question. Everyone's been talking about it. My estimate of it is that, you know, I think the U.S. will really have to carry the main burden of security, and that is, as I said, offensive and defensive operations against the insurgents, counterinsurgency, if you like, for at least the next 18 to 24 months.

There are specific types of Iraqi forces that are being trained in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. They have a very lengthy training program and a far more advanced training program than the basic guardsmen and the local police have, and some of these units have actually been quite successful in doing stand-alone offensive operations against the insurgents.

But they're very small in number at the moment. There are plans to have something like 33 battalions of these special commando units, army special forces, and so on come out of the training pipeline over the next 12 to 18 months. But of course, again, there needs to be a period of time where they're tested in the battlefield, if you like. They have strong support from the U.S. forces, and they can then gradually take over responsibility. So it's going to be a gradual process, and no one should be mistaken in thinking that there will be a complete handover of security responsibility to the Iraqi forces anytime soon.

What will happen, though, is that over that gradual period of time there will be a shift in the emphasis, obviously, of what U.S. and coalition forces do. You've heard talk about the emphasis being shifted to training, which I think is absolutely necessary. And in fact, I think the emphasis should be shifted to the type of training that is provided and really focus it in on that particular type of counterinsurgency training, and allocate resources to do so.

But just on the political front, I want to make a few comments about how I think this new government, whoever is the prime minister and whoever is in this new government, actually how effective it is in weakening the insurgency over the next 12 months as part of that political process. I agree with Noah's points about the insurgency, that there are some rational members of that insurgency. There are others that you can't really negotiate with, the Islamist extremists, as far as the foreign jihadists and some indigenous Iraqi Islamists. But they're very small in number. In fact, the vast majority of the insurgency is made up of these ex-military personnel, the ex-Mukhabarat, the ex-secret service personnel—the inner apparatus of Saddam's security, you know, [inaudible], if you like.

There is potential for them to negotiate. I remember a meeting in Ramadi back in late 2003, where we met with the governor of al-Anbar Province and some of the tribal leaders, and they brought with them about 15 of these ex-military personnel. Some of them were clearly former Mukhabarat. And sitting at the table, you could tell that these guys were firing mortars at the U.S. base just the day before. So clearly they were the insurgents. But the point about it is that they were prepared to sit down at a negotiating table. They understood that force was one way of reaching their political ends, or their political goals, however unrealistic those goals might be—for example, return to a Baathist regime. But they understood there were other means to do this. They would come and sit down and negotiate.

So there is potential there. But the potential really rests in whether this new government will be inclusive. There are some key questions as far as what this new government will do in the political process over the next 12 months. Will they be inclusive, will they appoint key cabinet posts, will they appoint Sunni leaders to key cabinet posts in the ministry? You don't have to be a member of the assembly to be a minister in the executive. You can be appointed outside of the assembly, similar to the U.S. system in some ways. Will they be very inclusive of Sunni jurists in the drafting of the constitution down the track? And the last question I think is important in relation to this new government is, will they be calling, for example, or pressuring the U.S. for a withdrawal timetable?

Well, we've seen answers to many of these questions from some of these key Shia leaders in the past couple of weeks. I've heard Hakim say, and Dr. Jaafari, the head of the Da‘wa Party, very clearly that they will be inclusive of their Sunni brethren, as they call them, but specifically pointing to, yes, we will appoint Sunnis to cabinet posts, and they've been quite specific about that. Abdul-Mahdi, who is essentially Hakim's deputy, has also come out and said, well, we won't be calling on the U.S. for a withdrawal timetable, so basically in line with the U.S. strategy of turning over security when they can and over a gradual period of time.

But turning to who, I think it depends how you answer these questions. First of all, it's all very well to say these things. It remains to be seen whether they will be followed up by action. And the second part of it is it does depend on the type of government that is formed—how much

say the Islamists have on that, whether there will be some horse trading, as Noah was alluding to, with the Kurds and the rest of it, which might blunt the Islamist part of that government.

Abdul-Mahdi, whom I know personally and worked with him, he is a very competent minister, but Noah is right again in saying that he is an Islamist. Just because he's not a cleric doesn't mean he's not an Islamist. But he is very competent and he has very good relationships with the U.S. and the coalition. I don't think he would be a prime minister that the U.S. would be unhappy with. In fact, he's been probably the most competent of the ministers in the interim government as the finance minister.

There are others there, too. Hakim's ruled himself out because he is a cleric, obviously, but Dr. Jaafari, I think, is another potential candidate. Everyone thinks that Iyad Allawi is completely out of the game now, but there is a possibility, however remote, that if his vote can be bumped up from the current 13 percent, I think it is now, to something like 20 or 25 percent, which is—it's a tall order, he may be able to ally himself with Barzani and Talabani, his natural allies, of course, particularly Barzani, and then he'd really have to poach some of the more secular-minded members of the United Alliance and bringing the dribs and drabs of the other votes in the other parties to patch up a coalition that has two-thirds in the assembly. But it's a very long shot. There are other candidates, such as Shahristani and so forth, and even Chalabi. But I think the front runner, of course, is Mahdi.

So I think it does make a difference what type of government is formed and how it impacts on the security situation.

The last couple of points I'd make is in relation to the security situation. As I said earlier, it goes hand-in-hand with the political process over the next 12 months—the drafting of the constitution, the next set of elections, and how this new government deals with security as far as taking on responsibility. There are structures in place now, such as the national security council [inaudible] and other sort of executive structures, which really give much more responsibility to the Iraqi government. Even the interim government had more responsibility as far as deciding the actual strategic direction of security policy in the country. So they will be very much in charge on that front.

One fear I do have, and I know it might be one that is not going to eventuate in reality, but there is some talk I've heard about some members of the Shia United Alliance talking about bringing back some of the Shia militia, such as the Badr Corps, to take on the insurgents more quickly and more effectively. I think this is a very dangerous course of action. And of course there are structures that have been put in place in which it makes it very difficult to bring in Shia militia and other militia as far as mass unit transfers into the new state security services of Iraq. It's based on individual recruitment, if you like. But there have been some calls for this, and I think that would be one of the scenarios which would accelerate the potential or possibility of civil war, for example, or having the Shias not just retaliate but bringing, you know, their militias to directly take on Sunni insurgents. I think that would be a very dangerous way to go.

At present I think the more moderate members of the alliance both in Da‘wa and SCIRI would not be following that course of action. There are others there that I've heard talk about it. And we've constantly resisted that, actually, over the past two years, to bring these forces into the

state security services, partly, of course, because of their connections with Iran. The Badr Corps, of course, many of the foot soldiers had been trained in Iran by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. Those are very close links even just at the personal level, but could be some evidence to suggest that some of them actually are being paid by the Iranians. There are all sorts of allegations about that.

But it's difficult to know. That's the point. I mean, if you have 10,000 Shia militia or Badr Corps, it's very difficult to know who is who and who is a patriotic Iraqi and who's working for the Iranians. So you have to be very careful about your vetting of these guys into the security services. So that's why we were proceeding with the individual recruitment. And I think the U.S.—I hope—draws a red line as far as this if there are calls to bring in some of these militia groups into the state security services.

That's the key danger I see. But as far as the security situation over the next 12 to 18 months, it's going to be a tough road and the insurgency is not necessarily just going to die down, as you've seen. They've picked up the attacks after the election. But there is potential, as Noah was alluding to, to bring some of the more rational members of the insurgency—by identifying some of their leadership—into the political process. A lot of that does depend, of course, on how this new government deals with them, how inclusive they are, and how many of the Sunni leaders they bring in who are credible enough to start bringing some of the rational members of the insurgency back into the political process.

Last point is a key of this is whether they see that there is something for them in the political process. You saw a good template of this with Muqtada al-Sadr. Eight months ago, everyone was up in arms about Sadr and the fighting that was going on in Najaf and in Sadr City. But he saw that he wasn't going to reach his political ends by the use of force and has, in some ways, laid down arms and joined the political process. Although he didn't run himself, some of his deputies have run in the assembly. And then you see reconstruction happening in Sadr City, for example, and an improvement in the security situation generally. So there is some potential for this to occur in the towns and cities in the Sunni Triangle and with the insurgents.

Thank you.

MR. STEINBERG: Let me just press you a little bit more on that issue of the composition of the security forces. There's been some concern, certainly by Shia and presumably by the United States, about the fact that there have been people who have been brought into the security service who are giving information to insurgents. A lot of these ambushes and the like seem to be inside jobs, as it were. What is the dynamic there? I mean, to what extent are the Shias prepared to allow people, Sunnis who may have ties there back in at the risk of jeopardizing it; and conversely, if they don't, what are the prospects of the Sunnis sort of feeling that they have a stake in this new military if they can't get a proportionate representation in [inaudible]?

MR. KHALIL: Well, that's a very good point, Jim, because of course the other thing I didn't mention about some of the Shia Islamist parties is the absolute desire to purge Baathists, what they call Baathists and war criminals, out of the new security services. There are Sunnis in the new security services. According to the split of population, it's about even in the army,

which is an ethnically diverse and combined national force. There are Sunnis in there and there are some Sunni senior leadership. And the Shia Islamists have actually zoned in on some of these guys and said we don't want them in there, we don't want them in the new ministries of interior or defense, and so forth. So that is also going to be problematic, because you can't on the one hand give them a ministry or a cabinet post and on the other hand completely purge some of the security services from some of these guys who have the experience.

I should distinguish, though, between Baathists and Baathists. Not everyone in the Baath Party was a Baath Party ideologue. There were many professionals who just joined just to advance their career and also, even in the military there were some professional officers. But it's very difficult to tell the difference between someone who is a Baath Party ideologue and a torturer and a war criminal and someone who just joined the party to advance their career. So that's a difficult tangle there as well. So I think it's going to be a difficult process.

As far as the vetting, the first part of your question very quickly, the vetting of the forces and the difficulty of understanding who is who and who's working for whom and who's influenced by whom, part of the problems that you see with the infiltration of insurgents in the armed forces, particularly in the national guard and the police, came about because of a very decentralized vetting and training process that occurred in the first year or so, up until about early 2004, when it was centralized. The problem has actually been rectified. It's been brought under the Central Command of, first, General Eaton for a couple of months and now General Petraeus, where he trains all of the police, national guard, army, and there's standardized and centralized vetting. But prior to that, it was done out in the regions by the local military commanders. They would just reconstitute, largely, the police forces, bring back ex-officers, get them back on the street without any real, you know, rigorous vetting of these guys' background. Some of them didn't even go through the training. So it was very uneven, depending on which region you're talking about. And this was, again, the case with the national guard. They were brought in very quickly, trained very basically in, you know, a couple of weeks, and the vetting, again, was uneven.

The army, however, was a different story because from the beginning the vetting was centralized and standardized. There were very good records in the Ministry of Defense that were smuggled out before the installations were destroyed of all the people who had military experience. And so there was a very standardized vetting process, and the quality of recruits in the army was much better, infiltration was much lower.

So the problems you see now, it's a bit of a time lag—guys who had infiltrated the national guard and the police probably a year ago or so.

MR. STEINBERG: Sheba, the third pillar of this is reconstruction. What's your assessment? You all have been spending a fair amount of time looking fairly closely at this. What's the strategy now, is it working, what are the adaptations going to be?

MS. CROCKER: Of course, the way we think about reconstruction actually includes the other things that have already been talked about, so I'll touch on those with just a couple of sentences and then move on to the sort of economic reconstruction assistance side of things, particularly from the U.S. side.

A couple of things to add on the security front. One would be I agree completely that the role we saw the Iraqi forces playing on the day of the election was about what we can expect of them right now in terms of their level of training. But I think it's also important to recognize what kind of a security lockdown the country was under during the elections. That made the tasks that they were given on that day even easier for them to accomplish, in the absence of any air travel, very little vehicular travel, borders were shut down. And on that note, I also notice that the Iraqi government just announced they may again shut down the borders for about five days.

I think another missing point is that we tend usually to think about the security situation in Iraq in light of the insurgency, for understandable reasons. Many Iraqis do as well. But there's another point that impacts Iraqis' daily lives probably more, on average, than the insurgency, which is just a sort of rampant law and order vacuum that continues to exist throughout much of the country. And I'm still not convinced that we have the right strategy for how that security vacuum will be filled in the interim months, particularly if we're talking about shifting most of our efforts to the kind of training and equipping efforts of the Iraqi security forces that, I agree, we do need to see going forward.

On the governance front, I would add something slightly more mechanical than what others have talked about right now, which is just to point out how tight the time line is during which all of these things that Noah and Peter were talking about need to happen—which, as I'm sure many of you know, is incredibly foreshortened. The constitutional drafting process and the getting to a draft of a constitution is supposed to occur by August 15th. There is a provision that if the National Assembly thinks it won't be able to meet that date, they can get a sort of one-time six-month extension, which will push this whole political process out through sort of June of next year, if they go that route.

Assuming they don't, there is to be another national referendum in October on the constitution itself, and then assuming a positive vote on that constitution, another set of national elections by December 15th. If there's not a positive vote on the elections, according to the TAL, the National Assembly is supposed to dissolve and there are supposed to be elections for a new National Assembly.

So again, just to point out that in addition to all of the sort of various fault lines that we've all become familiar with in terms of the political negotiations, compromising, et cetera, that needs to go on in the next few months, how difficult it is going to be to do in that very short amount of time.

Turning to the other areas of the reconstruction fronts that we look at, I think the picture continues not to be particularly hopeful. Although I will say that the United States does continue to sort of rethink how we are spending our assistance, trying to gear the assistance toward smaller-scale projects and in some ways away from some of the longer-term, big infrastructure projects that we have been focused on throughout most of this effort. Throughout Iraq, we still see a situation in which even very basic services—access to electricity, clean water, sanitation—continues to be very sporadic throughout the country. There have been some improvements in certain places, but even in places where we've seen improvements, we continue to see a lot of

backtracking. And again, this relates back to the sort of law and order problem and the insurgency.

There was a recent State Department announcement that they intend to start shifting some of the money that we have not yet obligated over to Iraqi ministries to administer, so that it will no longer be a situation in which the U.S. government is giving contracts directly to U.S. contractors, but rather will be funneling the money through Iraqi ministries. The ministries themselves, according to how I understand the announcement, are then supposed to decide with whom they will contract, although the Defense Department's Project and Contracting Office will continue to pay the contractors.

They have said they will do this on a limited basis, a sort of pilot basis at first. They're planning one $50 million contract to run through the housing and construction ministry, I guess it's called, which is one that has a proven track record, they think. So this could start to make some difference in terms of how Iraqis view this reconstruction process in terms of some of the things that we've all been talking about for a long time, about the need to increase Iraqi ownership of the reconstruction process and move away particularly from the sort of large-scale U.S. contractor model that we have been using so far.

But again, I'm not convinced yet that we are going far enough in how we need to rethink that strategy and we're still talking about it on a centralized level with a central government, ministries. I think although the State Department and USAID have made some attempts to shift some of our assistance to smaller-scale, more localized projects, we haven't gone—the full extent yet.

Unemployment estimates still range—and I think this is something that Michael could touch on also—but it's difficult to get a handle on good estimates. The common ones tend to suggest that unemployment still ranges in the 30 to 40 percent level. Some estimates I've seen put it as high as 60 to 70 percent. Again, we need to figure out how to use our assistance in a way that is really going to be more successful at hiring Iraqis. That might occur if we start funneling money through the Iraqi ministries because they, presumably, will be more likely to hire Iraqis than we have been on our own contracting process.

We also still need to figure out a way to move the U.S. money more. I don't have the precise numbers, but from what one can tell, I think we've disbursed about $2.5 billion of the $18.4 billion in reconstruction funds so far. Significantly more than that has been obligated onto contracts, somewhere close to $10 billion, but we've still only been successful at spending very small proportions of it. There are multiple reasons for that, some related to the security situation, others related to just the normal bureaucratic difficulties at spending U.S. government money. Every time that the State Department announces a new re-think of its assistance program, one thing they say is that they hope this will prove more effective at getting the money to move more quickly. But we haven't really seen that yet.

I think also—and this will cover some of the other points that were talked about—we need to figure out a way to talk more reasonably and realistically about what progress we're making on the reconstruction front. The metrics that we tend to see coming out from the U.S. government side are not particularly useful in terms of telling the entire story about what's really

going on in Iraq. So that, in other words, you can talk about—and this is one that we've seen a lot in the news lately—how many Iraqi security forces have been trained. Even there, of course, we see wildly varying estimates on what that really means. Anthony Cordesman at CSIS thinks that there only about 7,000 to 11,000 Iraqi security forces who really are adequately trained to fight independently against the insurgency. Senator Biden has suggested the number may be about 18,000. General Myers said that no more than 40,000 were really capable. But again, we still have the U.S. government saying we have about 130,000 or whatever it is that are trained and out on the beat.

So you can only take so much from the sort of metrics that are put out, and I think we need to be re-thinking about how we might measure what's the kind of progress that we're really making. We have come up with one way to do that that we have been doing in a series of updates at CSIS that tries to look more broadly than just sort of the strict numbers, and I know Michael has been doing a lot of work on this, too.

And I think finally I'll just set forth that we've also heard a lot in recent weeks about this idea of what does an exit strategy mean for the United States. I think what we're still missing from the administration is a real strategic vision and laying out some specific and clearer goals about what it is that we're trying to achieve. I might caveat that by saying that my own view is that the United States needs to use whatever continuing leverage we have in Iraq very judiciously, particularly on the political front. And I think it's somewhat dangerous to get into a mindset in which we're thinking about what the United States needs to do in order to try to shape this political process. Because the minute that we're seen to be doing that at any level, it de-legitimizes the process from the beginning.

And strategy, I think, in this context—we're talking about an exit strategy—has to mean more than just thinking about when we can bring the U.S. forces home, although, of course, that's a very important and key part of it, particularly from a U.S. public perspective. On that note, we had an op-ed recently talking about the idea of a referendum in Iraq about bringing U.S. forces home. Others on this panel have had op-eds talking about the need to start talking about a time line for bringing U.S. forces home. We have had a lot of discussion about this idea recently. I think the discussion should go on. But again, I think my own view, and as Peter says, is that the strategy needs to be somewhat broader than that, and we need to think about a strategy that includes both security elements, political aspects, and an economic reconstruction plan that really will start addressing some of the problems that we all know have been inherent in our reconstruction program so far but that have not yet been fixed.

In the state of the union address, the president laid out four things that he said needed to happen before U.S. forces would come home. Again, they're goals, and they're admirable goals, but they're not a strategy. And in any event, if you look at them, they could spell out a much longer engagement than the president or the administration or, I think, any of us have really been thinking about.

The first is that Iraq is a democracy. If we're serious about that, that could take at least a generation, if not decades. We've had one successful set of elections. That does not mean that Iraq is a democracy.

The second is representative governance. Again, I think going forward and some of the things that Noah was touching on, that remains to be seen. We're not there yet.

The third is that Iraq is at peace with its neighbors, something that we maybe have on a shaky ground right now, but certainly not anything that's cemented.

And finally, that Iraq is fully capable of defending itself. And I think as we've already talked about and as the past 21 months have shown, we have little evidence that that is going to occur anytime soon.

MR. STEINBERG: Thank you, Sheba. I turn now to Mike and Ken.

Mike, you've been following and been the keeper of the data—anyhow, you and Adrianna have some thoughts about objectively how we're doing. I'd also be interested in your thoughts not only on this exit strategy question, but how you see the military strategy working from the U.S. side, as opposed to the Iraqi side.

MR. O'HANLON: Thanks, Jim. It's a treat to be on this panel and of course a lot of smart people have said a lot of things that I wish I could say as eloquently. So I'm glad they went first, because I couldn't have done it as well anyhow.

I think all I can really do here is echo a couple of the important points that were made. Unemployment and crime rates remain very high. This reinforces a lack of popularity of the United States among Iraqis. We just saw some polling that had been done recently that suggested a number of Iraqis who want us to figure out a way to get out of there are in the 60-80 percent range, and that's among all three major ethno-religious groups, not just the Sunni Arabs. On the other hand, they also realize that precipitate withdrawal would be dangerous, and especially among Shia and Kurds. So we have these conflicting problems. We seem them in the data on public polling. We also see a lot of basis for their unhappiness in the data, and unfortunately that hasn't really been changing.

I'll take one example—and again, I'm not trying to sound too negative in the sense that I admire the efforts of everybody who's there and has been working, and things are in some areas better. But electricity production is now again back down, well below where it was in the latter Saddam years and about where it was immediately after Baghdad fell in April of 2003. Some of this is scheduled maintenance, getting ready for the summer when the air conditioners need to be operational, but part of it is sabotage and that things just keep breaking. We haven't quite figured out a way to slow down that process.

Availability of fuel. The good news is there are a lot of cars on the streets in Baghdad. And anecdotal evidence that I hear—I don't know how to measure this in the Index; we may think about how to do it—but people tell me traffic is 5, 10 times what they are told it used to be under Saddam, or 5, 10 times what it might have been in the early years right after the invasion. On the other hand, that also means the gasoline lines are 24 hours long and 5 miles, in some places.

So the quality of life is really not getting that much better for many Iraqis. On the one hand, you shouldn't ignore the fact that they do have a lot more cars. There is a bustle to Iraq, from what I'm told—I haven't been in a year and a half, so I'm taking it on faith. But there is that

sign of vitality and energy. On the other hand, most of the fuels, most of the gasoline supplies and the jobs that people really want are still, for the most part, not there in great numbers.

So as we develop a broad framework for thinking about this problem, you know, I really think that the key point we have to settle on is that we are not going to be able to win this war on our own. We're not going to be able to, essentially, construct the three pillars or help the Iraqis to do so within a couple-of-years time frame, the political, economic, and security side. What we're going to have to hope we can do is develop an exit strategy that puts the Iraqis in a position to keep on doing this without us, or with much less American role, but with the economy and the politics still being very fragile. And I think that's going to be true even in a couple of years. The trend lines are just not that promising.

I was going to maybe finish with one strong point before I get to military strategy—and this is inspired in part by Peter Khalil's very important work on training and he's emphasized the need to really focus in on these counterinsurgency capabilities, and I've certainly learned a lot from that argument. It's very persuasive. But I also think, in broader terms, in a way we don't have the—I think Peter's right, if you have a fixed amount of training you can do, you probably do have to think about redirecting it or concentrating it. But I think we have to get beyond that restriction and that constraint. We really have to bring in the entire international community to do training as robustly as we can and develop an exit strategy over the next 18 to 24 months that's going to get most of our forces home. Because I think that we really have become both part of the solution and part of the problem.

I won't go into this argument in detail now; we can do it later in the discussion. But I think on the training piece of this, there is the potential, if we can get most of our European allies, many of our Arab allies really involved, that we should be able to do all this training simultaneously. We're talking about 150,000 people. This is not a huge number of people if the Western and Arab worlds put their mind to it. This should be on a scale—you know, people love to throw out Marshall Plan or whatever as a historical analog, but this should be seen as the central security challenge of the Western world today, getting this training mission right so we can develop an exit strategy that keeps the insurgency in check and counters the impression of an American occupation. We need it badly. We need to really expand this effort.

And so far, as Sheba has well summarized for us all, we don't see enough of positive movement in this direction to be comfortable with the pace at which we're training. The concepts are right, the centralization is right, the guy in charge is right, most of the strategy is right, but the resources aren't yet there. And we don't have the luxury of picking and choosing which part of the security forces we're going to train most in the short term. I think we have to view this as the central challenge for the next few months, to get the entire international community much more engaged.

On military strategy, I guess by implication, Jim, what I'm saying, to answer your last question, is—and Ken will probably have some more sophisticated thoughts on this—but in broad terms, I don't see a way to make it a whole lot better. I'm sure there are a lot of things we're still doing wrong. We continue to do some raids with insufficient attention to civilian casualties. We're still not doing a great job of policing on the streets. One can itemize a lot of the problems. I don't easily see the concept of operations, however, that would fix most of these

problems. And so, again, I don't see how we are going to develop a strategy for victory in the next 18 to 24 months. I think we have to develop a strategy to allow the Iraqis to take on this fight on their own and counter the image of an occupation which has become, perhaps, our number one enemy and our number one challenge within Iraq. And by implication, we're training the Iraqis to carry on a military strategy that may not improve very much, that may still involve a lot of the same pieces and same elements. But I think to the extent it's done more by competent Iraqis and less by Westerners, it has a better prospect for success.

That's a punt, but it's more or less the best I can do.

MR. STEINBERG: Ken, a lot of [inaudible] have gotten a lot of pleasure in the last week or so running around the e-mail circuit, this famous New York Times story reporting right after the elections in the summer of 1967 in Vietnam about the elections and the security situation. You're a political military historian as well as an analyst. Any relevance to that? I know you've given a lot of thought to what the U.S. strategy ought to be on the military side. So any thoughts on those or any of the other comments you want to pick up on?

MR. POLLACK: Sure. Thanks, Jim. And of course, like Mike, I have the disadvantage of having gone after three—four now—tremendous presentations. What I thought I would do is try to pick up on a number of different pieces that all of my predecessors have laid out on the table and give some of my own thoughts.

I think it is important, Jim, to start off with this Vietnam question because Vietnam has been more and more on my mind recently, not so much in the way that I think other people are thinking about, but in a very different way, in particular about how we've handled the military situation in Iraq and some very, to me, disturbing analogies with Vietnam and how we handled the situation there.

As for the election itself, is it going to be like the 1967 election in Vietnam? I don't know. I think only time will tell. I know enough about Vietnam to know that the circumstances in Vietnam were in many ways very different from the circumstances in Iraq. So I don't think that you want to necessarily start making specific comparisons.

The broader analogy may ultimately be apt. And I would like to start out, actually, by picking up on some things that Noah said, in particular the importance of the negotiations that are going to take place. And important for two reasons. Important because, A, the constitution is very important to Iraq. Iraq is going to be a state that is going to be difficult to make work properly. It is a multiethnic state. It does have a history of violence and oppression. There are a whole bunch of factors out there that suggest that if we don't get the political process right as some point in time in the next few years, it's going to be hard to keep this thing together. So getting it right is very important.

But Noah also mentioned, kind of implicit in a lot of what he was talking about, the importance of psychology. A lot of what we're doing in Iraq is a psychological enterprise. The most important thing that we have going for us in Iraq is the fact that the Iraqi people want reconstruction to work. I think that's what you ought to take away from the election. The most important thing about it was this resounding statement by the Iraqi people, 90 percent of whom want reconstruction to work. They don't want civil war. They are deathly afraid of civil war.

They don't support the insurgency. They want the reconstruction to work. That's enormously important to us.

But as Noah pointed out, patience is starting to wear thin in Iraq. You know, people like me have been saying this for more than two years now, that we had a honeymoon period in Iraq, a period of time when the Iraqis were going to look to us and say we're really glad that you overthrew Saddam Hussein, we don't much like having you in our country, but we're going to wait and see what you're going to do for us. And the problem is we've overstayed our welcome. This is one of the points that Mike was making and it's some of the points that you see reflected in his Iraq Index.

But even there, I do think you have to be a little bit careful because what we're seeing in these polls from Iraqis time and again is oftentimes the Iraqis will say things that they don't necessarily mean, but they say because they're trying to register protest, because they're trying to make clear their anger and frustration. And for a lot of them, speaking to these pollsters is their only way of speaking truth to power, of saying we're really pissed off at the way that you are handling things and we want you to do things better. And I think that's why you're seeing these polls saying 60 to 80 percent of Iraqis view us as an occupying force and would like to see us find a way to get out, against the fact that all of the major politicians, many of whom now have much better feels for their constituency, do not want us to go. And in fact, it continues to be my experience that when you talk to Iraqis, what you may initially get from them is why don't you just get out of our country, but when you start to actually talk to them, what you hear is I don't really mean that. I know that you need to be there for awhile, I just wish that you were doing a much better job of what it is that you're doing.

And the political negotiations that Noah talked about, I think, are a very important element of the psychology. Because in one sense, 90 percent of the population has gotten a big psychological boost from the elections. This was really important for them. They liked getting out there and being able to have their say and have their contribution, either because it was the first time for them and a way of expressing their freedom and freedom from Saddam's oppression, or because they felt that finally now they were going to put in power people who actually represented what it is that they want. So there is a sense of hopefulness.

The problem is that they've been disappointed many times over the last two years. And I, for one, am nervous that if this process comes off the rails, you will see that kind of increase in popular—your word—that increase in popular enthusiasm suddenly plummet as people say, you know, by God, we thought this was going to be the solution, we put our own people in charge, and if it turns out to be the case that they can't even do it, you might see the opposite reaction and a crash after the spike. And obviously, that would be very dangerous.

It's very dangerous because if reconstruction unravels, it is going to unravel for these psychological reasons. Civil war will break out in Iraq if it becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy. And what that means is it will break out if Iraqis, and particularly the Shia and to a lesser extent the Kurds, believe that it is inevitable that civil war is coming and that there is nothing else out there that can stop it. If they believe that there's no other solution to their problems except taking up arms, they will take up arms. And that's what will cause the civil war. So the psychological dimension is absolutely critical.

Now, that brings us back to security. Inevitably it brings us back to security. And it brings us back to security because at the same time that over the next 6 to 12 months Iraq's elites, their new elites, are going to be wrapped up in this political negotiation that Noah described—that is absolutely critical to get it right—the rest of the country is looking for some other things. Sheba started talking about it. And, you know, those of you who have been here before, you've heard me talk about it every single time we've had a press conference. It bears repeating. What the average Iraqi is looking for is electricity, is the gasoline that Mike talked about, is the day-to-day security, the law and order vacuum that Sheba talked about. That's what they want.

I spoke to a friend of mine, a person affiliated with the United Iraqi Alliance, in the days after the election. And it was an interesting conversation, because he was not as euphoric as many of the other Iraqis that you saw on TV. And I said to him, you know, what's on your mind? He said, "Look, this is great. You know, we had this election, it's a fabulous election. It was fair, it was free, people showed up, the violence didn't derail it. But now they expect me to turn on the lights." That's the big problem that they have, that the people are looking to this government to do what all the previous governments couldn't since the fall of Baghdad—get the lights on, ensure the gasoline supply, ensure day-to-day security, provide jobs.

That's going to be difficult under any circumstances. It's going to be even more difficult because they're going to have to be going through all of these political negotiations that Noah talked about. But it's also going to be difficult for some of the reasons that Sheba and Peter talked about, which is that right now we haven't got a very good system to deal with Iraq's economic problems. And I think Sheba covered that brilliantly, so I'm not going to talk about that anymore except to say that I completely endorse the points that Sheba made. We've got to do a much better job on that in many of the ways that Sheba talked about.

But of course the other issue that's underlying it—and Peter and Sheba both made this point—is the security situation. Now, here I'm going to take up Mike's challenge in terms of could we do this better. And this is going to be the point that I end on. Yes. I think we could do it better. I think we could do it much better. And I think that what we saw in the six months before the elections suggests how we could be doing this better.

The first point, the broad point I would make is, I think the United States has committed a critical error in terms of the prosecution of the war against the insurgents and the bigger security picture inside Iraq. And for me, this is where Vietnam comes back, because we made the same exact mistake in Vietnam. There is a maxim among military officers. It's a really good one, okay—it always turns out to be true: Never reinforce failure. Reinforce success.

It comes from a different part of warfare, but I think it is actually applicable here. We have consistently reinforced failure. We have consistently put our security forces into the places where security is worst inside Iraq. We have thrown our forces at the Sunni insurgency and gone on offensive operations and mounted raid after raid after raid, and tried to reduce cities where there were big insurgent presences. That is reinforcing failure. And what counterinsurgency strategy has taught for a hundred years is that's the best way to lose against an insurgency.

You reinforce success. You put your security forces where the security situation is actually better, where you have the support of the people. Because by putting your security

forces there, you give the people the room to allow their political and economic situations to improve. And it is that psychological component that is critical in defeating the insurgency. And we saw some of this, I think—you know, the best proof of this—in the runup to the election, where for the first time the United States started doing things like foot patrols. I mean, I couldn't believe it, but I actually got calls from friends of mine in Mosul and in Aqua saying, hey, we're doing foot patrols. We've been talking about doing this for two years and we're actually doing it. And it had a big impact on the local population. And they all believed that it was a very important element of getting people to actually come out in different cities throughout Iraq. Because there were American soldiers on the streets talking to the Iraqis, showing a presence.

The other thing they did and we're doing much more and it's a very important thing—mixed patrols and mixed units. And again, Mike is absolutely right. We have this problem. I've talked about it also. We've created a dilemma for ourselves. On the one hand, we're the only force in Iraq that really can ensure security because, as Peter pointed out, the Iraqi forces are still at least 18 to 24 months away from being able to take this on themselves. But we've also overstayed our welcome, because there are a lot of Iraqis who are pissed off at us and don't like to necessarily see us in their faces. And having these mixed formations of Iraqis and Americans helps a lot. The Iraqis actually feel much more comfortable. It's much more comfortable with the Americans there. I mean, I still have Iraqis who say to me we don't always trust the Iraqis for many of these problems—that Mike and Peter were talking about, because of the recruitment problems and the vetting problems, especially early on—so we like to have the Americans there. But we also really like to have the Iraqis there because it makes it feel like this is something that we're part of, that we're doing. It's not just the Americans imposing it on us.

And even beyond that, the argument that I would make is that these insurgent hunts that we go on, this concentration on the provinces, in al-Anbar and Diyala, et cetera, they are not the way to handle security. As a result of that, we are taking the security forces out of those areas where they could do real good, where they could improve the political and economic lives of average Iraqis in 90 percent of the country. Instead, we're throwing these forces at the 10 percent of the country which, as Noah has suggested to you, to a certain extent ain't ever going to be with us and, for those who are going to be with us, it's going to require a different political approach to deal with them.

So my argument is I think that there is still real potential. Actually, I'll make a last point. You all remember, what was it, 8, 10, 12 months ago, we were all sitting in this room and you had a whole bunch of American generals that had just gone out and spoken to reporters—we had about 130,000 troops in Iraq—and they all said we don't need more troops. Every single one of them, we don't need more troops. Everyone you spoke to, we don't need more troops. We have a 150,000 troops in Iraq. Somehow, we raised the level by 20,000 over the protests of all these generals, who didn't need more troops. I think that also puts the lie to this claim that we didn't need more troops. We do need more troops. And we're doing better with 150,000 than we did with 130,000. And many of these tactical adjustments—and there are more tactical adjustments we could make—that would help as well, but putting more troops into Iraq would help as well—in the short term, in this 18-24 month window that we have—before we can start to really rely on the Iraqi security forces. And it may be longer than that; we're just using that as a number.

But again, the bottom line on the security strategy is, as far as I'm concerned, we continue to reinforce failure, which is exactly what we did in Vietnam. And many of you heard me say this before—you want to read a good book on Vietnam, Andrew Krepinevich's *The Army in Vietnam*. Read it. I think many of you will be chilled to see the comparisons with the stuff that Andy talks about that we did in Vietnam and, unfortunately, what we've been doing in Iraq.

MR. STEINBERG: Thanks, Ken.

Let me just add a word at the end here about the alliance relations side of this. I just came back from Brussels, so at least a fresh chance to talk to a number of senior European officials. I think, as we're looking for modestly bright lights, this is one. I think we are really looking at a moment—not, you know, the profound differences about what should have been done about Iraq having been forgotten or resolved, but a possibility of a better degree of coordination and cooperation between the United States and the Europeans.

And I think there are three reasons for that. The first is the charm offensive that the Bush administration has put on, the president's decision to announce right after the election that he would go to Europe, he'll be going there the week after next.

Second, the very successful visit that Secretary Rice has had to Europe, where she, I think, succeeded, at least in terms of rhetoric and presentation, to convince Europeans that the administration really does care about alliance relations and transatlantic relations and that, while we may have differences about this, the United States is not going to approach this in a way in which we are simply indifferent to the fact that we have differences, that there will be at least some effort to try to find common ground.

And third, in some respects perhaps most important, the little glimmers of progress and hope that we see in the Middle East peace process, which has a positive effect on Europeans for two reasons: one, because it's very important to them and they place a lot of emphasis on the need to make progress on the Israeli-Palestinian relations as a part of an overall strategy to deal with the problem with Iraq, but also because they see it as the administration being responsive to a call that Prime Minister Blair and others have made, which is that the United States needs to show that it's paying more attention to those issues.

So the net is that you have both a much, much more positive attitude, as you've most dramatically seen with Secretary Rice's visit in Paris but also a really remarkably warm press conference she had with Chancellor Schroeder. And also, I think what we'll see in the summit, when President Bush goes to Europe, is some modest substantive steps by Europeans to increase their engagement in police training, perhaps some more on economic reconstruction, and a greater appreciation that the Europeans themselves have an interest in success in Iraq.

Now, there are still a lot of questions out there. There are going to be a lot of uncertainties as we go through all the mine fields, literal and figurative, that everybody's talked about here. But I do think that there is another window of opportunity here in terms of the United States gaining broader international support for the efforts here.

I should probably have added another important factor in the European attitude was the elections, which I think surprised most Europeans, who were expecting a much less successful

outcome, and which I think caused them to have a little bit of second thought about whether they feel uncomfortable being seen as being on the wrong side of democracy and freedom. And even though they remain skeptical about the future, they certainly don't want to seem to be the ones throwing cold water on this very remarkable demonstration that we saw on the day of the election itself.

So with that, we've covered a lot of ground. I thank all the panelists. Now let's open it up to questions.

QUESTION: Jim Matlack [ph], affiliated with the American Friends Service Committee.

Is it too soon to draw a balance sheet on the CPA in terms of its performance? Many of the positive features that have come up in the discussion here seem to be reversals of past positions or quite different courses of action than Bremer had in mind. The elections in particular owe more to Sistani than to Bremer in terms of the configuration in which we're now operating. And from the very beginning, the fact that the whole CPA operated under the Pentagon, who had not planned for the immediate aftermath and continue to have the responsibility, which is quite contrary to the profile suggested by Bathsheba and her colleagues at CSIS, for basic approaches to post-conflict reconstruction. Obviously, that suggests my verdict is a pretty negative one on the CPA, but I wonder how others on the panel might feel.

MR. STEINBERG: Peter, you were there.

MR. KHALIL: Okay, well, first of all, I think this key point about law and order, Bathsheba is absolutely correct. Because right after the war, the breakdown in basic law and order and the crime that increased across Iraq, the looting and the rest of it, was really the key problem which, as Ken alluded to, the grace period that Iraqis had for the coalition being there very quickly eroded. And many of the problems the CPA faced were as a result of this very poor post-war planning strategy. In fact, I think there needed to be far more troops just after the war had ended, to fill that security vacuum.

I don't think the decision to rebuild the security structures—the army, the police—changed the culture of these security institutions, which, you must remember, were the tools of repression for 30 years under the Baathist regime. That's not necessarily a mistake, because it will be better for Iraq in the long term to have these newer forces and institutions that have democratic practices inculcated within them. But the mistake was not filling the security vacuum, and then you see all these other problems occur.

The second point I want to make about some of the decisions, much of the foundations for what you saw the other day, the elections and the constitution, the whole political process, but also in security, in the security area, were laid by some of the work that was done in the CPA. Look, there were many mistakes that the CPA made. I don't dispute that. But I think some of the important work that was done will reap longer-term fruits, if you like. And I'm talking about building up a new civilian-led ministry of defense, building up a new civil service which is independent in that ministry, building up a new army which has the soldiers being promoted based on merit, not on their political affiliation to a Baath party, where the officers don't abuse the soldiers like slaves and cut off their ears if they do some things wrong or which they dislike. It's a whole different culture.

And I'm talking about a more modern, capable force, but unfortunately these things take time. These things take time to develop. It takes years to really make these things work. So what you'll see probably in maybe two, three, five years, people looking back and saying, oh, there were some good things that the CPA did as far as building the security structures, the institutions, the forces, and the political structures as well—separating the executive and the assembly and setting up all these different things. You probably won't hear a lot about it now, but I think it will be talked about in five years' time.

MR. FELDMAN: I just wanted to speak briefly to the political side of your question. You're absolutely right to say that the elections owed more to Sistani than to Bremer, but that also can be seen as a positive feature of the CPA's political approach, namely that when they realized that the initial thought of not going forward with elections quickly was not going to be accepted by a broad political constituency for which Sistani purported to speak, and I think probably did speak, the reaction was to compromise and to come up with something, a process that did in fact correspond more closely to Sistani's approach while preserving the TAL as a kind of default framework that will be useful in subsequent negotiations, because it caused the parties to reveal a deal they could live with—including Sistani. It was an information-forcing process that required people to ultimately sign a document publicly, the same political elites, although represented in different proportions, who were going to be involved in this next process, to reveal their positions.

So I entirely agree with your assessment, but it's not obvious to me that that should be seen as a failure. Sometimes when things are done on the fly—and the most characteristic feature of the CPA from day one is that it operated on the fly—I mean, remember the thing that Peter described, the collapse of security, happened before the word CPA had existed. The was no CPA when those things happened. The CPA wasn't really even existing in potentia at that point. There was something else. There was ORHA, there was the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance. But in any case, in the on-the-fly formulation, CPA was slow, but ultimately it was flexible.

MS. CROCKER: My own sense is that the first few years of this exercise saw many, many more failings than they did successes. But I think it's not unimportant for us to be recognizing the fact that the CPA did some things in terms of policies that may have some longer-term benefits in Iraq. On the economic front one can look at what they mostly did on the economic front, which focused very much on much more macro-issues rather than the things that were going to be very meaningful for Iraqis in the short term.

So it may be that we see some longer-term benefits. Having said that, I think it was largely a mistake on sort of all fronts that the CPA made the policy decisions it did at the time, because they were not decisions, in many instances, that were having the right impacts on the Iraqis at the time, and in the very immediate time. And I think from the very beginning we got off on the wrong foot on the security front, on the political front, and on the economic front in a way that meant that the CPA had very little credibility to start with and was never going to be able to get that credibility back. And I think that very much complicated everything that the CPA tried to do in all of the areas that we're talking about.

I also don't discount the fact that there were some things that were done. I don't think that everything that the CPA did was an unmitigated disaster, but I do think that a lot of the very difficult times that we've seen in Iraq for the past few years are related to decisions that were made by the United States in Baghdad and in Washington.

QUESTION: Nick Berry, Foreign Policy Forum.

If all you talk about is that the United States comes out well, that there's a success at the end of the day, would this change what most of the rest of the world sees as an illegitimate war? Would that success make the war therefore legitimate?

MR. STEINBERG: I'll let the panel answer it, but I'd like to keep the questions a little more forward-looking. Like I said with the Europeans, I mean, we can spend forever debating the question about whether this was a mistake or not. We've had enough panelists here over the years, and, you know, I think we've all expressed our views yea and nay about whether this was a good thing to do or not. But I will invite the panel, if you—

QUESTION: But that's forward-looking.

MR. STEINBERG: I think the question is—nobody's going to be able to undo it. And clearly, the more success that we have, the less damage this will cause from everybody's point of view. And so I think the universal view among, certainly, any of the countries in the world that either have a stake or have any kind of relationship with the United States is that they want to see this come out as clear as it can. And that even if they disagree, you know, I think that's the message that the Europeans are giving, that they still understand that this is better to have a success, and so they'll continue to say, well, we might have been better of if we hadn't done it. I think there is a growing awareness of the costs and risks associated with failure in Iraq and a greater willingness to be part of the effort to try to make it happen and make it work.

QUESTION: Don North, North Star Production.

Do any of the panelists have an insight on the current status and future of U.S. government-supported media in Iraq, namely [inaudible] television and radio and the al-Sabah newspaper? For almost two years and millions and millions of dollars of U.S. taxpayer money, these media seem to have no credibility with Iraqis and seem to be a spectacular failure.

MR. STEINBERG: It's a good question. I regret that Tammy Wittes, who has done a lot of work on this, is not also with us. But—Sheba?

MS. CROCKER: I don't know a lot of specifics, but I would just say that I think a lot of your question gets back to some of the things that we've been discussing thus far on the panel, namely, whether anything that is seen as being a U.S.-funded—in this case—news outlet is going to be able to gain the foothold that it needs in terms of credibility on the ground in Iraq. And I think, for better or worse, because of the way we started on this whole venture back in April of 2003 and subsequent things that have happened since then, my own sense is that it's going to be very difficult, if not impossible, for the United States to win on the psychological warfare front any longer. I think it's very difficult for us to turn around this train. I think in some ways what you see is the same thing that you see, for example, with al-Hurra, which is that—I mean, the

Iraqis are a very sophisticated media audience. They know where every single piece of media that they're reading or seeing comes from.

I also have not now been in Iraq for a year and a half, but when we were there, we talked to Iraqis all over the country about what they were watching on TV, for example, and they very much know that if they're watching an Iranian-funded TV station, that they are being fed a certain bias. It's not to say they don't watch it, but they watch it with a very keen eye. And I think the same goes for the media outlets that the United States is funding. They know the funding that's behind it and they know that that is there for feeding them a certain bias.

MR. STEINBERG: Let me just add one thought that's come out of some discussions that we've had here, some work that Tammy Wittes and Peter Singer have been doing.

One of the things that I do think is successful is—and how you try to overcome this idea of paid-for and therefore distorted media—is the idea of what we've begun to call C-SPAN 2 in the Middle East, which is not to produce programming but to cover things. So that you have an opportunity at an outlet that will put on the president's press conferences, that will put on hearings in the Congress—things where there's no script or editorial content, but really just an opportunity for more of the debate and perspective to come unfiltered either from the U.S. or from Arab sources. So it seems to me that that's one avenue of opportunity to try to get at this problem of how do you get some reality out there that is not tainted by views on the other side but also to recognize that, without some effort to break into this, it is unlikely that anything that we would recognize as a dispassionate or objective perspective on some of these issues is likely to break through in the media that exists now.

QUESTION: David [inaudible] from Georgetown University.

Concerning the question about Abdul-Mahdi becoming the next prime minister, I want to know—and this is for both you and for Noah—I want to know if the presidential council remains the same, in other words, one Shia, one Kurd, and one Sunni, which by every indication that's what going to happen, how does Abdul-Mahdi get the Sunni to buy off on a member of SCIRI becoming prime minister?

MR. KHALIL: Well, you're right. First of all, just—everyone knows that the assembly appoints this Presidency Council and it might be, as you say, spilt between the three ethnicities more likely than not. And then that Presidency Council appoints the executive, the government. So the point about this, though, is how the numbers play out. Noah was talking about the Shia United Alliance having maybe just more than 50 percent or so; they need to have 67 percent to appoint this Presidency Council, the guys that they want in there.

Now, if they bring the Kurds in, and we've heard Jalal Talabani, you know, promoting himself as the next presidential candidate—yeah, Jim's laughing at this, but it might be a real possibility if the United Alliance—

MR. STEINBERG: I'm laughing not because I don't think it's [inaudible], because I do think it's a real possibility.

MR. KHALIL: And Jalal has been wanting this for awhile, too, so, you know, he can be brought in and form an alliance, if you like, with the Shia United Alliance, the Islamist parties—

in return, obviously, for the Kurds having some key posts in that central government, and that's the way, then. Obviously the Shia [inaudible] going to get that. They want the role of the prime minister, they want that post. They probably want some of the—either two, but maybe just at least one of the key ministries, Ministry of Defense or Ministry or Interior. Oil and rest of it, too, are very important.

So I think that's how it might happen, bringing the Kurds in, and you can see it happen that way. But it's very difficult to tell now, because we don't know the numbers.

QUESTION: [Off microphone, inaudible.]

MR. KHALIL: Well, there are Sunnis on the United Alliance List, actually. And, no, you can—

MR. FELDMAN: Yeah, I mean, I agree with everything that Peter just said, but the short answer to your question is that the alliance of Shia and Kurd that's going to make up the two-thirds vote to choose the Presidency Council just picks its own Sunni. And whoever that Sunni is, the price of becoming a member of the Presidency Council is to approve the chosen Shia as the prime minister. That's just good politics.

The only footnote to that I would add is that this is dependent upon the Shia List managing to maintain an internal agreement on whether it would be Adel or Ibrahim Jaafari. Now, this is a—now we're entering into the internecine world of Shia exile politics, which is now returnee politics. But the tensions between SCIRI, which is Adel's party, and Da‘wa, Jaafari's party, are deep. And the fact that they wanted to all agree that they'd better make certain that Shia were a majority in this election was all well and good, but now comes the hard part. Jaafari will have to get a very, very good payout to agree to Adel becoming prime minister, and the question is, really, can that happen.

I suspect in the end it will happen, but not without a lot of pain and agony of the negotiation and probably not without Sistani in one form or another weighing in to say, look, let's not have this break apart again. This is also part of a background process, which is how involved in day-to-day politics has Sistani become. Part of how he's maintained his credibility at the national scale is by not being involved in the painful details of politics. The further he's drawn into the details, the less like—truth to be told, the less like the grand ayatollah he looks. And there's going to be a lot of call on him to engage. It will be very interesting to see what he does.

MR. KHALIL: Just very quickly, the reason that Allawi got the interim prime ministership, apart from his good relationships with Langley, was because of the deadlock between Jaafari and Hakim on that position.

QUESTION: I'm Tim Phelps from Newsday.

Peter talked about the dangers of bringing in the Badr Brigades into the military apparatus. What about the dangers of the *peshmerga*? It's my understanding that they were—in Fallujah we used peshmerga in Iraqi uniforms. How much of the effective units, as Cordesman describes, are actually wholly or mostly peshmerga, and how much of a problem is that?

MR. KHALIL: We have to distinguish, we have to be very clear about this when we're talking about peshmerga, or former Shia militia, who've joined, obviously, the national guard, the police, or the army and some of the special police commando units. Now, many of the peshmerga have joined the army. They're former peshmerga. Many have joined the national guard. The national guard is locally recruited and locally trained, as I was saying earlier. If you have a national guard unit from Irbil, they're largely going to be Kurds, or ex-peshmerga. So to say that, you know, the peshmerga are fighting in Fallujah is a bit disingenuous because it's probably the national guard unit that has been deployed there in an emergency situation or army units that have ex-peshmerga in there.

Now, as far as the danger of bringing these forces into— There was a program of transition and reintegration that was worked out with the political leadership of the militia, and it was over many months. The idea was to say that, look, we want a phased draw-down of your troops, the transition and reintegration of your troops recruited into the different forces, into educational programs, into retirement programs, all government-funded, obviously U.S.-funded as well, if you agree to this program, that you'll have political and legal cover in the TAL. And there was a section in the TAL which said basically those political parties that have agreed to the transition and reintegration program are legal while they draw down.

So there are still some residual elements of these forces, obviously in Kurdistan, clearly, and some of the Badr, who are still moving into these different streams. And they do it at the pace that they've agreed to. So my fear when I was talking about that earlier was that these residual elements that haven't moved into the national guard or the army or retirement or whatever can be called upon by some of the more radical leaders and sent up, you know, north to deal with the Sunnis head-on. That's the real danger as far as I'm concerned. But the way it's set out now is that it will be very difficult for them to do that legally, if you like.

MS. CROCKER: I just think we have to be somewhat—the question is probably slightly more nuanced in the sense that it probably depends on in whose eyes. I mean, I think it is true that there are many of the former Kurdish peshmerga who have joined the national guard. If you talk to them, though, they might just say, yeah, well, that's what we've said we've done, but we're still the pesh. And one of the things that has not actually yet come out at all in this discussion is—or not that it hasn't come out at all, but perhaps not as forcefully as it should—is the very difficult dynamics that we might face with the Kurds more generally. And in that regard, I think it is also important to note that it wasn't only in Fallujah, but in Mosul, where, when we were running into problems in Mosul when we were otherwise tied up in Fallujah in November, we essentially re-hatted Kurdish peshmerga as Iraqi national guard to deal with the issue in Mosul. And that was probably more than the Kurds had ever dreamed of in their expansionist tendencies.

But it's certainly the case, and many have written about this, warnings, in recent days, that Kirkuk is another potential enormous challenge, that not only the new Iraqi government is going to have to deal with, but that it's very much front and center on the minds of the Kurds and is something that could potentially become very difficult for both the United States and potentially for Turkey. And I think up until now, the Kurds have been playing—they've sort of been creating facts for themselves on both sides of the line. They've been doing what they need

to do with respect to the central government in Baghdad and with respect to the political process that the United States has been pushing, and certainly doing very much in support of the United States, and will always say that. That will be the first thing that sort of comes out. But at the same time, they are, as we all know, a lot of facts on the ground that have been created in northern Iraq that will be very difficult, if not impossible, to walk back from in the coming negotiations.

MR. POLLACK: I just want to add a comment. Tim, I actually think that in this whole discussion about the peshmerga and in uniform, et cetera, we're kind of conflating symptom and cause. I completely agree with Peter. The peshmerga are going to be in uniform. They need to be. They need to be integrated into the Sunni national army. It's not going to work unless you've got a significant number of peshmerga because the Kurds won't trust it if you don't do so. And at the end of the day, the national army is going to stand or fall, it is going to remain united or not based on the larger politics of the country. If the Kurds break from the rest of Iraq, all the pesh within the national army are going to go with them. If the Kurds stay with the country, the peshmerga will stay in the army and over time they will be integrated.

I mean, again, this is a pattern we've seen throughout history. And I like to think in historical analogies. The one that's immediately coming to my mind are the Israelis, where, you know, initially you didn't have an Israel Defense Force. You had a bunch of little militias which eventually got integrated. And there were all kinds of problems with that integration, the most important of which being that the Palmah, which is the best arm of the military, are a bunch of wild-eyed communists, by and large. And that's a real problem for Ben-Gurion. But over time, it works. They integrate the Palmah, not without some blood being spilt—metaphorically, not literally, in this case—but the Palmah does get integrated into the larger army, and over time all of that breaks down and all the problems go away. And they go away because the Israelis come up with a workable power-sharing compromise, exactly the stuff that Noah was talking about.

I have no problem with peshmerga being in uniform. I have a much bigger problem with peshmerga not being in uniform. And that's why Peter's point about the Badr Brigades, that's the real problem because that's the road to civil war. The more that Iraqis believe that they have to rely on their own militia as militia, the more they're going to believe that reconstruction is not going to work. The more that they can look and say the national army is working even though it's got pesh and Badr Corps and all these other guys in it, that is a sign that reconstruction is working, because that's a sign that integration is going on. That's the kind of thing that's going to make reconstruction succeed.

MR. STEINBERG: Well, unfortunately we've run out of time. There are so many questions that people have. But I want to thank our terrific panel and all of you for coming, and look forward to continued conversations as we go forward.

[Applause.]

[END OF TAPED RECORDING.]

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