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## PROCEEDINGS

MR. POLLACK: Good morning, welcome to the Saban Center at the Brookings Institution. We are delighted that you could all join us here so early on a blazingly hot Monday morning.

First, there are a number of seats up front. So those of you who are standing in the back, if you would like to take a load off and come sit, there are plenty of seats up in and around here hidden amongst various other people.

We are very pleased to have this gathering with us. Obviously, the developments in Israel, the Palestinian Territories, and Lebanon over the previous five days have captured the headlines across the globe, and I think that there are questions in everyone's mind as to where this is going to go and where it is going to end. For the first time in a long time, there are people talking about a much wider war in the Middle East. And so, we decided to put together a group of experts who we thought could give a sense of what many of the major players in this drama may be thinking, how they are likely to interact, and to give you a sense of how that interaction may play out over the next several weeks.

I am joined up here on the stage—and I am going to make these introductions brief, so that we can maximize time for their comments and their questions—I am joined to my most immediate right by Nahum Barnea who is our Y'non Kreiz Fellow here at the Saban Center at the Brookings Institution, who is a columnist, a leading columnist for *Yediot Aharonot*, the leading Israeli daily publication, and is an

extremely well known figure on the Israeli political scene. Nahum will be explaining to us what the Israeli side of the equation looks like.

Immediately to Nahum's right is Hisham Milhem, a figure known, I think, to many of you around Washington. Hisham has many hats here in Washington. He is the Washington Correspondent for *Al-Nahar* which is a Lebanese daily. He also has a show called "Across the Ocean" on Al-Arabiya. As I said, he is someone who is well known in Washington as a constant commentator on Middle Eastern events, and we have asked Hisham here to help us to understand the Lebanese perspective on things.

On Hisham's right is our own Shibley Telhami who is dual-hatted as well, who is the Anwar Sadat chair at the University of Maryland and who is also a Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Saban Center at Brookings. We have asked Shibley to come up and tell us a little bit about the wider region and how it is looking at the crisis in the Levant and how it is likely to respond.

Then finally, the Director of the Saban Center at the Brookings Institution, Martin Indyk, our former Ambassador to Israel and former Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East, who will also talk about U.S. options and what the United States could and should do to help deal with the current situation.

So, with those brief introductions, let me turn things over immediately to Nahum, and I will drink some more water. Nahum, if you could please explain to us

what it is that Israel thinks it is doing and why this time is going to be any different from 1974 and 1978 and 1982 and 1996 and a whole variety of smaller operations.

What is the Israeli strategy? What does Israel hope to accomplish?

MR. BARNEA: I can start there with a question. If you were Prime Minister of Israel, what would you have done in this situation?

MR. POLLACK: I thought you were my friend and would not lay that on me.

MR. BARNEA: I don't believe Ehud Olmert and his government had a lot of choices. It had to happen.

Let us start with Lebanon. What happened in Lebanon recently reminds me of the movie, "Little Shop of Horrors." You had a plant, Hizbollah which, by the way, Israel is at least partially responsible for its existence because it started with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, but it grew and grew and grew and became dangerous for everybody. The fact that Nasrallah has a kind of charm and charisma when he appears on television does not diminish the dangers that we have here. It is an organization which is basically a subcontractor of Iran and Syria and has a constant interest in provoking Israel.

Now, in the year 2000, as we know, Ehud Barak, who was Prime Minister at the time, retreated from Lebanon completely. He made a very clever decision by going to the U.N. and asking the U.N. to draw the line. The blue line between Israel and Lebanon is recognized by the U.N., so there is no reason to doubt it. The

locations of Hizbollah over the border were meant to provoke, I would say, the kind of violence which could be controlled by Hizbollah.

Now, there were many surprises in the last few days. I believe that Hizbollah was surprised by the magnitude of the Israeli reaction. I believe that Israel was surprised by the capacity of Hizbollah to return fire. Let us not underestimate their achievements in military terms, first, by abducting the two soldiers from Israel, by bombing a tank which crossed the border in order to follow the abductors, by hitting a very wide region of Israel which were never hit by rockets from Lebanon. I am talking Haifa, about Tiberius, about the Valley of Israel, all these Biblical places which people usually connect with stories from the New and Old Testaments that are now targets.

In the cabinet session, I believe, they made the decision to react heavily to the Hizbollah provocation. During this session that took place, I believe, about a week or five days ago, the possibility that Haifa will be hit was on the table. What Israel didn't know was the capacity of Hizbollah to hit our navy. One of our ships was hit by a Hizbollah rocket which meant that we had to respond because we didn't know that the Iranians delivered this kind of weapons to Hizbollah.

Now, Hizbollah still didn't use all of what they had in their arsenal. They have, I believe, a basic logistical problem to launch other missiles. Most of the missiles were destroyed by the Israeli Air Force. But, you know, when you start

with 13,000 rockets, even if 10,000 were destroyed by the Israeli Air Force and about 700 or 800 were launched from Lebanon by Hizbollah, you still have several hundred rockets which can Israel very, very hard.

The scope of war is more than anybody could predict at the beginning. The number of victims is higher than anybody could predict. At the same time — here, may I go beyond what you asked — it is an old cliché that every crisis is an opportunity, but I believe that in this crisis is probably true. There is opportunity because unlike other problems between Israel and its neighbors and unlike other problems you Americans have in Iraq, and we and you have vis-à-vis Iran, the Lebanese problem is unique in the sense that probably most of the Lebanese public opinion would like Hizbollah to restrain or even disappear, fade away. They have no interest in this kind of violence between Lebanon and Israel. They are the victims of it, no doubt about it. The Lebanese people, unlike the Palestinians, I believe, have no dreams about going back to places in Israel. We have no real problem with Lebanon.

So, you have the Lebanese public opinion, you have a unique situation that allows France and the United States to work together. Usually, they work against each other, but in the Lebanese crisis so far, deporting the Syrians from Lebanon, they work in a kind of consensus. You have a U.N. resolution which is very, very blunt and clear, and the Lebanese political system, at least most of it, would like to

have, I believe, more forceful reaction of the international community in order to have more guts and to deport or to at least diminish the power of Hizbollah.

I have two more comments. One is the big question was or the biggest Israeli demand was to remove Hizbollah from the southern border of Lebanon. I believe it has less relevance now because we found out that the range of the rockets Hizbollah has can go beyond any Lebanese Army sovereignty or control over the border. Let us assume that the same Hizbollah with the same objectives would be stationed 20 kilometers from the border. It can still hit large parts of Israel. This is one very interesting point.

Another point is that Israel from the beginning had, I would say, one open objective and one less open objective. The open objective was to retrieve the two soldiers who were kidnapped and to remove Hizbollah from the south. The real objective was to force the international community to react, to become much more active in settling, in making some order in Lebanon. Now, this is also quite unique because Israel quite often is very reluctant to have international intervention in a dispute between us and our neighbors.

Here, this was the objective, and I believe in this respect, Israel has a kind of relative achievement because it is no doubt that it became the topic of the G8 or at least the topic of the public statements from the G8. Since President Bush doesn't know how to switch off his microphone, we know now that he would like to send the

Secretary of State to the region and also to force Syria to restrain Hizbollah. There is some, I would say, interest, at least in the leaders of two powers, to intervene, and it is good because there is no other way this crisis can be — resolved is too big a word but — dealt with.

MR. POLLACK: Terrific, thank you, Nahum.

Hisham, given that this is Israel's approach and given that this is Israel's theory about how this is all going to work out, how is this playing out in Lebanon? Looking at it from the Lebanese Government's perspective, what do you think they want to do and what could they do if they wanted?

MR. MILHEM: Well, you know, Ken, even in the best of times, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to talk about a Lebanese perspective. I mean you get three Lebanese, and you end up with five opinions. But in these tragic times — these are the worst of times if you will — in the immediacy of the events, in the heat of the battle, in the midst of an historic amount of destruction that is being visited upon Lebanon by the Israeli military machine, the first reaction of the Lebanese is one of horror and disgust and anger that is directly essentially at the Israelis, and obviously later on in the second and third degree, probably against Hizbollah and Hizbollah's recklessness.

Many Lebanese are now reliving again the horrors of the 1982 Israeli invasion. I know we live in a city that believes that history usually should be measured by



years and at most decades. In 1982, when the Israelis invaded, remember Sharon's phrase: We want to dismantle the infrastructure of the PLO's terror. Now, the Israelis are saying they are interested only in the dismantling of Hizbollah's state within the state, and yes, Hizbollah has been unfortunately a state within a state.

Now, what you are seeing today, what the world is seeing, and what the Lebanese are feeling, those who criticize Hizbollah and those are supporters of Hizbollah, is that these the Lebanese state is being dismantled in front of their eyes. All the money, all the debts, all the hard work that Lebanese put in the last 15 years to rebuild the country after a brutal civil war and foreign interventions and occupations is being destroyed in the last five days.

Depending on how this tragedy will unfold, it will be extremely difficult for Lebanon to rebuild again, and probably beyond the rebuilding of the physical infrastructure, it will be extremely difficult for Lebanon to revive a political process that would maintain Lebanon as a unitary state. There are deep political, ideological fissures within the Lebanese society, and we have seen them come to the fore last year in the debate around the so-called National Dialogue. That is what when the guns fall silent, when the dust settles, many painful questions will be asked by the Lebanese about the international community, about Israel's intentions, about Hizbollah, about the impotence of the Arab World.

The tragedy also is what the Israelis are doing in Lebanon, they have done

before exactly. We have seen this horror B movie before. It is like the fellows in Tehran, Damascus, Hamas, and Hizbollah wrote the script, and Israeli leaders memorized the lines — destroying the infrastructure, inflicting collective punishment, kidnapping religious and political leaders, being totally dismissive of civilian casualties, and in the end, they end up radicalizing those who are the receiving end of that kind of punishment.

It is useful to remind people: Hizbollah literally emerged from the rubble and the ashes that were brought about by the Israeli invasion of 1982. Prior to 1982, there was no such thing as Hizbollah. Israeli actions also contributed to the rise of Hamas.

Just one word on Hizbollah: Hizbollah represents or claims to represent, with a degree of, I think, credibility, the majority of the largest Lebanese community, that is the Shiia community. This community and the modernistic Lebanon which they refer to as the invisible community, this was on the margin on political life, on the margin of economic prosperity that Lebanon witnessed in the fifties and sixties and early seventies. The politically elite Lebanon, mostly the Sunni Muslims and the Maronites and others marginalized the Shiia until the emergence of Musa Sudi who later on disappeared in Libya. That community was reawakened, if you will.

Under Nasrallah leadership, this community achieved the status that was unprecedented. The man is probably the most charismatic leader in the world. This

man who was 46 years old lost his son, 18 years old, fighting the Israelis in South Lebanon. He became the stuff of legends in the Arab World, in an Arab World that is ruled by a collection of brutal, autocratic regime that feels that it has been living in the Israeli shadow for decades, humiliated by their own people, humiliated by the Israelis repeatedly. Nasrallah and Hamas and Khaled Meshal now with their backers in Damascus and Iran are seen as an alternative to a failed Arab State system to the failure of the so-called moderate Arabs to deliver on any promise of social development, economic development, political opening.

Also, the events unfolding in Lebanon and Gaza should be seen in the context of a sense that is prevailing in the region today from Tehran to Damascus, Hamas and Hizbollah that America's moment in the Middle East has come to an end or, to be specific, George Bush's moment in the Middle East is over or is going to be over soon, that the Americans are drowning in Iraq's quicksand, that the American project, the drive to spread democracy in the Middle East has reached a dead end, essentially, and that those Arabs, the liberal reformers and others, are on the defensive. What Nasrallah calls the Culture of Resistance, the Logic of Resistance is now being projected as the alternative to this failed approach.

In that sense, what you see today in Lebanon and in Gaza, where we have people fighting at each other, there is also a verbal war taking place on the regional level, and we have seen it in the recent meeting of the Arab Foreign Ministers in

Cairo, where there was this polarization between the Egyptians, the Saudis, the Moroccans, the Kuwaitis, and others who were not only critical of Israeli tactics and overwhelming use of force against civilians but also critical of Hizbollah. One should keep that in mind when you are talk about what is taking place in Lebanon.

Now, Hizbollah has emerged in Lebanon as a state within a state. This Hizbollah is a very well disciplined political party. It has an extremely effective military wing. It has its own media empire. It has its own independent sources of funding from the Shiia community spread all over the world from North America to South America to Australia to Africa. And it has what it calls a “strategic relationship” with two countries in the region. One of them is a major country, Iran, a serious country, as Brzezinski keeps repeating and reminding us, and he is correct, and a not so strategic and important country, Syria.

What we have seen now is again unique in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and Hizbollah is in part responsible for it. Hizbollah today and Hamas for the first time in the Arab-Israeli conflict, you see two nonstate actors, Hizbollah and Hamas creating a dent in Israel’s strategic deterrence. It never happened before. You have never heard an Arab leader in the past, telling the Israelis: If you hit us, we will hit Haifa, and then he will deliver. It never happened before.

One of the reasons why you have this sense of Israeli frustration is that their deterrence is no longer as effective as it used to be. It is very easy to deter a nation

like Syria, especially if it is exposed and weak, than it is to deter a group like Hizbollah where the leader can go underground, where you don't have to rebuild the bridges, where you don't have to rebuild the airport, where you don't have to do anything. It is practically sometimes impossible to deter a nonstate actor like Hizbollah, and that is why there is no military solution to this. Every time the Israelis embark on these strategies and tactics, they ended up strengthening Hizbollah. This was the story of the 1990s. Ken was correct — 1993, 1996, until the year 2000.

Now, after 2000, I argue publicly that Hizbollah faced a major choice in the year 2000. In fact, Hizbollah's greatest moment was the year 2000 when they drove the Israeli occupying forces from South Lebanon. Hizbollah, at the same moment, faced its biggest challenge: How to justify its, at least declared, own debt, i.e., to resist Israeli occupation in South Lebanon. Then they came up with the Syrians, obviously, and with the excuse of the Sheba'a Farms. Now, I am one of those Lebanese who does not believe that Sheba'a Farms is a Lebanese territory, but it is a convenient excuse for the citizens who were in Lebanon at that time and for Hizbollah and their friends to justify Hizbollah maintaining its military wing.

Now, what happened in the last few years was the beginning of a debate, murmurs, criticism, and implicit criticism of Hizbollah maintaining its weapons. After the death of Hariri, first Lebanese Government since the supposedly the end of

Syria's hegemony over Lebanon, the country, in my mind, they made a major mistake in terms of including Hizbollah in the government without getting something in return from Hizbollah, i.e., like deploying the army to the south or working on a program to disarm the party, which I don't think Hizbollah was willing to entertain, but at least the Lebanese Government or the majority in the Parliament in Lebanon at that time should have put these challenges to Hizbollah publicly.

Later on, we went into a major political dialogue, a National Dialogue, in which the taboo of discussing Hizbollah's weapons and arms in the future was broken, and the Lebanese leaders began to call publicly on Hizbollah in these debates and in the media, that you should lay down your arms and you should allow the centrist government to deploy its forces to the south. Given the logic of Lebanese politics, given the fact of the civil war, that everybody still remembers the civil war in Lebanon, and given the sectarian nature of the Lebanese political system, the other groups are not going to allow one group, even if it is the largest group in the country, to maintain a military wing. In the name of self-preservation, in the name of self-defense, the other groups are going to be armed.

Now, in the heat of the battle, with Israel destroying what is left of Lebanese infrastructures and all of these casualties, people are not going to criticize Hizbollah while the Israeli bombs are falling on their heads, but when the dust settles, there will be serious questions asked of Hizbollah. What gives you the right to claim that you

have the right to determine issues of war and peace that are traditionally reserved by sovereign government? Then we are going to see a major debate in the country. My fear is that the acrimony will be so deep, the fissures will be deeper than they are today, and what you have now is not only polarization along the traditional lines, Christians and Muslims, but you have now a polarization and deepening rift between the Sunnis of Lebanon and the Shiia of Lebanon which is a phenomenon that exists in every Arab country where you have Shiia minorities, from Iraq, where they are a majority there, to Bahrain, to Kuwait, to Saudi Arabia, to Syria. We are going to go through a very ugly period in Lebanon in the next few weeks and months.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Hisham.

Shibley, let me turn to you now. Given the complexities which Hisham has laid out that the Lebanese see, the differing motives and sources of anger and frustration, is that something that you see reflected in the larger Arab stage, or is their thinking a little bit clearer? How are we going to see it manifest? It is one thing to say that the region is going to say that the region is going to be unhappy. It is another thing to talk about how that can have real world impact.

MR. TELHAMI: When you look at the Arab reaction to this, obviously, there are the official reactions that we have seen, and we have seen division in the official reaction, and there is the public reaction. No question, the vast majority of Arabs, whether they are Saudi or Egyptian or Moroccan or Jordanian, are very much rooting

for Hizbollah and blaming Israel. There is no question that the public opinion is very strongly rooting for Hizbollah. You can see it sweeping. If you look at the internet exchanges, you can feel the degree. In fact, I think one can say it revived a sense of pride in the Arab World, and some of the Saudis, when you look at the exchanges, say you have raised our heads. So, people are looking at this as Hizbollah doing something honorable. While we haven't had public opinion polling on this issue, I would say that is a sweeping move at the public level, and that becomes even more so when there are a lot of civilian casualties.

That is not the case at the level of the states, and I think we have seen that already. In fact, there has been a remarkable gap emerging, not only among different Arab States, to reflect itself in the Foreign Ministers' meeting, but also between the public and governments. I think particularly the three key friends of the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt, they have made a strategic decision that is separate from U.S. pressure, by the way, that they have something to lose if Hizbollah wins militarily or is assumed to be power or even if Hamas is seen to win. They have made strategic decision that is something they don't want, that this is something that will destruct their priorities in the region. This is something that will be destabilizing. This is something that will be empowering to their opponents within the region and particularly in the Hizbollah case because of the Hizbollah-Iran linkage.



So, there has been a strategic decision reflected in pronouncements of the likes of which we haven't seen. When the Saudis issue a statement that initially tends to blame Hizbollah for the crisis, when you have a well connected, prominent Saudi commentator also pinning the blame on Hamas for the Israeli incursion in the Palestinian areas, it tells you that there has been a strategic decision made that they are going to take a different kind of position. I think certainly those three governments and many who support them have taken that position that they cannot afford Hizbollah and Hamas to preempt their strategic goals in the region.

Yet, I think all of them, just like everybody, are taken by surprise at the level of escalation, both the Israeli escalation and the capacity of Hizbollah to hit Israel. The events have intensified public opinion opposition to these governments and put them also in a place where they simply cannot be indifferent to the level of casualties, to the civilian casualties. What happens with civilian casualties, as Hisham was saying about the Lebanese reaction, even those people who know Hizbollah is to blame for starting this crisis and would have said so, when you have huge civilian casualties, the blame shifts. You can have a liberal Israeli in Haifa, who thinks that Israel overreacted in Lebanon. You have some who did, not a lot, but you have some who did. When they are there and under the rubble of a building from a katusha rocket that was fired from Lebanon, they are not going to say our government is this, Hizbollah is responsible for this. That is just the nature of things.

That is what we see at the level of the public opinion.

I want to say I don't know whether this is consequential or not, that is, public opinion. Arab governments have had a history of being able to be repressive and ride out a lot of different crises. They have done that over and over again, and there is no reason to expect that something really huge will happen in Saudi Arabia or Egypt or Jordan as a backlash in the short term. So, this may not be entirely consequential in the short term.

I want to say two things about that. One is, of course, forget democracy for now. You recall this was something on the agenda at one point. I mean that is not something that is on the agenda. The gap is too wide. Can you imagine people opening it up right now, and the U.S. being happy about opening it up? The second thing I want to say is think about those who are really wanting to contain this or certainly want to blame Hamas or Hizbollah and those who don't. What we see is this huge gap between established states that are linked to the international system that are deterrable, and then you see all these nonstate actors, whether they are groups or in the public opinion, who are on a different side.

I want to talk about this issue of deterrence as it is seen strategically in the Arab World a little bit more because we say that states are more deterrable than nonstate groups, and it is obviously true, but I don't think we understand the full consequences of that. It is not just that nonstate actors are harder to deter.

Obviously, it is true. If you look at Syria, Syria has far more powerful missiles than Hizbollah does, far more powerful missiles than kastam missiles from Gaza, but it is not firing them across the Golan Heights, despite the fact that its territory has been under occupation for nearly 40 years. It is not doing so for a very simple reason: They know consequences. Israel has an address. If they do so, they will be destroyed. I think for that reason, Israeli deterrence has worked. It hasn't worked vis-à-vis Hamas. It hasn't worked vis-à-vis Hizbollah.

The message there is not just that it is harder to deter groups. The message is when you disrupt states — look at Iraq — when you remove central authority, you have no control. In Lebanon, we haven't had central authority. There has not been a really effective central authority because central authority, in the end, rests with security. It rests with security. That is the notion of monopoly of means of violence. That is what a government is. When you don't have it, you don't have a central authority. You have it in name. Lebanon hasn't had it. Certainly, the Palestinian areas have not had it. They have had some limited version, but they have not had it.

You look back and say, what is a strategically beneficial outcome in this case for the Israelis? Hizbollah may be weakened or even destroyed, although it has a population base, as Hisham said, that is the largest single group in Lebanon. So, that group isn't going to disappear. In the meanwhile, the state is also going to be weakened. So, you are going to have both weakened. What that means strategically

is that anybody could fill that vacuum.

What we have forgotten is just before this attack, there has been a war of words going on between al-Qaida and Hizbollah, and al-Qaida, beginning with Zarqawi before he was killed and then after Zarqawi's death, has been accusing Hizbollah of "shielding Israel" from al-Qaida, not allowing al-Qaida to take root in Lebanon so as to attack Israel more effectively. I think this is an issue that has to be in the back of people's minds in terms of even if you defeat one group, what happens if you create an environment where others will take place, whether it is in Lebanon or in Syria? Syria could be defeated militarily, but with its ethnic diversity and its bordering with Iraq and Lebanon, what might happen if you have a disruption in the political system there from the point of view of deterrence?

The final point I want to make is about linkages. I think when you look at the perception, certainly here from this town and I would say to some extent from the Israeli point of view but less so, that is, the Arab-Israeli conflict was not seen to a central issue here and certainly not a priority. I mean it is an issue, but it is not a priority, and there are other priorities: Iraq, Iran, the nuclear proliferation in North Korea, a lot of other issues that are on the table.

One of the things that is obvious in this case is the very quick, unintended escalation. I believe that neither the Israelis nor Hizbollah expected this level of escalation, and I don't think the Arab States did. I don't think the United States did.

I think this happened too rapidly for anyone to control. Very quickly, it will escalate to a level where there are linkages, whether it is pertaining to Iran or whether it is pertaining to Iraq. There are linkages, and those linkages simply cannot be ignored. You cannot pretend like there are no linkages.

Tied to this is this perception that we have to sit back and reflect here a little bit. I think people are reacting emotionally, understandably. Everybody is. Too many casualties. Too many fears. In fact, I think from the point of view of our government, we are not projecting enough empathy with those casualties and fears across the board, because that is what people see in the Middle East. They are living the horror, and people want to see that people are noticing they are living the horror, aside from taking political positions.

One of the things that I think we have not reflected on is linkages that are different from what I just said about the consequences for other issues. Look, we pretend the world is a perfect world as states, and it is not. States matter, and they have to be held responsible, and in the end, that is a cornerstone of international security. In the end you have to deal with state, and that has to be the basis of the relationship.

But identities are not about states. Every measure of identity you take, you find triple identity or quadruple identity. People are at once Egyptian and Arab and Muslim and Jordanian, and all of these are there. To pretend that you can have a

bilateral relationship and that ends the linkages, that cannot be right. If Egyptian-Israeli peace is good for the states, but if there is an Arab-Israeli conflict, Egyptians are Arab. If there is a Muslim-Israeli conflict, Egyptians are Muslim. They are tied in.

That is why, in my own judgment, it is very hard to come up with a point of equilibrium unless you think comprehensively, and I am not talking about an ambitious let us get a conference, but I give you a contrast between what we have now and what you had in the 1990s. The 1990s have been the only decade in which we did not have a major Arab-Israeli war, the only decade. We are having one now, and obviously, it could escalate into a bigger war. The reason for it, I think, is that there was a scheme. It didn't have a comprehensive piece, but there was a scheme that began with the Bush Administration and continued with the Clinton Administration about engaging everybody in a scheme that would lead to a comprehensive settled, and I think that created incentives for everyone and addressed most people's notions of identity in the region. I don't think in the end in this particular case, we are likely to avoid having a future confrontation if we limit this simply to a ceasefire agreement between Lebanon and Israel.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Shibley.

So, Martin, the Middle East is in the soup once again.

Why don't we start from this presumption? We heard the President, as Nahum

pointed out this morning, and there seems to be more of a willingness on the part of the United States to get involved in a more meaningful way. Let us, for a moment, take that as granted. Given that, what would you be advising this Administration that they can do and should do?

AMB. INDYK: Well, I am not sure I am the President now or I am advising the President. Let us not assume I am the President, but let us understand that we have George Bush in the White House and not the President that I advised, which was Bill Clinton.

As you suggested, there is a lot of *déjà vu* about this. Through eight years of the Clinton Administration, President Clinton had to deal with numerous crisis in Lebanon, but the way that he dealt with it in those days was immediate intervention to tamp down the conflict because of an understanding that it could blow in precisely the way that this one has blown, although in those days, it was because Syria was in Lebanon, there was a much greater danger that it would blow into a regional conflagration. That said, we had much greater ability to tamp down the conflict in those days. Why? Because Syria was in Lebanon, and Syria was able to curb Hizbollah, and we were engaged with Syria and Israel in negotiations of a peace agreement in which we were trying to deal with Syrian and Israeli concerns through diplomacy and negotiations.

That meant that we had a very simple response. Hizbollah flies katusha

rockets. We call Damascus. Damascus says, well, we can't really control them, but we will do our best. We call Jerusalem and say, hold off because the Syrians are saying they are going to do their best. The Israelis are watching and listening and they see that Syrians are talking to Hizbollah. Lo and behold, the rockets stop, and we go back to the status quo. Now, occasionally, it blew, and it didn't work, but that is when the Secretary of State would fly over there, Secretary Christopher in particular, do a shuttle between Damascus and Jerusalem and work out an agreement and solve it that way.

But, it was in the context of an Administration that was seeking peace through diplomacy and saw stability as helpful in achieving that objective, that the transformation of the region would come through peace and the liberation of Lebanon would come through peace and the disarmament of Hizbollah would come through peace, not as a result of our demands of it but because Syria would have an interest in disarming Hizbollah as part of the peace treaty between Syria and Israel and Israel and Lebanon. Then, the Lebanese people would have an opportunity to start to pressure Syria to leave.

In the Bush Presidency, we have a very different approach to the region, to say the least. It starts with the belief as articulated again by the Secretary of State repeatedly yesterday on the television talk shows. It starts with the principle that pursuing peace was a Clinton policy and we don't want to do that because it didn't



succeed, and pursuing stability, something pursued by previous administrations including the previous Bush Administration, was a mistake because it produced 9/11 and the attacks on the United States. Therefore, we are going to adopt a different approach to transforming the region. We are going to pursue regime change and democratization, and we are purposely going to eschew stability because stability brought us 9/11.

And so, as a result of that, when it came to Lebanon, after the Regan Administration tried to make Lebanon a test case and it withdrew in ignominy after 231 marines were killed by Hizbollah, previous administrations decided you couldn't depend on Lebanon for anything and you just needed to keep it under control while you focused in other areas. The Bush Administration decided to make Lebanon one of the test cases of transformation and promotion of democracy. In pursuit of this, it pushed Syrian troops out of Lebanon. The consequence of that but perhaps the unintended consequence was that we lost the stabilizing force there. The Lebanese got freedom, but they paid in terms of stability. The Bush Administration was not concerned about stability, so it didn't focus on that.

The consequence now is what we saw this morning, if you watched the conversation between Tony Blair and George Bush in which Bush kind of, as he is chomping on his bread, looks up at Blair and says, we need Kofi Annan to tell the Syrians to cut out this shit. Well, that is not a particularly effective way to deal with

the Syrians in this situation. Imagine that the United States is dependent on Kofi Annan to get the Syrians to cut out the shit, and imagine if Condoleezza Rice picked up the phone to Bashir Al-Assad and said, hey, cut out the shit. The Syrians are going to say, well, would you like us to go back in to take care of the problem now?

One of the consequences of this transformational policy which eschewed diplomacy and stability and favored democratization is that we don't have the same levers at our disposal.

The second thing about the Bush Administration's approach at large is that it chose to emphasize elections as the vehicle for promoting democracy. Some of you have heard me say this before, but we see it very clearly in this crisis. In choosing elections as the vehicle, the Administration understood that there were players out there like Hizbollah, like Hamas, like all of the political parties in Iraq that had militias, but the theory was you have an election, you have a popularly elected government, and that government will take care of the militias. So, in the case of Lebanon, even though we had a U.N. resolution 1559 which called in its second paragraph for the removal of all foreign forces, that is, the Syrians, and its third paragraph for the disbandment and disarmament of all militias. We insisted on the implementation of paragraph two, and the Syrians left. We ignored the implementation of paragraph three on the grounds that we were urged to do this by the French. First, we will elect the government, and that government will produce

the disarmament of Hizbollah, paragraph three.

We did exactly the same thing in Iraq where there was a constitution that required the disarmament, but we had the elections instead, and we did exactly the same thing in the case of the Palestinian Authority, where we said have the elections and the Fatah will win the elections and they will have a mandate to disarm Hamas.

What happened? In each case, the parties that we would have disarmed through the elections used the elections to gain power in one way or another. And so, we have this massive problem of the militias in the government in Iraq. We have, in Lebanon, Hizbollah moving into the government, into the cabinet with its ministers and vetoing any effort that the majority within the Lebanese Government try to make towards the disarming of Hizbollah. They used the election system to prevent their disarmament. And, of course, we know what happened in the Palestinian Authority. Hamas took over the whole government and put its own people in control of the Ministry of Interior and brought some of the worst of the terrorist elements into the government to run the various security services. In the case of Lebanon, the willful ignoring of paragraph three of Resolution 1559 leads to a situation where Hizbollah is able to use its military capabilities to provoke and pursue this crisis.

Now, I think the reassessment of the pursuit of transformation through democratization and regime change is long overdue, but it is not happening. Instead,

the Bush Administration continues to follow the same basic set of assumptions. What that means now is if it is to achieve or protect the democratic transformation that it began in Lebanon, it has to use this crisis not to achieve to stability, not to achieve a ceasefire, but to achieve paragraph three of 1559, the disarmament and the disbandment of Hizbollah's militias. That is why the President has said, in the last few days, we have to treat the root causes. He is talking about the fact that Hizbollah has a militia that has to be disarmed. That is why Secretary of State Rice, in her interviews yesterday, talked about not just a cessation of violence; what we have to do is make sure that when we end this crisis, we are not hostage to Hizbollah's next decision to launch missiles into Israel.

If the objective now is the disarmament and disbandment of Hizbollah, how is the Administration to achieve it? The Lebanese Government is clearly too weak at the moment to pursue that objective and to achieve that objective. Given the premise that what we are seeking here is democratic transformation, we have an obligation to support and strengthen the Lebanese Government which is being democratically elected. That is, by the way, why Bush started off his first statements in this crisis to Israel not to undermine the fledgling democracy in Lebanon. As I say, it is too weak to in this crisis to exercise any kind of control over Hizbollah. In fact, Hizbollah's, just like in the case of Hamas, use of violence to provoke the crisis has undermined the power of Abu Mazin in the case of the Palestinians and the government of Prime

Minister Siniora in the case of Lebanon.

We can't turn to the Syrians. I have already explained why that won't work. Hizbollah's main backer, Iran, doesn't take us seriously. Why should they? They have paid no price whatsoever for continued defiance of the international community when it comes to their nuclear program. They won't deign to respond to our offer of direct negotiations with an incentive package of carrots and sticks. And so, it is hard to see how we could get Iran to disarm or disband or even curb what is its major proxy in this part of the Middle East from which it has always managed to gain great advantage.

In effect, to achieve its objective, the Administration is left with only one source of leverage, and that is Israel's use of force, and that is why the Administration is holding back the demands for a ceasefire because it hopes that Israel's use of force will serve to weaken Hizbollah at least to the point where that objective is disarming and disbanding can be achieved.

The problem is, as you heard from the other speakers, that the use of force is a blunt instrument for this purpose. Hizbollah hides its infrastructure, its military infrastructure, amid civilians. Whether it is in the villages of the South or the suburbs of Southern Beirut or the town of the Bekaa Valley, that is where Hizbollah operates out of. If Israel is going to take apart Hizbollah's military capabilities, it is going to be killing civilians, and that is exactly what is happening now. Israel also

has to try to cut the lines of supply from Syria and from Iran, and so it takes down the civilian infrastructure in Lebanon as well. Of course, the Israeli Air Force, since it is bombing from the sky, makes mistakes and civilians die as a result thereto.

The problem with that is not only, of course, that civilians die, not just in Lebanon but also in Israel in this process, but that the effort to hold off the pressure for a ceasefire while Israel uses its military force becomes more and more difficult to do as the civilian casualty count rises and the United States comes under increasing pressure to do something to stop the violence.

The second problem with depending on force is that, as we have heard, Hizbollah is an indigenous force. This is not the same as 1982 when Israel was able to use force to have the PLO and Yassar Arafat evicted. It is questionable exactly how this is going to work in terms of getting Hizbollah to a weakened position.

Thirdly, of course, the bombing of civilian populations tends over time to turn the anger from Hizbollah for creating this crisis to Israel for killing them. Therefore, I think that while force can achieve a certain weakening of Hizbollah, the longer Israel goes on using force, the diminishing return it gets from that tactic, and that especially applies for the Bush Administration.

Therefore, the Administration needs now to start to plan to a diplomatic initiative. I will just finish quickly on what that could look like. The first principle, as I said before, is that the Lebanese Government comes out strengthened from this,

rather than weakened. The same, of course, applies in the case of Abu Mazin, and that Hizbollah and Hamas, who both provoked this crisis, come out weakened rather than strengthened.

Siniora, the Lebanese Prime Minister, made a speech on Saturday that was little noticed but contains actually the elements, I believe, of a potential diplomatic initiative, and we should get behind what I will call the Siniora plan. The first is a ceasefire. The ceasefire that has to be based on acceptance of the following principles:

First of all, that Hizbollah will either remove itself or be removed from Southern Lebanon and replaced with the Lebanese Armed Forces. That is something that Siniora spoke about on Saturday. That is something contained in all of the U.N. resolutions since Israel withdrew in 2000, that Lebanese sovereignty should be extended to the South and the Lebanese Army should be moved there, but the Lebanese Army isn't strong enough to do this on its own. Therefore, it will have to be backed by international forces, not the pathetic UNIFIL forces that have been there for more than three decades but a real international fighting force that will back up the Lebanese Armed Forces in patrolling the South and keeping quiet there particularly on the border with Israel.

Secondly, as Siniora called for on Saturday, and I thought it was a very interesting statement, a return to the Armistice Agreement of 1949 between Israel

and Lebanon. I want to emphasize again that this is something that the Lebanese Prime Minister put on the table. It is significant because it suggests, its implication is that Israel and Lebanon will deal directly with each other, will in effect reach an agreement which is a de facto nonbelligerency pact, and that will govern the relationship and the status of the border between them. In fact, under the Armistice Agreement, there is room for a Border Demarcation Committee to be established.

The third element has to be implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559. There is a consensus in the international community behind that; it is mentioned again in the G8 communiqué; and the United Nations Representative, Terje Roed-Larsen, was appointed for the purposes of the implementation of 1559. As I said before, 1559 contains, in paragraph three, the demand for the disbanding and disarming of all of the militias and that, of course, means Hizbollah. This is not something that can be achieved before a ceasefire, but it needs to be part of the ceasefire package, so that the Lebanese Government will come out of this crisis with the international community backing that demand and insisting that if Lebanon is to be reconstructed, that Hizbollah will have to disarm. It can have its proper place as a representative of the Shiite community in the Lebanese Parliament and in politics, but it can no longer be free to use its militia independent of the sovereign Lebanese Government.

Finally, of course, there will have to be a deal made for the return of the Israeli



soldiers. In that context, something which needs to be done once a ceasefire is achieved, a deal indeed can be done, but it must be done not through Hizbollah but through the Lebanese Government.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Martin.

We will open things up to your questions. There are — how many microphones do we have? Two. Why don't we start right over here?

AMB. INDYK: Did we lose Nahum?

MR. POLLACK: Yes, Nahum had to dash out. Unfortunately, he had a little bit of an emergency. Martin, I assume you can field questions that would normally come Nahum's way.

Please introduce yourself and indicate your affiliation.

QUESTION 1: Robin Wright, the Washington Post.

I am interested in following up on something Martin suggested, and that is this issue of an international force. I am interested particularly in what Shibley and Hisham have to say about, given the experience of the last multinational force in Lebanon, the fact that it had to leave in the face of violence it couldn't deal with, the fact that the Americans would have to be involved this time again for the Israelis to feel confident, what are the prospects of success and what are the obstacles it is likely to face? How viable is it?

MR. TELHAMI: I personally think that an international force is workable

when you have an agreement that all sides sign to, that is, if it is just essentially a symbolic and logistical presence that everyone has signed onto. If, in fact, it takes place in an environment where some of the key parties have not signed onto it, I just don't see how it can work. I think that the international force would become a target.

I think unless you are talking about a NATO force and you are talking about an army and you talking about real war fighting, even there I wonder whether the international will is sustainable, particularly if you put them in this context. For example, now if you have an artificial ceasefire without an agreement that Hizbollah signed onto and with their capacity still in place, very quickly either they are going to find a way to launch attacks against Israel or they are going to launch attacks against the international force. I think that transfers the problem.

So, I see the international force idea as kind of an end of a process, not a beginning of a process. I see it as a strengthening of an agreement that has to be signed. To put them in there in a hostile environment, I don't think would solve the problem. If you ask me: What is the solution? If I were in Martin's place, I would ask the question: So, what is the alternative? I am not sure what the alternative is.

I think the problem right now is that we are on an escalation road, and I think we have to, in a way, ask the question backward, rather than what should we do. Events are moving so rapidly, so rapidly on the ground, that if there is a Hizbollah missile that hits Tel Aviv tomorrow and you have 100 people dead, it changes the

picture dramatically. If they hit the petrochemical plant in Haifa, it changes the picture rapidly. I think, from the Israeli point of view, what is the next level of escalation? It very quickly can get to Syria in the logic of escalation and a rapid emotional escalation as well.

The question we have to ask is what is it that we don't want this to get to, and then work backward and figure out how to prevent that level of escalation before you even figure out how you are going to end the fighting in between.

I have mixed feelings about the international force. I see it as helpful but not in an environment where hostility is taking place.

MR. MILHEM: In order to have an effective international force, we have to have the right political environment. It is maybe too early even to speculate at this stage because really we don't know how or when the guns will fall silent and what would be the status of Hizbollah or even the Olmert Government, for that matter, after the guns fall silent. I cannot imagine, at this stage, Hizbollah under Nasrallah signing on any kind of international force. I really cannot see it. It is not in the cards.

Unless you have the right kind of political environment, you will end up with the same situation that we saw in the early 1980s when you had a small, ineffective international force that did not have a very clear political mandate and a very weak government. After the first big loss of the American following the bombing of the

Marine barracks, the United States declared, if you remember, the infamous or famous redeployment which is a nice euphemism for putting your tail between your legs and fleeing. Unless you have that kind of political environment, it is not going to work.

Even if you have an international military force, it has to be part of a comprehensive package that would include the rebuilding of Lebanon. Lebanon has a tremendous debt in terms of per capita ratio. Unless you have the right political environment and a package that would include rebuilding along with, as Martin said, the implementation, the full implementation of 1559, again within a broader approach to the region that we have to pursue some sort of a revival to the peace process that is becoming like a curse. One reason we have this crisis is again there is a sense that the United States has retreated from peacemaking activity in the region. You have a big problem when you cannot talk to the Iranians, when you cannot talk to Hamas, when you cannot talk to Hizbollah, and you have minimal contacts with the Syrians. How are you going to effect and influence their behavior?

None of the major players now among the G8 are addressing the issue, particularly the United States. Intellectually, in terms of conceptually, this government is unable to admit that they have a crisis in terms of meaningful ways to affect the behavior of the Syrians and the Iranians, short of the use of military use. As I said earlier, there is that sense in the region that America is bogged down in

Iraq. That is why even these nonstate players are active.

It is amazing when you look at the relationship between Syria and Hizbollah. Bashar al-Assad is in awe of Nasrallah. In the old days under al-Assad, he would keep the Islamists at arm's length. He hated them, but he was cunning enough to use them. The son, who has nothing of the father's cunning and political dexterity, looks up to Nasrallah. I think Martin alluded to this. Just as Khaled Meshal now, as the leader of a nonstate player so to speak, marginalized Mahmoud Abbas, Nasrallah, by design or not, marginalized Meshal. The problem in Lebanon that Martin did not address is how you calibrate your political and military moves in a way that would not plunge the country into civil war. That is the fear that is gripping every Lebanese leader or every thoughtful Lebanese leader, and we have only a handful of them.

MR. POLLACK: Why don't we go over to this side to John Moore?

QUESTION 2: I am John Moore.

I would like to ask a question to Hisham about Hizbollah and the leadership and the relationship between Hizbollah and Iran and Iran's influence on the group. If Nasrallah was to die and be martyred in this crisis, would the group be able to stay together? Is it cohesive enough?

What is the actual Iranian role in all of these with regards specifically to Hizbollah? Are they directing Hizbollah? Is Hizbollah independent enough to take its own actions within the Lebanese and international context? Can you explain that

a little bit?

MR. MILHEM: The Israelis obviously would like to kill Nasrallah, but the problem is the old adage: Beware, what you wish for, you might get it. They did kill Nasrallah's predecessor who was not very effective, and they ended up with Nasrallah, the most effective leader that Hizbollah could imagine. He did create a more cohesive political and military force.

The relationship between the Shiia of Iran and the Shiia of Lebanon is very complex. In fact, it was a bunch of Shiia Lebanese clerics who, back in the 16th Century, helped to convert Iran from a Sunni majority state into a Shiia state. So, you have that kind of historical relationship among some families or clerical families and whatnot.

Iran was very instrumental in helping the emergence of Hizbollah in Lebanon. In the early years, we used to refer to Hizbollah as an "Iranian phenomena in Lebanon." Today, the relationship is more complex. It is more subtle. Hizbollah has a partnership, if you will, with Iran. I don't think the Iranians could issue orders and tell Hizbollah what to do. Definitely, they would like to maintain some sort of deniability, if you will, but Hizbollah and Iran share almost a world view. It is very simplistic for people to think here that Iran plays Hizbollah like marionettes. It is more subtle. It is more complex than that. There is a relationship of partnership.

Many Lebanese, by the way, in the last couple of years, began to see Hizbollah

as an integral part of Iran's regional strategy. If there is an American-Iranian conflagration, Hizbollah would be a party to it. If there is an Israeli-Iranian conflagration, Hizbollah is likely to be part of it. There is a good deal of truth to that, although if Hizbollah becomes involved in this kind of warfare, it would lose a great deal of support in Lebanon. This is something that they don't think about right now. It is not very pressing.

There is a very sophisticated, complex relationship. Iran provided Hizbollah with training, logistics, money, spiritual guidance through Syria, again which is funny now where you have a state like Syria of almost 20 million people depending on what is left of its small influence in the region on nonstate player like Hizbollah. Hizbollah today in its relationship with Syria probably is more important than the Syrian State. This is again the reversal. Syria's relationship with Iran is different totally or radically today than the way it was in the late 1970s when it began when Iran was dependent on Syria for weapons because of the war on Iraq and all that. Now, Syria is a third rate partner, if you will, to an emerging war.

This is a very complex relationship. Iran will always maintain a degree of influence with the Shiia community of Iraq, although how events unfold in Iraq, by the way, should not be left out of the equation. I mean I would imagine that if Nasrallah at one time entertained the notion that I will put my heavy weapons in escrow and go into a gradual process of disarmament, he watches events in Iraq and

he will say to himself, why should I disarm? You have an upstart of Muqtada al-Sadr who looks up to Nasrallah as a model, and you have the Iraqi state falling apart, and the only means to preserve the safety, if you will, of the community is through the militia. He is not going to disarm, and that is part of the Lebanese tragedy.

We always on focus on Lebanon and on Lebanon and Israel without keeping the region in our mind, but everybody in Lebanon, everybody in the Arab World is watching Iraq and watching the sectarian polarization that is taking place there.

AMB. INDYK: Can I just jump in on the question of Iran? Just as I was coming down, there was a wire coming out that the Iranian Foreign Minister has turned up in Damascus today, and he said that there can be a ceasefire and an exchange of prisoners. I would not rule out the possibility that in this partnership, the Iranians, who I believe — I can't prove it — decided that it was convenient to start this crisis at this particular moment, will want to show themselves as capable of ending the crisis as well, in that way to demonstrate that they are a player, not just in the Gaza territory but across the Middle East.

Let us not forget that this is the regime that sought the “grand bargain” with the United States. It already has the United States making offers to it on the nuclear front. Now, if it can project itself as a player that can either turn the heat up or turn the heat down in the Arab-Israeli arena, it shows that it has cards that it would like the United States to recognize as part of this negotiation. Then we come back to the



Bush Administration. I find it highly unlikely the Bush Administration is ready to play that game, but that doesn't mean that the Iranians won't make the offer.

MR. POLLACK: We have a lot of questions and not a lot of time, so if I could ask you to keep the questions brief and also keep the answers brief. Let us go to that gentlemen right there on the aisle.

QUESTION 3: A very brief question, what do you think was going through Hizbollah's mind when they abducted these soldiers once it appeared that Israel would show this kind of reaction?

MR. TELHAMI: That is really a difficult question, and I think obviously it is being debated whether it was timed in any way to coincide with the Gaza operation, whether it was tied to distracting from the Iran nuclear issue. The timing is important.

Just a couple of things, I think my own interpretation is just an interpretation because we really don't know for sure. First, Hizbollah has been saying that it is going to take Israeli soldiers as prisoners to exchange them for prisoners. Nasrallah himself said this has been an operation that has been in planning for months, and I would think it has been because the technical skill to be able to do it means that it has been in the planning for months. It doesn't explain why the timing, obviously, but clearly it is something that they had been thinking about for one reason or another to do. So, it wasn't just that they thought there is something, an opportunity,

let us go and carry out this kind of operation. This kind of operation has been in their plan.

Second, I don't think that they expected the level of the Israeli retaliation. Nasrallah is a very tactical man. As Hisham said, he is really a different breed actually of Arab leader. One reason why he has charisma and he is taken seriously is because unlike a lot of previous declarations by many Arab leaders, they typically exaggerate the casualties of the Israelis and underestimate their casualties and exaggerate their power rather than underestimate it. He has sort of made it a point to look credible. To him, that is a very different kind of image that he is projecting in the Arab World.

I think that his strategic calculation always was that the Israelis will escalate, and he knew the Israelis would escalate. They would escalate at least one notch or two notches. The Israelis always do when they think there is new strategic threat. They do against states, and often it works. That kind of escalation, if you take it one step at a time, he now has a counter to it by virtue of having these missiles that can escalate the ladder and then perhaps the process would stop earlier. I don't think that he anticipated the overwhelming Israeli response to which he had to escalate much more rapidly. That is my own estimation.

I don't think that he wished for this kind of escalation at this point because it is very hard to see a win for him. You can say he might emerge the political leader. It

doesn't mean there is a win situation for the Israelis. That is a different story because I don't think there is a win situation in the short term for the Israelis either, but I think there is not an obvious win for him in this, and that is why I think he probably miscalculated the degree of Israeli reaction.

MR. MILHEM: Just quickly on this one, actually many Lebanese leaders were shocked by the timing of Hizbollah's attack because they were given reason by Nasrallah and Khaled and others that Hizbollah would not embark on anything of that sort during the high tourism season in Lebanon. Everybody was hoping this would not occur. As Nasrallah said in his own press conference, the first one after they captured the Israeli soldiers, in terms of timing, this was essentially linked to Gaza.

Part of the calculus, it seems to me, that there will be an Israeli action, but it will be kind of limited because the Israelis are fighting on the Gaza front and they will probably end up doing what they have been doing in the last few years when Hizbollah managed to kill or capture some Israelis or capture Tenenbaum, some air raids, some retaliation, but it will not amount to a major reaction like this. As should be said, we have the means of deterrence, and this is probably a new government untested. Olmert is not Sharon or is not Rabin.

While they have a degree of deterrence, the problem is the kind of deterrence that Hizbollah owns is a deterrence that it probably can use once, and that is why

now you have the Israeli determination to deprive them of that deterrence, especially in terms of the long range missiles.

MR. POLLACK: How about right there on the end?

QUESTION 4: Steve Consine with AFP.

My question is about a possible visit to the region by Secretary Rice. Given that the U.S. has said it is not going to push for a ceasefire immediately, is this necessarily the right time for her to go?

Secondly, are there any deliverables that she could justify investing the capital of a U.S. Secretary of State going to the region, that she could come away and say, I achieved this?

If you are not going to speak to Syria and Iran at least directly yourself, is there any chance of success?

And, finally, would she be welcomed in Israel and part of the Arab World? What would her welcome be like?

AMB. INDYK: We can be sure she would be welcome in Israel. I think it is definitely premature to send her out there, and I would be very surprised if she goes anytime soon. That is precisely because of the points that you make in your question.

What is she going to do? Is she going to go to Damascus? The Syrians would love that. That would be an indication that the United States was coming to the

Syrians to exercise control in Lebanon. So, she can't go to Damascus. She could send somebody else there. Tony Blair is apparently offering to go and maybe that will happen, or Kofi Annan seems to be the President's idea. Wouldn't that be ironic?

It is a big problem. It is a big problem, and we don't have the ability to draw-draw. As Churchill would say, better to draw-draw than war-war. We are going to war-war for a while and see who's prepared to talk to us. We are not going to go. I can't see her going, cap in hand, to Syria for this purpose and the same would be with Iran. So, we are going to have to find. We are going to, in essence, have to wait to see whether Israel's use of force produces enough nervousness in Damascus and Tehran that they are prepared to talk about a ceasefire. This first indication from the Iranian Foreign Minister might be such a sign. I still think it is premature to believe that they are actually ready to talk about ceasefire, and therefore, I would expect to say the crisis will escalate, and it may actually end up in a Syrian-Israeli conflagration of some description before the United States actually comes in with a major diplomatic enterprise.

I have to say, from previous experiences, that Secretaries of State do not go on missions impossible because then their credibility will be directly affected. There just doesn't seem to be any way in which she could put together a positive outcome, what you call a deliverable, in these current circumstances.

This is the job of Assistant Secretaries to go out and fail. David Welch is out in the region. He happens to be in Tripoli, Libya of all places at the moment. Maybe they can influence the situation. I would expect him to be around. Terje Roed-Larsen, the U.N. envoy. Of course, Solana, he specializes in those kinds of missions impossible. Then once we see what happens as a result of the application of military force, then I think the Secretary would have to think about going out there. I do think that this cannot be ended without her intervention, but it would be premature to do now.

MR. POLLACK: I think we can take one more question. We will take it right here on the end.

QUESTION 5: Paul Shamm from the Middle East Institute.

I would like to focus for a minute on Israeli strategic thinking on this and whether Israel seems to have really perhaps bitten off more than it can chew. The similarities between this and 1982 when it tried to remake what then they talked about the Middle East; now they are talking about the rules of the game. How can Israel be satisfied by what may realistically happen? Given that Israeli public opinion is surprisingly united on this — even the remnants of the moderate Israeli peace camp are supporting the current policy — how do you see Israel being satisfied and being able to pull back, feeling that it has had some sort of victory?

AMB. INDYK: Very quickly, I would say that if the military were in control,

if you had actually generals as Prime Minister and Defense Minister, I think the answer would be a little different and more problematic for Israel because their focus is on restoring Israel's deterrent capability. I think what you heard from Shibley and Hisham in this regard is that is not achievable in these circumstances. That is precisely the game that Nasrallah wants them to play.

He keeps on saying, you guys are idiots. You don't understand. You hit me, and I will hit you back hard.

He is trying to establish new rules of the game of deterrence that Hizbollah can deter as well with terror, and no general will accept that.

I think the politicians, while they are going to escalate, are actually interested in the kind of initiative, diplomatic initiative, which would result in the Lebanese Army coming down the South and stabilizing that border and removal of the katusha rockets. Nahum's point is a very good one about the range of these rockets now creates a problem, but Israel is not going to be able to destroy all those rockets and prevent them from resupply.

The best that a politician can achieve in these circumstances is a situation in which they can point to a process of the Lebanese Army taking control in the South — that is an achievement from Israel's point of view — a process in Lebanon that leads to or moves in the direction of disarmament of Hizbollah in the context of implementation of 1559, and talks on prisoner exchange which will lead eventually,

as we have seen in the past, to the two soldiers being returned. If you look carefully at what the Israelis are saying because they are not saying very much now, they are basically saying, our objective is to see that the Lebanese Army comes to the South and stops Hizbollah from threatening our northern areas.

MR. TELHAMI: Quickly on this notion of this strategy of overwhelming response which, as I said, has worked against states. It has been effective, and it is a logical military strategy, particularly when you worry about wars of attrition where you think you have escalation dominance, and when you think you have escalation dominance you want to take it to a higher where notch you have dominance. That usually creates a new deterrence, and you go back to a better strategic situation.

The problem is that what we don't think about is when you react overwhelmingly, which is costly to you as well as to your enemy, to a seemingly small incident, seemingly, and it might have a strategic implication that is bigger than the incident itself, you are also projecting yourself as being weak and vulnerable. You are telling your enemy, you are hurting me, no matter how little it is. You can disrupt my confidence. You can change my strategy. You can change my priorities by a single incident. That kind of message is usually compensated for by deterrence if it works.

If it doesn't work, you are left with projecting even more weakness in addition to the bloodshed. The problem with this is when it doesn't work, particularly when



talking about Hizbollah, once you have committed, you are in a process of logic like Martin articulated. From the military point of view, no military will accept this at this point. On the military logic of this, there is no way out except for escalation. That is why I think escalation is real, no matter what the politicians want.

If you ask me what is the most likely outcome a week from now, two weeks from now, I would say escalation, escalation. I don't see a short term diplomatic solution to this. When I say escalation, escalation — escalation, by definition, is unpredictable. You cannot control it, especially when you don't know what the other side can do. Sometimes it is a complete accident where a bomb falls, and the consequences are big. I think the most predictable outcome in the next few weeks is more escalation, and I don't think diplomacy has yet even found a place, whether it is for Israel or for the Lebanese. I think whatever options we put on the table today may be outdated in two weeks by virtue of the fact that you are going to have escalation.

MR. POLLACK: Well, on that very happy note, let me say thank you for joining us, and we look forward to seeing you at our next event. Please join me in thanking our speakers.

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