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PROCEEDINGS

MR. TELHAMI: Good afternoon. It is my pleasure to moderate this special forum of the Brookings Saban Center on Iraqi public opinion. I would like to just briefly introduce my colleagues Steve Kull and Ken Pollack. I think they both are well known to you. I will just say a few things about each.

Steve Kull is the Director of The Program on International Policy Attitudes. He is one of the leading analysts of public opinion and foreign policy in general, American public opinion on foreign policy issues particularly, but also international public opinion. He has been doing a lot of polling around the world, and most recently, a lot in the Middle East as well. And I must also add that this program is associated with the University of Maryland with which I am also associated, although I am also a Nonresident Senior Fellow here. The University of Maryland has had a very long cooperative relationship with Brookings, and this is one of those products.

Steve has done his poll, a very timely poll because of the date that is ongoing on Iraq, and we might ask questions about the relevance of public opinion altogether, but especially Iraqi public opinion. I think one can argue that in a place like Iraq where you do not have a strong central authority, public opinion is even more important than in places where you have strong central authority because in the end, the options that are available to people, daily options, are really a function of their attitudes and the degree to which the government is central in their affairs is smaller, and I think that, therefore, it is helpful to know where the Iraqi public is on issues not only related to foreign

policy, but also internal issues including sectarian conflict and the neighboring states.

After Steve presents his findings from the poll, I will turn to Ken Pollack who is the Director of Research at the Saban Center at Brookings for commentary on the findings. Then I will present a few more comments of my own on the findings of the poll, particularly comparing them to the other polls that we have in the Arab world about similar issues.

So let me move quickly and ask Steve to present the findings of his poll.

MR. KULL: Thank you, Shibley, and thanks to the Saban Center for having us here.

Last January WorldPublicOpinion.org conducted a poll in Iraq and found some rather interesting findings that were presented here, and since then there have been some numerous developments that raise questions about whether the views of Iraqis may have shifted in a significant way. We have with us today the Director of 3D Systems which did conduct the poll, together with KA Research and Matt Warshaw, and he might have some comments later on, and in particular, if you have any questions about the methodology. It was a nationwide sample. Polling was conducted in all 18 provinces, overall, 1,115 respondents with an oversample of the Sunnis because we really want to know what is going on there. This produces a margin of error of plus or minus 3 points for the same as a whole. It was fielded September 1st through 4th. The interviews were conducted face to face, going into people's homes.

Probably the first question on people's minds is how do Iraqis feel

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about the presence of U.S.-led forces in Iraq? Here I have to say this section is not particularly encouraging. We asked which of the following would you like the Iraqi government to ask the U.S.-led forces to do, and 37 percent say that they would like them to withdraw within 6 months; another 34 percent say they would like them to make a commitment to withdraw according to a timeline within a year. So a total of 71 percent say that they want the U.S. out within a year. Last January we gave them the option of 6 months and a 2-year time timeline and got 70 percent, and it is a year later and now it is 71 percent say 1 year. It is not always that neat in polling, frankly, but it does kind of add up. While last January 29 percent said only reduce as the security situation improves, that has gone down to 9 percent, and 20 percent say get out according to a 2-year timeline.

Looking at the breakouts among the different groups, of the Shi'a, now 74 percent want the U.S. out within a 1-year timeframe, 36 within 6 months. As for the Kurds, only a third want the U.S. within a year, but another 34 percent want the U.S. out within 2 years, and that is a change for the Kurds. In January a majority said only get out as the security situation improves, the 57 percent there.

Down at the bottom there you see something kind of interesting. There has been a significant drop in the percentage of Sunnis who want the U.S. to get out within 6 months which is close to as immediately as possible, a drop from 83 percent to 57 percent. You may have heard that the Sunnis now do not want the U.S. to leave, there has been some reporting to that effect, and some people have that impression. Clearly there is a moderating of the eagerness, but we still clearly have 57 percent wanting the U.S. out within 6 months, and 91 percent wanting the U.S. out within a year, and you will see other signs of that.

Also it is interesting that in Baghdad, it is a very small sample so we cannot have complete confidence in it, but the number wanting the U.S. out within 6 months is as low as 24 percent, but still you have a clear majority even in Baghdad saying that they want the U.S. out within the year. You will see other signs as we go along of some moderating of the virulence of anti-American feeling among the Sunnis.

Why do they feel this way? Why is this readiness to have the U.S. leave? Some of it seems to be some confidence in the Iraqi Security Forces. Asked do you think that 6 months from now the Iraqi Security Forces will be strong enough to deal with security challenges on their own or will they still need help from military forces from other countries, you see from January to the present the number went from 39 percent to 53 percent. Of those who say we will still need the help, we asked, how long will it need help? Another 9 percent say we will be ready within a year. So 53 percent say we will be ready in 6 months, and 62 percent say that they will be ready within a year. So that is a pretty significant movement there and can help explain some of this eagerness.

Breaking this out, the biggest movement upward is among the Shi'a who have gone from 45 to 68 percent saying that they are strong enough. As to the Sunnis, it has gone down. That might be more of an expression of preference than what their actual perception is. The Kurds have also gone up from 22 to 40 percent saying that the Iraqis forces are strong enough.

Another factor seems to be, and really quite a key one, is the perception of the effect of the U.S. military presence. We asked do you think that the U.S. military presence in Iraq is currently a stabilizing force or provoking

more conflict than it is preventing, and you see that overall, 78 percent say that it is provoking more conflict than it is preventing. Overwhelming majorities of the Shi'a and Sunnis take that position. The Kurds, a slight majority, 56 percent, say that it is still a stabilizing force.

Looking at attitudes about the influence of the U.S. in Iraq in general, we see overall 79 percent say that the U.S. is having a mostly negative effect on the situation in Iraq. And the confidence in U.S. military forces is quite low; overall 84 percent say that they have none or just a little confidence in U.S. military forces, with the Shi'a and the Sunni overwhelmingly having this feeling, the Kurds though having a modest majority expressing still some confidence in U.S. military forces.

Another interesting dimension that might explain some of why there is this support, we asked if the U.S. made a commitment to withdraw from Iraq according to a timeline, do you think this would strengthen the Iraqi government, weaken it, or have no effect either way. You might think that there is a substantial fear that this is going to really undermine the Iraqi government, that we are just going to leave them to the lions and they will not survive, but that is not the dominant perception. The dominant perception is that if we pull out that it will strengthen the Iraqi government.

A dimension of this may be that the Iraqi government right now, and that because U.S. forces are there, does not really have the legitimacy that it would otherwise have, thus, it does not have the strength because there is uncertainty about how long the U.S. is going to be there, and the U.S. seems to have this ultimate authority, so this, you might say, in a psychological sense may

be weakening the legitimacy of the government. This is a strong view among the Shi'a. The Kurds and the Sunnis are not as strong, but the Sunnis definitely lean in that direction, while the Kurds are divided.

We asked if U.S.-led troops withdrew from Iraq in the next 6 months, what effect do you think it would have on the amount of interethnic violence, and 58 percent say that it would decrease interethnic violence. This is down a little bit from January, but approximately the same. And when we broke that out by the groups, we find that as to the Shi'a, 57 percent say that it would decrease it, Sunnis 72 say that it would decrease it, which is pretty interesting because, again, there is some question about whether the Sunnis might feel like they need the U.S. forces there to protect them, but not very large majorities, but declining majorities in both the Shi'a and the Sunni. Maybe they are getting a little nervous as it seems like the time grows closer to the possible time for the U.S. to leave.

The Kurds in January, by a clear margin of 68 percent, said that they thought that withdrawal of U.S.-led forces would increase the interethnic violence, and that has gone down now to 48 percent, and they are evenly divided. So that you might in some ways look at the Kurds as a particularly significant bellwether on that.

How do Iraqis feel about attacks on U.S.-led forces that are, as you know, a continuing phenomenon there? This is probably the most disturbing finding of the poll, because there has been a substantial increase in approval of attacks on U.S.-led forces, rising from 47 percent in January, to 61 percent today. You find 62 percent approval, with the biggest change occurring among the



Shi'a, rising from 41 to 62 percent. The Sunnis were way up there right from the beginning at 88 percent and are basically the same, and the Kurds are basically unchanged as well.

The question, of course, arises if only 1 in 3 Iraqis favor the U.S. withdrawing in the shortest timeframe, i.e., the 6-month timeframe, why then is there such high support for attacks on U.S. forces, as high as 61 percent? In fact, among those who approve of such attacks, only 50 percent say that they want them out within 6 months. So there is some reason that they are approving of these attacks that is not simply as a way of getting them out as fast as possible. I am not going to provide a definite answer because you cannot really answer these kinds of things definitely with these kinds of data, but there are some pretty suggestive findings.

One question that comes to mind is, is it ideological? Does this flow from a kind of sympathy for a jihadist kind of framework, or does this reflect sympathy for al Qaeda, and that hypothesis I must say goes down in flames. These percentages are those who view Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden unfavorably and are broken between somewhat and very unfavorable. Overall, 94 percent view al Qaeda unfavorably, 82 percent very unfavorably, and the only group where the very unfavorably is not overwhelming are the Sunnis which are still 77 percent unfavorable, but 39 percent say somewhat unfavorable. Osama bin Laden is approximately the same, with overwhelming majorities unfavorable and overwhelmingly unfavorable, and here again the Sunnis are the only ones that are not quite that strong, but still you have 71 percent saying unfavorable. So it is difficult to explain that support for attacks on that framework.

Another possible explanation is related to the question of whether they believe the U.S. has plans to ever leave Iraq. We asked, “do you think the U.S. government plans to have permanent military bases in Iraq, or to remove all its military forces once Iraq is stabilized?” Here are the numbers who believe that the U.S. plans to have permanent military bases in Iraq, overall, 77 percent, including clear majorities in all ethnic groups. The only ones that are not overwhelmingly convinced of that are the Kurds.

We also asked, “If the Iraqi government were to tell the U.S. to withdraw all of its forces within 6 months, do you think the U.S. would or would not do so?” Here are the numbers that say that they would not withdraw forces to say if asked to do so, a very large majority.

We then asked let's look at the relationship between support for attacks and this belief, and we looked at those who believe the U.S. plans to have permanent military bases in Iraq, and those who believe that the U.S. plans to remove its military forces once Iraq is stabilized to see if there is a difference in their level of support for attacks and, indeed, there was. Among those who had this belief that the U.S. plans to have permanent military bases, 68 percent approve of attacks on U.S.-led forces, those who believe the U.S. plans to remove its military forces once Iraq is stabilized, 34 percent approve of it.

There is also some evidence that if the U.S. were to make a commitment to withdraw, that that might make a difference. We asked those who support attacks, If the U.S. made a commitment to withdraw from Iraq according to a timeline, would you feel less supportive of attacks against U.S.-led forces or would it make no difference? Again, these are in terms of the total sample here,

so 36 percent of the total sample said that they would feel less supportive, 23 percent said no difference. So that is actually the majority of people who approve of the attacks say that they would feel less supportive, and you can see very large percentages of Shi'a and Sunnis say that their attitudes, again, these are in terms of the total sample, would change toward attacks on U.S.-led forces if the U.S. made a commitment. I think from here it may seem more self-evident that the U.S. has such plans, but that that is not clear in Iraq.

Shifting gears to a little bit so bring things to a more positive perspective, "Do Iraqis feel that Iraq is or should be coming apart?" Here I was somewhat surprised at the impression that I get of how things are going in Iraq. I got a different picture through the data. Asked, "Do you think that the new Iraqi system of government grants the central government too much power, too little power, or about the right amount of power," I think this would tell you something about desire for a more federal system or a more confederated system because all of that would involve a weaker central government, and overall, only 37 percent say that the central government according to the current system has too much power, and only 36 percent of Shi'a, the largest number, at 46 percent of Sunnis say that, and the most surprising one to me is that 34 percent of Kurds said that the central government has too much power.

"Would you prefer to have a strong government that would get rid of all militias, or do you think it would be better to continue to have militias to protect your security?" This is, again, a key question. Are people losing confidence in the central government, increasingly looking to militias now for their security? Have they pretty much given up and now they are aligning and

reorganizing around the militias as their basis for security? Again, this is one of those surprising numbers for me, an overwhelming number of 77 percent say that they want a strong government that would get rid of the militias, and only 21 percent say that they think it would be better to continue to have the militias to protect their security, and this applied to all of the ethnic groups. Interestingly, you virtually never see 100 percent in polls, but in this case, 100 percent of Sunnis said that, so clearly the Sunnis do not think that in the militia game they have any prospect of doing well.

“Do you feel that if all militias were to disarm now that you could or could not rely on the government alone to ensure security in your area?” The question here is, have they just given up on the capacity of the central government? Clear majorities said that they felt that they could. Interestingly, the smallest majority was among the Shi'a, with 54 percent saying it could, and 44 percent saying it could not. But notice the Sunnis expressing this rather strong affirmation of the central government. You will see later that they also express a lot of negative effect. It is not that they like the central government, but they are looking to the central government as their source of security which I think is very significant. The Sunnis' attitudes are rather complex.

Perhaps one of the most significant was, “How likely do you think it is that 5 years from now Iraq will be a single state?” Overall, 72 percent say it is very or somewhat likely. Interestingly, the Sunnis are the lowest on that at 56 percent.

Do you think that the current Iraqi government is or is not the legitimate representative of the Iraq people? And whenever you are talking about

an emerging government, that is key. When people lose confidence in the legitimacy or they stop perceiving the government as a legitimate representative, then it is really in trouble. Overall, 65 percent say that they believe that it is the legitimate representative, including very large majorities of the Shi'a and Kurds. The Sunnis reject that view. Again, this is that complexity in the Sunni attitudes, that they are looking for a strong government, but they also say it is not a legitimate representative.

Asked about whether the Maliki government is doing a good job in its efforts to deal with Iraq's problems, these are the percentages saying that it is doing a very or somewhat good job. That is not bad. It compared to job ratings of leaders around the world, and 63 percent is probably enviable from the perspective of some government leaders, but here again Sunnis express that negative attitude.

How much confidence do you have in these forces to protect your security? It was rather strong, 71 percent was confident in the police, 64 percent was confident in the Iraqi Army, and that is a key part of what we have been talking about, and 62 percent expressing some or a lot of confidence in the Iraqi Interior Ministry.

But here again you get this complexity where the Shi'a and Kurds are very definite in their confidence, and the Sunnis expressing a lack of confidence, but given, again, that they are looking to the government, it may be more of an affective expression than an expression of what they are really seeing.

QUESTION: Can you verify what is the difference between the police and Interior Ministry forces?

MR. KULL: That is a broader discussion. The question was simply the police and the Interior Ministry forces. My understanding is that there is a distinction.

One of the reasons that the Sunnis might be a little bit more positive about the Iraqi Army is that the Defense Minister is a Sunni, so that is something to note there. But as for the Sunnis, this certainly may also be an expression of their feeling that they are not being protected by these forces.

Again, the question of, Are things falling apart in terms of the legitimacy? How do people feel about the attacks on the Iraqi government security forces which are a major portion of the attacks that are occurring in Iraq these days? These are the percentages that disapprove, and these numbers are really quite overwhelming of the disapproval, and overall, 68 percent strongly disapprove of attacks on government security forces. Eighty-six percent of the Sunnis also disapprove, though only 29 percent strongly disapprove. Attacks on Iraqi civilians are just completely rejected with overwhelming majorities strongly disapproving. So these are I think are what you could say are positive signs.

We asked who they think is attacking civilians, and this is kind of an interesting question that might engender some discussion here, foreign fighters or other Iraqis. We asked who do you think is attacking Sunni civilians, and overall, 54 percent assumed foreign fighters, with 63 percent of the Shi'a believing that, but 69 percent of the Sunnis thought that they were other Iraqis, which is a different and interesting mirror image of a phenomenon here. But in terms of perception of attacks on Shi'a civilians, majorities of all groups thought that these were foreign fighters. But there is not clarity here. Not all these people

are living inside the same narrative as to what is going on in Iraq and who is attacking who.

As to the purpose of the attacks we asked, How much of the violence directed against ethnic groups has the purpose of driving them from their neighborhood so that an armed group can solidify its power there? Sixty-seven percent said that some or most of the violence was related to that but, again, is not that there is a real clarity about what the nature of this violence is. And among the Sunnis and Kurds it was not that clear.

What is the mood of the country after this good news so to say about a lot of indications of some strengths? The mood of the country is not very good. The toll of all the violence and instability has been wearing people down. Do you think that Iraq today is generally headed in the right direction or the wrong direction? I know these things are hard to follow, but over there on the end you can see the most recent number with 52 percent saying wrong direction, 47 percent right direction. Last April you had that 52-percent wrong direction, but this is a high point in terms of the percentage of the people overall saying that it is going in the wrong direction, and it has been pretty rare that wrong direction has been higher than right direction.

But when you analyze this in terms of the breakouts of the different ethnic groups you get a rather different picture. With the Shi'a and the Kurds you have clear majorities saying it is going in the right direction, but this has been coming down. In January, 84 percent of the Shi'a said it was going in the right direction, and that is down to 59. The Kurds dropped from 76 to 64, but it is still a majority. With the Sunnis, it is 93 percent wrong direction, unchanged.

Do you think that 6 months from now the level of violence in Iraq will be higher than it is today, lower, or about the same? Basically, there was no real change. Only 38 percent expressed optimism that it is going to be lower, and there is no ethnic group that believes, so the majority thinks that it is going to be about the same or worse.

How do they about what got all this started? Thinking about any hardship you might have suffered since the U.S.-Britain invasion, do you think personally that ousting Saddam Hussein was worth it or not worth it? Now 61 percent say it was worth it. That is down from 77 percent in January, but in April 2002, 62 percent in a Gallup poll said it is worth it. So it is staying up there pretty firmly, but it is on a downward slide at the moment. Here again, with the Shi'a and the Kurds there are very strong majorities saying that it worth it, but not the Sunnis. These downward movements are worth noting.

“Do any leaders have broad appeal?” We only tested three main Shi'a leaders, and overall Maliki has a favorable rating at 64 overall with a very large majority of the Shi'a supporting him, and he gets a majority from the Kurds, but not from the Sunnis. It goes downhill from here.

Sistani, though 60 percent overall, that comes almost entirely from the Shi'a with overwhelming support from the Shi'a, but low support from the Kurds, and even lower from the Sunnis. And you say so many people like al-Sistani, that must mean that Muqtada al-Sadr is an unpopular guy because they are quite poor on a lot of issues, but Muqtada al-Sadr is quite popular among the Shi'a as well, but as to the Sunnis and Kurds he is extremely unpopular.

How do Iraqis feel about Iran, Hizballah and Syria? The subtext



here is they are an emerging Shi'a Crescent as some people have talked about, and even though Syria is not really Shi'a, it is still talked about as being part of this potentially emerging Shi'a Crescent. The short answer is no. The view of Iran is not very good. Overall, 52 percent say that Iran is having a negative influence in Iraq. The Shi'a are more positive, but only 45 percent have a positive view of Iran's influence, and the Kurds and Sunnis are very negative.

Ahmadinejad does a bit better. Overall, 42 percent have a favorable view of him, with the Shi'a at 64 percent, but Sunnis and Kurds are quite negative. Hizballah is a bit better with 63 percent overall, and very strong support among the Shi'a, but only 41 percent approval among the Sunnis, and very low among the Kurds. Last, as to the view of Syria, here Syria does not do well with 55 percent saying it has a mostly negative influence, Sunnis at 41 percent, so there is some resonance there, but not very large.

I will end it there and turn it over for comments.

MR. TELHAMI: Thanks very much, Steve. Ken, why don't we start with your comments?

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Shibley, and thank you, Steven, for another terrific poll. We of course helped you roll out the last poll in January. I think that was a very important and useful contribution, and I think that this falls into exactly the same category. I also thought that your presentation was a very important one. I think that called attention to some things that were very important in my mind when I was going through the data, which are the contradictions and the complexity of the situation. I think that that is very important to keep in mind.

I would start out by highlighting some things, and starting out where you ended, because for me, where you ended really is the most important data that we received from the poll and the thing that the U.S. government needs to be looking at most carefully, and that is the broad question of "do you think that Iraq is headed in the right direction or the wrong direction?" and that fact is that we now have only 47 percent saying that Iraq is in the right direction down from 64 percent in January, the fact is that we have 52 percent saying it is headed up in the wrong direction, up from 36 percent in January. As you have pointed out, this has fluctuated over time, but I think we are finally starting to see polling results that mirror what I and a number of many other Iraq experts have been hearing anecdotally, which is the growing frustration and the growing fears of Iraqis. And I would also marry that up exactly as you did with the question that you asked Iraqis in terms of was it all worth it, was it worth getting rid of Saddam to find yourselves in the situation that you are in today. And, of course, the majority of Iraqis still do believe that because, quite honestly, living in Saddam Hussein's Iraq was like living on hell on earth. It truly was Kanan Makiya's Republic of Fear, and it would really take a lot to convince Iraqis that any situation would somehow be worse than living under Saddam; but the fact is that a growing number of Iraqis are saying that.

And just one side note as to the Gallup poll you pointed out, that Gallup poll which showed about the same number was taken in April 2004 which you may remember was one of the real nadirs of the reconstruction. It was a period of time when the Iraqi Governing Council was in complete charge, corruption was absolutely rampant, you had twin revolts in Fallujah by the

Sunnis, by Muqtada al-Sadr's Jaysh Mahdi elsewhere in the South, and that was a really bad moment. If what we are seeing is Iraqis have now gotten to that same level, which is again saying that the trend is a very poor one and that this is headed in the wrong direction.

What I would suggest is that this is important for the U.S. government because in these kinds of counterinsurgency and stability operations we need to remember that Iraq has both problems of an insurgency and a failed state, it is both of those things together, and one of the measures that is out there is that these kinds of public opinion indices can be very troubling in both sets of situations; that when you have public opinion downwards, whatever the reason, it is a very bad sign for the government in both of these kinds of situations.

With that said, you highlighted very nicely the complexities out there, and I thought that I would point to a few also because for me they get to this question of exactly what is going up. I will put it this way; there is no question that Iraqis are ever more angry and frustrated with the United States. That said, my interpretations of what I'm hearing from Iraqis differs a little bit from some of the things that you found. Some things that really stood out to me—this idea that Iraqis were now confident in their own security forces. First, in my own contacts with them, I have not found too many Iraqis who were of that case, but even in the poll, one of the things that I noted was that while on the one hand you had Iraqis expressing some or a lot of confidence, 64 percent in the Iraqi Army, 66 percent in the Iraqi Ministry of Interior Forces, 71 percent in the police, it is also the case that when you ask them do you approve of the U.S. training these Iraqi security forces, the overwhelming majority, 77 percent, either

disapproved or thought the U.S. was doing a poor job of it. So it is kind of strange to have Iraqis on the one hand saying we think that our security forces are really coming into their own and doing a great job, but the fact that the United States who is doing all of the training, they are wholly reliant on the United States, the fact is they do not think that the U.S. is doing a very good job there and they ultimately disapprove, many of them.

MR. KULL: The majority does approve.

MR. POLLACK: The majority does approve, correct.

MR. KULL: But they don't think that they're doing a good job.

MR. POLLACK: Correct, and even there the number was just 36 percent which is a significant minority. Again, there are some disconnects here.

Another point on that, looking at this issue because, again, this really resonated for me or was a really set of interesting findings in terms of the Iraqi public's feelings about their own security forces. The first point I make is that the Kurds need to be removed from that sample entirely because, of course, the Kurds are not protected by any of these groups. The Kurds are protected by the Peshmerga, and when we go back to this question about the militias, one of the really interesting things was it was pretty clear to me that the three groups were using the term "militias" very differently and that explains a lot of the findings that you found.

For the Shi'a, the term militias actually did mean what we mean by militias. For the Sunnis, it just meant the people killing us. And for the Kurds, it meant everyone but the Peshmerga who of course were the original militias in Iraq, and that is why you had so many Kurds saying they would be fine with the

central government doing away with the Peshmerga. I was up in Urbil up in Kurdistan just less than a year ago and I can assure you that the majority of Kurds does not want the Peshmerga done away with, but, yes, they would be delighted to have Jaysh Mahdi and Badr and every other person's militia done away with.

Along those same lines, there is a real distinction out there between the Iraqi Army, the armed forces, and some of the other security organizations and it was useful I think that you broke it down that way, because the Army really is doing much better than the other security forces. That is not to say they are ready to take over and they are ready to stand on their own two feet, but they are doing much better.

One of the things that really struck me was that you now do have a lot of Shi'a who are saying in the poll that they do feel safer with the Interior Ministry forces and with the police and what that raised in my mind is exactly this question of, What does that mean? Do they feel safer because they know that the police and the Interior Ministry forces are basically overrun by the militias? Yes, those Interior Ministry units are basically Badr Brigade units that were just simply taken out of their own Iranian uniforms and put into nice new American uniforms, but they perform effectively the same function. These are the guys who are running the death squads in most of Iraq and it raises the question of why is it that the Shi'a responded that they felt more comfortable with these groups. Is it that they have simply resigned themselves to the fact that, well, they are bastards, but there are our bastards. They are not going to kill us, they are going to kill those Sunnis which, again, is not necessarily a positive development for Iraq overall.

Then a last point getting to the U.S. forces and the low levels of support that you found all across the board, early on after the invasion of Iraq, I did find that you had a lot of Iraqis who would say, in particular Sunnis, we don't like you being here because we think you are here to steal our oil, and typically the Shi'a version of that was we don't like you here because we think you are really here to put the Sunnis right back in power, that you are really servants of the Sunnis, you are friends with the Jordanians, the Kuwaitis, the Saudis, et cetera, and you do not represent our interests.

These days I hear much less of that, and typically what I hear from the Shi'a is we don't like you here because you're not doing a blood thing for us. You don't protect us, you don't keep the streets safe, you're not improving our lives in any way, shape, or form, so why on earth should you be staying here? And on top of that, you will get Shi'a who are saying we think you are actually the servants of the Sunnis because they see Zalmay Khalilzad who is himself a Sunni Muslim and they see him trying desperately bring Sunnis in the government, and they see that as we knew it all along that the Americans are here to put the Sunnis back in power. And typically what you hear from the Sunnis is you're the servants of the Shi'a. You have installed a Shi'a government, they are all Shi'a and Kurds, and they are just trying to exclude us. So again, I think getting of this question of ultimately what is the source of Iraqi anger and frustration at the United States is tough. There is no question that there is a lot of anger and frustration with the U.S., and it is growing, but I think getting at that is definitely very hard.

Another point, this question about whether the U.S. military is a

stabilizing force or provoking more conflict, to me what was striking about that is the gap that is now opening between the Iraqi leadership and the Iraqi people, because when you talk to the Iraqi leadership, they are now almost unanimous in declaring that we have to stay, and this is where your points about the Sunnis come back in. You are right, the Sunni rank and file, the average Sunnis has a very different read, but the Sunni leadership are the ones who are increasingly coming around and hinting *sotto voce* we don't really mind you guys staying, please don't leave because we don't want to be slaughtered by the Shi'a.

But just across the board in the last 3 or 4 weeks, we have had eight or 10 of the most important Iraqi leaders come through town, and what every single one of them has said and, again, it has been the *Leitmotif* of every words out of their mouths is "you cannot leave us. If you leave us, the country is absolutely going to come apart at the seams." What your poll demonstrates is just the radically different perspective of the people on the streets whose feeling is our lives are miserable now and you Americans clearly are not doing anything for us, why don't you get out? Maybe if you get out things will improve. Maybe our security forces will be able to take over things. Maybe things will get better somehow.

Just as a final point on that, when I got to your questions about are our security forces strong enough to deal with the problems and deal with the challenges, again, you made this point very nicely that the people of Iraq are living in different narratives. That is a really nice way to put it. I might be a little bit crasser and say that there are a lot of Iraqis who are frankly living in denial, they are living in a fantasy world, they are relying entirely on wishful thinking,

because it is absolutely striking to me that you have 53 percent of Iraqis overall saying that their security forces are now capable of dealing with security, or rather will be in 6 months or dealing with security entirely on their own, something that I cannot imagine any U.S. or Iraqi military or civilian official saying. But again, it represents this just enormous divide between where the public is headed in terms of just their overall anger and frustration, and they are looking for some kind of a dramatic change, as opposed to where their leadership is.

MR. TELHAMI: Thanks, Ken. That was really helpful and provides a lot of ideas to discuss.

I would like to make a few reflections on putting this poll in perspective and comparing it a bit with the polling that has been done in other parts of the Arab world of where Iraqi public opinion is in comparison to the rest of Arab public opinion.

I think the one note that you can make the outset on most issues is that our public opinion is very close to the Sunni Iraqi opinion, there is no question, the Sunni Arab public opinion, particularly on are they better off without Saddam Hussein or not, clearly Arab public opinion is very much similar to the opinion that is expressed by Iraqi Sunni Arabs. That is true even of Lebanon, by the way, which has a Sunni minority. So it is not just true of the Sunni-dominated Arab countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, but it is also true of Lebanon where Sunnis are a minority, and the opinion of Lebanese on whether Iraqis are better off are worse off is very close to the opinion of Sunni Arabs.

But there are a couple of things to think about when we try to interpret the polls. One is, why every time, although the time horizon is



narrowing, do you find a majority of people who say they want the U.S. to pull out, but not right away, whether it is 6 months, a year, or 2 years, that is narrowing and that is important in a way, but still that do not want it to be immediate. That is interesting in and of itself. One part may be what Ken suggested which is they are still frightened of even more anarchy possibly, but there are other considerations, and I think one of them we have not considered fully is particularly pertaining to the Shi'a. With the Kurds, we know why they would want the U.S. to stay longer in a way because they have benefited more. But with the Shi'a, I think it is interesting to think about the large number of them who think favorably of Iran, not a majority, but a plurality, and there is no question that a lot of people are fearful of the belief that the American entanglement in Iraq is actually preventing an attack on Iran.

It is interesting to think about this a little bit, whether it is one consideration even for 10 or 15 percent, I do not know, it is interesting to reflect on because when former President of Iran Khatami was here, in one of his remarks he said that the U.S. had given Iran two great gifts, one, to remove Saddam Hussein, the other, to remove the Taliban. But he wanted like most Iranians the U.S. to be out of Iraq, but he did not want the U.S. to be out of Iraq right away. He said there would be anarchy. And I actually do believe that the Iranians do not want to see total anarchy in Iraq. But they also undoubtedly fear that the U.S. out of Iraq could increase the chance of a military confrontation with Iran, and that is an issue to consider I think when one thinks about what other objectives people may have in not wanting an immediate withdrawal, not only about what might happen to them right away.

A second point to put this in context is on the attacks on U.S. troops, a very important finding, where you have majority support including among the Shi'a for attacks on the U.S. That is troubling. I wonder whether all of that is related to Iraq or whether that comes on the tail end of the Lebanon war, and we know that with the Lebanon war there has been a great sympathy for Hizballah and in fact many Shi'a leaders calling for more attacks on the U.S. as a consequence of the Lebanon war. So there may be a Lebanon war effect here at least among the Shi'a community pertaining to this increased willingness among the Shi'a to see attacks on the U.S. and it is worth thinking about because we know that the Lebanon war was an issue in mobilizing people against the U.S. in Iraq and brought some the Shi'a and Sunnis closer together on the issue of the U.S.

A third point has to do with the sectarian breakup of opinion. I was thinking about this. This is not new; we know that the Shi'a, Sunni Arabs and Kurds do not have the same opinions on many issues. We have seen that before, and we see it now, and particularly, for example, on attitudes toward Hizballah you see where the vast majority of Shi'a support Hizballah, the vast majority of Sunnis and Kurds do not. As to Ayatollah Sistani, the vast majority of the Shi'a think favorably of him, others do not. And as to Iran we see the same split. But what is interesting here is that the Sunnis of Iraq on some of these issues do not have an identical opinion with Sunnis outside of Iraq, and Hizballah, for example, emerged as a hero in Egypt. We know in the public opinion poll that was done by the Ibn Khaldun Center, Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hizballah, was the single most popular man in Egypt. And as you know, they are marketing the sweet dates

today for Ramadan in the name of Hassan Nasrallah. Hassan Nasrallah certainly is very popular in Jordan and in Palestine, and arguably in Saudi Arabia. And the interesting thing is that the Sunni Iraqis still do not think favorably of Hizballah, at least majorities do not, 40-some percent, which is a significant group, but not a majority of Sunnis, like you have the overwhelming majority of Egyptians who think highly of him.

This needs to be sorted out, but I think it is possible that on this issue what you have is countries that do not have the Shi'a-Sunni divide are more comfortable with Hizballah than countries that do, and we see in Lebanon obviously the breakup there and in Iraq where there is that, but certainly in Jordan and Egypt, that is a remote divide for them as there is on Shi'a-Sunni breakup and, therefore, Saudi Arabia will be very interesting. I am going to do my annual Arab Opinion Poll next month, and this is one of the issues I will look into, particularly when it comes to the attitudes of the Saudis on the issue of Lebanon and Hizballah.

A final point is on al Qaeda which I thought was fascinating, because some people would have expected I think they would find some support within the Sunni Arab public opinion in Iraq for al Qaeda, and that is not there. The overwhelming majority of Iraqis and the overwhelming majority of Sunnis, I believe 77 percent, reject al Qaeda. That is fascinating given the fact that al Qaeda is seemingly playing a role in defeating the Americans that the Sunnis do not want, or defeating at least the central government, and that is not there.

That, by the way, does not surprise me, and it does not surprise me because in the Arab public opinion polling we find a similar effect, that the vast

majority of Arabs do not accept al Qaeda's agenda and do not support al Qaeda, and they root for it only indirectly in rooting against the U.S. This is important in a way because of this fear that an American withdrawal will lead to domination by groups like Al Qaeda in Iraq, and when you look at this public opinion poll, clearly there is no reason to anticipate that anyone would allow them to, including the Sunni Arabs. That does not mean that they cannot exploit the divisions, particularly if you have breakup and civil war obviously you can, but that there is no natural home for them in Iraq and that is maybe one of the better news items that you are conveying to us today. Thanks.

Let's open it up for discussion. We are happy to take answers or comments.

MR. HAGEGE: Meda Hagege (phonetic), DOD. I have a couple of questions that perhaps would help further your findings' accuracy. One is whether or not you have controlled statistically for the age group 18 to 34. That is about 48 percent of the population, and as much as I would like to believe that a representative sample should go up to 55 years of age, in the conditions that we are dealing with today, the ones that are greatly contributing to the problems of the country come from the ages of 18 to 34. So I think once we control for that, perhaps you will find significantly different attitudes in part of the samples that you have done.

The other one is also a question of a female/male breakdown. Again, if you consider that what is happening on the ground is mostly male-related issues. I assume you would find a different type of set of findings that would come out of it.

But the question I have is on mixed cities such as Kirkuk, if you found any ethnic attitudes that came into play that came into those cities, and also you had controlled for Baghdad as in my opinion the determining or the most significant sample group that you have dealt with.

MR. KULL: Matt, do you want to say anything about the weighting? Basically we weight the sample to the best demographic information that we have available which is imperfect, but then we do demographic subanalyses which we have, and the data is rather fresh. This Friday at CSIS I am going to be giving a presentation on that, and I am not done preparing for it. But from what we have seen in the past, you basically do find in younger people more radical views, more anti-American views, more pro-Islamic, pro-extreme Islamic, pro-jihadist types of view.

MR. KULL: This is Matt Warshaw from 3D Systems.

MR. WARSHAW: The smallest portion of the sample were people age 50-plus, so the way the sampling is done, we do not have a quote for people with an age, but the way it played out naturally is that the smaller percentages were people over the age of 50. Census information is imperfect in Iraq, but the best figures we have from the Ministry of Planning and from looking at our own research and from counting numbers of members of households and what their age groups are, I think we have a fairly accurate representation.

MR. KULL: Did you want to add something?

MR. : We actually did age breakouts on this particular issue and we found that there were very few differences between younger Iraqis and older Iraqis. There were one or two questions where there were some differences,

but overall the age was not a significant factor in attitudes.

MR. TELHAMI: I might also add from this that from my own analysis of Arab public opinion outside of Iraq, that surprisingly on most issues, particularly issues toward foreign policy and attitudes toward political issues, there is not as much difference as you might expect between people based on age groups or, for that matter, gender. There is a slight gender factor, we cannot even tell whether it is a methodological systemic difference or real difference in the answers, there is often a gender factor on questions that pertain to women, for example, questions like, do you believe that women should have the right to work outside the house, there is definitely a gender factor there, and particularly in Saudi Arabia more than other countries.

But in general, surprisingly, the one demographic that seems to make more difference than any other in terms of correlating with answers pertaining to foreign policy and social issues is income, and in that sense what might look like an age factor is more often an income factor than age factor.

MS. MOGAHED: My name is Dalia Mogahed from the Gallup Poll, and I confirm with what you said in terms of age not being as big of a factor as we think. In fact, in a driver analysis when you hold everything else constant, it disappears altogether.

MR. TELHAMI: Right.

MS. MOGAHED: My question is about Kurdistan and the fact that I was intrigued by, unless I got it wrong, Kurds in majorities said that they thought Iraq would be one state in the next 5 years? How do we explain that with the fact that Kurds actually already have essentially an independent state today?

MR. KULL: I think what they have today still falls within the definition of other single state, and the question implies that by saying will Iraq still be a single state, so the status quo was in the question implicitly defined as a single state. So they are saying that in 5 years from now they do not think that that will change, that configuration.

MR. POLLACK: There was the question about the militias which I alluded to, but there was also the point that you made, Steve, which also leapt out at me was this question of should the central government be stronger, and you have 43 percent of Kurds saying yes which, again, scratch a Kurd, find a federalist. That just runs entirely counter to all of my experience, journalistic experience, again, it gets to this issue of I think there is more going on there than we are than we are recognizing, and it may have been something about the specific question or how Kurds saw the question, what it meant to them. But I think you are right to focus on this as being another one of those areas where—I do not want to suggest otherwise, these public opinion polls are very useful and we need more—

(tape interruption)

MR. POLLACK: (In progress) — we cannot just assume that doing a poll like this is going to tell everything that we need to know about a society that has become so hopelessly complicated like Iraq.

MR. TELHAMI: I have to tell you that when I looked at the results of the poll and you say what is surprising to you in all of this, a lot of these things were not surprising to me in part because they are not different from what we have been finding. But the two that were really kind of puzzling, I would say

puzzling in that they lead to questions that have to be answered, one was this about the Kurds and the central government, what do they mean by it, because that really does go against what we think we know.

But the second is this confidence in the police and security services which is so overwhelming. I think here we all have to put this in a little bit of perspective. Obviously, looking at the wording of the question matters how people are hearing it, what are they doing, we need to refine that a little bit.

But we also have to look at it as many of these indicators are really meaningful when you compare them in terms of change over time, you do not look at the absolute number as such, and that is why it is very important that you are doing it over and over again, because I think the bottom line is that trends is what we are looking for more than anything else because we know the absolute numbers one can look at and you could tell what the direction is, but you cannot have as much confidence in the total number of people saying it, so you really do need to have this change over time. It would be interesting to watch that and see what we get the next time around to reflect on it a little bit more.

MR. KULL: And there is also the aspect of the context because we were asking about how they felt about U.S. presence, and in that context they may have been more inclined to express their confidence as in I want the home team, I am allying behind the home team taking over here.

MR. POLLACK: If you do not like the Americans, you have to have some alternative.

MR. TELHAMI: And they have a Kurdish president.

QUESTION: Do you know of any information about the use of



children and teenagers in Iraq being that they have grown up in a different environment than their parents did, did their views reflect the views of their parents or do they have their own independent views?

MR. KULL: I really am not in a position to make that judgment, but just from looking at this data, I would really have to be a sociologist on the ground in Iraq to comment on that.

MR. IDI: My name is Ahmed Idi (phonetic) from Veterans for America. I am very glad to see the questions in the poll, and being an Iraqi myself I would have loved to actually get asked such questions and answer them. But I still think there are still some gaps in the poll, especially that when you look at the questions, as an Iraqi, I think they are very broad and they would not contribute so much to what this administration or the Iraqi government should do in order to change the situation because there are some issues and some decisions made after the war that were not asked about such as the de-Baathification which since people think that the U.S. has so much influence and the Iraqi should do so much, I think there should have been a question about what de-Baathification has changed.

And also one important question that should have been asked is do you think that Saddam's policies have actually contributed in creating such a miserable present for Iraq, because it is a long history that created what is happening today. It is not only the effects or the consequences of the war. So just I think those questions should have been asked and the poll would have probably had newer results or newer things to tell the public.

Finally, regarding Mr. Pollack's comments about excluding the

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Kurds from asking about the militias, I think that is true that they had the Peshmerga and I lived in Urbil for 5 years and I know how revered is the Peshmerga for the Kurds, but there are mixed cities such as Kirkuk and Mosul in which the Kurds are very afraid of an imbalance in the forces such as in Kirkuk just recently the Kurds were very concerned about the influx of the Jaysh Mahdi to Kirkuk, and in Mosul you have the Sunni influence. So I think they should still be included in what is happening.

MR. KULL: I completely understand the feeling that there were not enough questions. I am always frustrated with all the questions I want to ask and have to ultimately cut it down.

MR. TELHAMI: I second that. Believe me, polls are very expensive and it is always a struggle, especially if I am right about this need to have a repeat of questions from previous times so we know what the change is, that the number of new questions you could is much more limited given any budget. So it really is a struggle and that is the most agonizing part of preparing a poll because you are trying to decide which ones you have to drop and which ones you have to include.

QUESTION: Alexander — Russian Embassy. Actually, my question is related to that issue that is Iraq going to the right direction or not. In case we see more thoroughly on this diagram, we can notice that between October 2004 and October 2005 the polarization of the population of this country, I mean Iraq, is at its maximum. October is coming in this year; do you have any explanation of this relation that polarization has a cycle on this issue? Did you get my question?

MR. KULL: I do not know if I understood everything you asked, but I think you were talking about these spikes.

QUESTION: Yes, we can notice those.

MR. KULL: The two big spikes where it goes up well into the 60s were around the time of elections.

QUESTION: No, I am not talking about the spikes. I am talking about the touching points.

MR. KULL: The low points.

QUESTION: The low points, we can see some kind of a cycle, in October 2004 the answers of positive and negative of 42 percent and 45 percent, and in October 2005 are nearly the same. Do you have any explanation or any comments of this cycle? Thank you.

MR. KULL: I have a theory for the high points, but not really for the low points, but it is definitely worth examining.

MR. POLLACK: I think Steve's initial answer is correct though that typically there have been events or trends of events which Iraqi public opinion has mirrored.

QUESTION: The point is I am not talking about the ups and downs. The point is there is some kind of a cycle with the polarization of society on the same point. People are divided in two parts. Is there any explanation or not?

MR. KULL: I will give you my email address, and maybe if you come up with a theory, please let me know.

QUESTION: Thank you.

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MS. McKAY: My name is Ruth McKay. I am an anthropologist who actually worked at the University of Maryland before I went to the government.

As an anthropologist who did survey research for a couple of government agencies, we found that paradoxical or contradictory findings in our survey results could sometimes be explained by understanding what the respondents had in mind as to what the purpose of the survey was and how the results were going to be used, and this really has a lot of effect of, I do not really believe this but I want you to believe that I believe this. This might have some explanation for it why people were saying they had so much confidence in the Iraqi security forces.

MR. KULL: I very much agree with you. In fact, one of the first things I did when I got into the field was did a study where I asked people to explain what seemed like contradictory responses, and believe it not they often could explain what was going on there that caused them to produce results that seemed contradictory.

I think in the case of the Sunnis that sometimes their overarching anger dictates how they are going to respond so that they produce something that does not seem to quite make sense, and then they have another response to another question that seems like they are more speaking on the level. So, yes, you have to take all of those into account when you are interpreting and trying to put them together. If you just say they are of two minds or something like that, I do not think that that is generally too useful an analysis.

QUESTION: To further clarify the question, I was wondering how

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you represented the survey to the people. What was the purpose of the survey?  
How did the respondents think the data was going to be used?

MR. KULL: We try to keep that to a minimum, and maybe that has some perspective on how these things are contextualized in their minds, but we try to keep it as much of a blank scene as possible. Matt, do you have any comments on how you think it was being contextualized in their minds?

MR. WARSHAW: The company that works in Iraq is an all-Iraqi company and they present themselves as a private business that is in the business of collecting public opinion information and market research. They have a very short introduction that explains I am from this company that has offices in a few different places inside Iraq and we are here in Iraq today asking people for their opinions about various subjects on economics, politics, and the future. They do not anything about who the client is or who the representation is. It is very much a standard approaching to market research in that we try to keep the client as far out of the research process as possible.

We actually talked about this in the January poll, the point I might make is I actually think PIPA has been doing a pretty good job about this. I have seen a lot of public opinion polling data about Iraq, and as best as I can tell based on my anecdotal evidence in talking to journalists and other people who also go over there and talk to Iraqis, PIPA seems to do a much better job at it than a lot of other groups. But you are certainly right that we do need to take this always with a grain of salt. I find that just in conversations with Iraqis that they are always looking to speak truth to power. One of the great frustrations of the Iraqi people is they feel no one is listening to them, and that is especially the case during the

period of the CPA, but it remains the case to this day, and they tend to assume that anyone coming to ask them questions is from the U.S. military or maybe the U.S. government. The U.S. military does do a lot of polling in Iraq and it is because in a lot of cases that Iraqis just assume that we are pulling all of the strings and therefore somehow this always gets to us, and as I said, you can must find it anecdotally.

I can sit down with an Iraqi and the first thing they will say to me is, why don't you just get out? That is the kind of public consumption. If you spend an hour or two or five with them and you actually start parsing it out, you simple get all kinds of much more nuanced positions, but the immediate position which is if this guy is only going to be here for 5 minutes, the one thing that I want him to take back to his masters at the palace in Baghdad is get out, or you are failing me, or some other message that is going to have a jarring impact which is mostly just an expression of I am angry.

So you are right, whenever we are trying to engage Iraqi public opinion, it is one of the things that you have to look out for. As I said, my experience has been I think PIPA tries to do a much better job about this than other polls.

MR. TELHAMI: And I think there is a little bit more here in the sense that when you do a public opinion in places where you have authoritarianism or some very strong security services, secret police, the Mohabarat (phonetic) in the Arab world, you try to be very careful not to put your subject or the questioner in a position where they have to be concerned that this might be going to the power. It is the opposite of what Ken was saying, not

sending a message.

I, for example, when I do polling in the Arab world and I want to find out which leaders they admire most, I do not ask them directly about the leaders of that country, do you like President Mubarak or don't you, I don't expect to get a perfectly straight answer on that. I just don't, just because even though they know this is the University of Maryland and Zoby International, or PIPA or Gallup or any other outfit, they just simply cannot be sure.

So the real question in this case in this environment in Iraq is whether that particular question doesn't have a bit of maybe this guy is from the security services kind of answer. I don't know, therefore it is particularly legitimate especially when it seems to go a little bit against what we might think is right.

We often do not know, guessing is not a very good methodology, but nonetheless, I think that what you say though is really important. I know that PIPA is very careful when it frames the question and pursues it. I know that most major pollsters are. I know I struggle with it all the time. When I am crafting the question I think about it in terms of whether I am going to put the questioner and the subject in a position where I do not want to be, and so I think that particular one is really important.

MR. KULL: And that is why whenever possible we do focus groups, too, and try out the questions and try out the questions and see what happens in response in body language and things like that.

QUESTION: (Off mike.)

MR. TELHAMI: Yes.

QUESTION: I was wondering if you could discuss a little bit what you think what realistic steps might be taken to reverse the trend of more Iraqis supporting attacks on U.S. soldiers. I think for over a year Larry Diamond has talked about the need for the U.S. government to just come out and say we do not want permanent bases, we do not want your oil and affirm that. I think maybe even today Congress is voting on some resolution along those lines. But on the other hand, we have some officials talking about maybe we need more troops.

So with all that discussion going on, I am wondering if you have any ideas of realistically what might be done to reduce that support for attacks on U.S. troops.

MR. KULL: Who is that directed to?

MR. POLLACK: First, if you go to the Brookings website you will find a piece that I was the lead author for back in February of this year called "A Switch In Time" which is a 140-page report of a study group that we put together on how the United States ought to approach Iraq differently and included a lot of different recommendations on exactly that topic.

I will put it this way. I do not have any problem with the United States standing up and saying we are not here to steal your oil, we do not intend to have any permanent bases any longer than the Iraqis want us to. In all honesty, President Bush has done every single one of those things. The bigger issue when you talk to Iraqis, when you see it there, when you talk to Americans and Europeans who live and work with Iraqis all the time is it is the little things. It is things like American convoys throwing everyone else off the road with signs on the back that say "If You Approach Within 100 Meters We Will Kill You," and



then they mean it. It is things like some of these contractors who take these joy rides around Iraq shooting everything that moves or doesn't move, and of course, the Iraqis do not make distinctions between American troops and contractors.

This is not to suggest that every American soldier is like that. In point of fact, it is the opposite. Most of the American troops over there are trying desperately to do the right thing and really want to help, but pardon me for using a cliché, it only does take a few bad apples to spoil the bunch, and the bad stories get out much quicker.

Which leads me to a second point which is a point that I made earlier, one of reasons why the bad stories get out so much faster is because of this overall level of Iraqi dissatisfaction with what the United States is doing in Iraq. It is most at a macro level because, again, you can often find communities of Iraqis who have had sustained contact with American forces and who will say we really like having the Americans here. Just as an example, when I was up in northern Iraq near Mosul last November with a couple of Iraqi battalions and their American advisers, one of the most interesting things that I heard from the Iraqis, and by the way, these were all Kurds in the battalions even though they were operating in both Arab and Kurdish areas, was that initially the Arabs wanted to see the Americans when these guys went out on patrol because their feeling was we did not know who they were, we did not know what they were going to do to us, whether they were Shi'a, Kurds, Sunni, whomever, and, again, any of those groups can be associated with a militia, with organized crime, you just never know if you are an Iraqi what the security forces are going to do when they come through town and they wanted to see Americans there because they knew that the

Americans would keep the Iraqis in check. Which again speaks to the fact that there can be positive experiences as well, the problem is there are not enough of those positive experiences. And what most of the Iraqi population sees is neglect. They do not see any kind of a security presence, they do not see their electricity going on more regularly and increasing, they do not see clean water, sanitation, et cetera, and they know that we are the major power behind the throne and that we have most of the resources, we get blamed for that, and then you add into it all of these bad incidents when make the rounds very quickly and it become a pretty toxic brew.

MR. KULL: Let me add to that that from what I understand the bases look like they are permanent, and they are called enduring. But perhaps the more significant is the question if national sovereignty. Do we really communicate the idea that it is up to the Iraqi government how long we stay, and the perception is that we are communicating that we are there at our will and it does not matter what the Iraqi government says, and that does weaken the perception of the government, that creates a certain resentment, and national sovereignty elicits a lot of strong emotion in many people and I think more so in that part of the world. And I think there are things that we have not said that we could say that would address those concerns and address those feelings in a broad way with regard to this question, but also in specific ways of showing more deference to the Iraqi government.

MR. TELHAMI: I personally do not think anything would make a difference. I think there is no trust; it is simply there is no trust in America's intentions. It is not a question of anything in particular you do or you say. I think

there was no trust from the beginning. I do not think Iraqis believed, even those who are grateful for getting rid of Saddam Hussein, that America did it for the right reasons. Most people believe that America did it for oil or helping Israel or weakening the Muslim world or some other American agenda that is imperialistic but did not believe that American did it for their own reasons. It would have taken an enormous amount to make them believe otherwise because you were starting against a perception, in the first hearing in the Senate before the war in which I testified I recall going into Senator Biden's office and there were several of us who were there and experts on the Middle East. Some were for the war; some like myself were against the war. But everyone said that if you are going to go to war and you have any chance of success, you have a 3-month to 6-month window to succeed, that is your honeymoon period, and after that you lose it. You do not have a second chance to make a first impression.

I think obviously the events have reinforced people's fears, and Iraq is not operating in a vacuum. Yes, Iraq has its own central problems and they are focused on that, but they are also part of the region and you can see how they have opinions on Hizballah and strong ones, even though they are out experiencing what is happening in Iraq.

So I think that the bottom line is it is very difficult to retrieve trust and to hope that you are going to do some kind of step that is going to restore that trust. The strategy has to be based on something I think completely different.

QUESTION: I am one of the Executive Fellows here at Brookings and have a question about the data in the poll with regards to how do we characterize this as a civil war or not a civil war. I know the Deputy Prime

Minister from Iraq was here and he said that is academic to them, there are too many innocents and civilians being killed. But the data as you presented it seems to indicate that there is not much support in the data at least that it is a civil war because the numbers for the Iraqi government are pretty high and the numbers for the Iraqi security forces are pretty high, the view of their neighboring countries tends to be fairly negative which means that they identify themselves as Iraqis in addition to their internal differences. I am just curious, Ken and the professor, what your view is in terms of does the data support or not support the view that it is a civil war or not.

MR. POLLACK: For me it is a civil war. By any definition it is a civil war, whether you use an academic definition or political definition. But as you pointed out, I am not certain that is terribly useful. Obviously, there is all kinds of resonance with the term "civil war" and typically when I say that I say but it is a low-level civil war and the key is to prevent it from becoming all-out or full-scale civil war or something else like that. There are lots of different civil wars in the world. There are tons and tons of different countries that are in different states of civil war and these can be fully functional countries even though they are in some level of civil war. So as Barham said when he was here, the question for us is not whether or not we are in a state of civil war, the question for us is how do we improve the circumstances of our society.

MR. KULL: I think it is a kind of academic question, but I find that the numbers suggest a perception that Iraq will continue as a single state with support for a strong central government. We did not interview insurgents, so we do not know necessarily how they conceptualize what it is they are trying to do.

There is this perception that there is obviously a lot of strife, but I do not see indications that they are participating in a narrative that is leading to some kind of fissure to break it apart, they do seem to be conceiving that they are part of something with a growing central government and with a growing security system, whether it is doing well or badly, that is one question, but as I put it together, I see that that is emerging in their minds.

MR. TELHAMI: I think when you look at the two indicators, the sectarian violence and the number of dead, you have on the average 100 civilians dead a day that die a violent death mostly sectarian every single day, by any measure that is civil war. I think that the reason why it is not called that, and I actually am hesitant to call it that, I agree with Ken on that, the one thing that is really interesting about Iraq is there is not a single major group that wants civil war and that all the major leaders are trying to avoid a civil war. There is a will to try to avoid it. And arguably every single one of Iraq's neighbors who all have completely different considerations, from Iran, to Turkey, to Syria, to Jordan, to Saudi Arabia, they all do not want to see civil war in Iraq, and that actually should be a source of optimism. What makes it difficult to take is that despite that there has been this level of violence and it has been hard to keep the country together.

Thank you very much for coming. Thanks to Steve and to Ken, and thank you all for the questions.

(Applause.)

(END OF RECORDED SEGMENT.)

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