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REMARKS BY YOSEF KUPERWASSER

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INTRODUCTION AND MODERATOR:

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. POLLACK: (In progress) -- to the Brookings Institution. We are absolutely delighted to have with us as now our Charles and Andrea Bronfman Visiting Fellow Yosef Kuperwasser who we and I think many in the audience have known for many, many years. Yosef is one of these people, it is the old cliché, he has had a long and distinguished career, but it is a very valid cliché in Yosef's case.

He is someone who has been associated with Israeli intelligence for a very long time and has occupied any number of extremely important positions in the Israeli government relating to intelligence including serving here in Washington as the Assistance Defense Attaché in the early-1990s. He went on to be the Chief Intelligence Officer for Israel's Central Command dealing with the Palestinian Territories in the West Bank. Then he finished his career as the head of the Research Department of Israel's DMI, the Directorate of Military Intelligence, or Aman, which

is the crown Jewel of Israel's various intelligence agencies.

In this variety of different positions, Yosef has worked on pretty much every intelligence question under the sun. I remember at different points in my own career going to Yosef to talk about Egypt, to talk about Iraq, to talk about Iraq. It seemed like no matter what I shifted my focus on, Yosef was still the guy in Israel. So for that reason we are absolutely delighted to have him here at the Saban Center where he will be doing some work for us on Israel's own intelligence reforms and where he will be speaking today on the issue of intelligence and the recent fighting between Israel and Lebanon.

Let me remind you of a few things first. As always, at the Saban Center, we speak while Yosef speaks, so please do go ahead and enjoy your lunches. The meeting will be on the record. Yosef has very generously agreed to do that. And also a reminder, if you have questions, please indicate to me and I will keep a running tally of questions and we will call on

questioners as they come up in the queue. And please feel free to just give me a low sign or a high sign, just very discretely, and I will put you down on the list.

So with those words of introduction, let me turn the floor over to our speaker Yosef Kuperwasser. Yosef, the floor is yours.

MR. KUPERWASSER: Thank you very much, Ken, and welcome everybody. Enjoy your lunch. I was told that whenever you open a presentation in the United States it is very advisable to have a joke or some punch line, but since recently some people have noticed what can happen if you misread it, I will speak that and go right to the point.

(Laughter)

MR. KUPERWASSER: I am going to speak about two issues that are interrelated and try to actually see how we can learn about Lebanon from what we did on the intelligence side, and at the same time, see what we can learn about intelligence bearing in mind what happened in Lebanon. It is going to be a relatively

difficult task because we are very close to what happened. It is also emotional. It is not only logical the way people look at what happened. And there is a mixture here of archeology, history, poetry, wisdom, and vision, and I will explain why I mean all of these elements are involved in this matter.

Archeology is what actually happened. Somebody kidnapped soldiers, Israel took some action, airplanes dropped bombs, rockets were falling on the other side, soldiers were fighting each other. Everybody has his own story about what happened during that exchange: was there intelligence, wasn't there intelligence, did they know what was expected of them or didn't they know. There are committees to investigate these matters in Israel. This is archeology. A major Jewish scholar Haddam (?) who wrote about history and archeology and said that happened is history is what people remember about what happened, what people tell about what happened. I will refer to the historical aspects of what happened

in that war, what kind of memories will the Middle East have and other people who deal with the Middle East will have about that war.

I would say that history depends to a large extent on those who look at the situation and it is not necessarily what really happened. I have found for example here in Washington that many of the people who look at what happened look at it from a Washingtonian perspective, they look at it through the Iraqi eyes, through expectations that they had from the war. They thought that Israel should wipe Hizballah off the map. That is what some people thought, and when that did not happen, that looked at it all from a point of view of being disappointed with the fact that this did not happen. But this is also true for everybody else in that everybody looks at it from an historical point of view through his own glasses.

Poetry is the most important task of intelligence. In intelligence, people should be poets. Why I say so is because Aristotle when he

explains what is poetry all about, he explains what is the difference between the historian and the poet and can write history with meter and rhyme. That would not turn history into poetry. Poetry, he explains, is not telling what happened, but telling what might happen and what is necessary to happen. That is poetry. And that is what is expected of intelligence people, and the question is to what extent can we say that what was said about what was going to happen, might happen, what needs to happen was really the kind of things that were necessary and might happen, and that is the way to judge intelligence. From there we can also ask ourselves what might happen from here on, not only what could have been said on July 11th, but also what can be said today and what is going to happen in Lebanon and the Middle East, what might happen and what is necessary to happen.

Wisdom and vision are all about what the politicians have to do, bearing in mind their historical perception, taking into account the intelligence message about what might and has to



happen, putting that together with their vision, they have to have the wisdom to know what to do, and I want to look at the situation from all these five aspects.

From an archeological point of view, one can say that in 30 or more years there have never been any attempts to fix the broken system called Lebanon. Israel repeatedly tried to do that, and other elements tried to do that as well, usually after major terror attacks that made it unbearable for Israel to live next to this uncontrolled area. In retrospect, one can say that none of these attempts were successful. Something is really broken in Lebanon, and Lebanon has become a microcosm where all the elements in the Middle East are fighting each other, trying to prove something about their ideology, about their perception, about their philosophy, and using the fact that everybody has a representative in Lebanon, the reformists have Hariri, the radicals have Hizballah, everybody has a representative in Lebanon. They use them in order to fight over the main question of what is really the problem of the Middle Easterners and how

should it be solved, and this battle has been going on for quite a while.

This last war was just another round in this ever-going battle. What was the problem? What was the war all about? Hizballah decided to kidnap Israeli soldiers about a year and a half ago, not on July 11th. In the beginning of 2005 in a speech on January 29, 2005, by Nasrallah, he declared that Hizballah it is going to kidnap soldiers. The reason was very simple, he had to prove that the philosophy of Hizballah is the real and true one and in order to do that he had to prove that there is a reason for which Hizballah has to continue to exist in Lebanon as an armed organization. He used all kinds of excuses beforehand. All of them evaporated. He himself explained that had the Lebanese people supported this operation in Shaba, he would have continued with that and would even be successful. But the fact of the matter was that the people of Lebanon gave up on Shaba and, therefore, he had to find a new issue to cling to, and he went to the issue of the prisoners.

He thought that by doing so he would be able to prove that the unaccountability of the State of Lebanon is an asset, that the idea of having accountable states in the Middle East is a bad idea for the Middle Easterners and that the power should stay in the hands of the *muquwama*, the resistance, because the structure in which the *muquwama* has the power is a guarantee that the Israelis would not be able to strike back. There are two reasons for that, as he called it, the Lebanese National Defense Strategy that was forced on Lebanon by Hizballah. It was based on two assumptions. One, since the Lebanese government is not responsible for the activities of Hizballah, there is no point in Israel retaliating against the government or against the infrastructure of Lebanon, and that gives the guarantee that Lebanon would not suffer because of Hizballah's provocations against Israel.

Secondly, there is the deterrence of Hizballah. Israel would not dare to fight against Lebanon because it knows, and Hizballah did not keep

it as a secret, that Hizballah has 13,000, more than 12,000 actually, which it says it is not necessarily 13,000, more than 12,000 rockets aimed at civilian targets of Israel, who exposes civilians to such a threat, especially Israel which is a spider web. It is not to be expected that Israel would dare to do something like that. And it is inconceivable that Israel would carry out any ground operation because it has the experience of 18 years of trying to get out of the Lebanese swamp and why would they step again into that same swamp.

That was the idea that Nasrallah was trying to put forward and through that he would be able he believed to prove that Israel is not ready to fight while Hizballah is ready to suffer and sacrifice and take risks and that would mean that the idea of sacrifice and in a way even to the extent that you carry out suicide attacks and things like that, is the one thing that the *muquwama*, the resistance, would eventually solve the problems of the Middle Easterners

and make it possible for them to overcome their enemies. That is the philosophy of Hizballah.

What this philosophy was supposed to serve was not only the interests of Hizballah. Hizballah we know very well was working on behalf of many other elements as well, Iran that was supplying it with all the weapons and the training and the guidance and the money, Syria that for obvious did not want to find itself confronting Israel directly thought it was going to be a great idea to have Hizballah as an indivisible part of the Syrian military capabilities, and that is why using it as a proxy would guarantee that Syria would not have to suffer for the provocations that Hizballah is going to carry out on its behalf against Israel. That is why the Syrians since 2003 have delivered to Hizballah all the state-of-the-art weaponry, to include the Coronet antitank missiles, to include the 220 and 302 millimeter long-range rockets. These are the best things that Syria has. Some of those missiles were delivered to Hizballah immediately after they were shipped to Syria

from Russia, let's not open the boxes, immediately to Lebanon. In that respect, Hizballah was playing not for its own interests and for the interests of Iran and Syria, but also for the broader interests of the radical camp in its war against Westernism, against the idea of Westernism, because their question was a philosophical one, not only an ideological one. The question is, what are the most important values, and what Hizballah and the radicals claim that the most important values are are regaining the pride that is being lost, that is being taken away through the activities of the West that is determined to eternalize the lagging behind the Middle Easterners. There are enemies, I would say, inside the Middle East who are claiming there is something in what those Westerners are saying. Maybe we should put the most important value as the right to pursue happiness, that is the secret of the West, the fact that the state is there in order to help and prepare the individual to seek happiness. That is the idea. Why won't we adopt this idea as well?

Of course, the radicals, this idea is a terrible one. They can't even listen to that. But this is the battle that was going on. There was a philosophical battle going on between the radicals and the reformists, and in the middle stands a very big group of pragmatists who are on neither side who have not made up their minds yet.

This was the context in which this war was launched. This was the reason for which this war was launched. In this respect, one has to analyze the Israeli position. Israel for the last 6 years had adopted the policy that says we have had enough of that. We left. We do not want to be involved in that anymore. We have our *zimmers* in the Northern part of Israel, everybody is enjoying tourism, and as Thomas Friedman wrote correctly during the way in The New York Times, we want to prepare ourselves for Warren Buffett, we want to be bought by Warren Buffett, that is our main interest in life. As you know, just before the war bought the Iskar Company, and this was

the biggest achievement of the Israelis before the war.

We as Israelis have decided that dealing with this Lebanese problem, which is a problem that we do not underestimate the importance of since we do not want to do it, we want the reformists in Lebanon and the international community to deal with this problem. Until the middle of 2005, this idea was working quite well. There was an ongoing or ongrowing I would say pressure in Syria, Hariri was leading together with Chirac in an effort to change the nature of Lebanon and turn Lebanon into an accountable state. Hizballah was feeling the heat. And Hizballah, Syria and Iran were so concerned with what was going on, Rafik Hariri got killed, or died as Professor Landis said here a week ago. The effort was to block, to stop this trend of turning Lebanon into an accountable state by all means.

After that there was a feeling that not only that this trend is gaining strength, but it is almost about to bear fruit, and the 14th of March Movement



was a tool with which this was just about to happen. The Syrian Army left Lebanon, a major achievement in the way of turning Lebanon into an accountable state. What people did not understand, and this is poetry, this is what we said is intelligence in Israel, was that just the opposite was going to happen. That by leaving Lebanon the way the Syrians left, by leaving behind Lahoud and Hizballah, by knowing how important it is to continue to control Lebanon for any price, the radical elements in Lebanon are going to take harsher measure in order to make sure that nothing changes in Lebanon. And because of that, the chances of a Hizballah operation against the Israeli soldiers in order to kidnap them and by that way to prove that really relying on the resistance is going to give achievements for Lebanon on the security side, we shall eventually face a situation of escalation in Lebanon. That was the message of the intelligence, that it is necessary that this would happen, it might happen, but that it is necessary that it would happen. And that the flow of arms into Lebanon after the

Syrian withdrawal of Lebanon, the flow of 220 millimeter rockets and so on was becoming bigger and not diminishing. That was our impression at the time.

Hizballah tried again and again. Hizballah tried four times before they were successful on July 12th. Four times we have managed to foil their attempts to kidnap a soldier. We have warned them, listen Mr. Nasrallah, if you dare to kidnap a soldier, our retaliation would be different than the one you know because we might change our policy. We are not going to rely anymore on the international community to do the business. We are going to it ourselves. Nevertheless, he would not listen. He just would not listen. One of his advisers, a journalist by the name of Ibrahim Amin wrote an article in the As-Safir newspaper saying what if Hizballah kidnaps an Israeli soldier and Israel would retaliate heavily, and then Hizballah would launch rockets toward Israel. Then what? So Mr. Amin was immediately removed from As-Safir and Nasrallah stayed the course.

It was obvious that eventually he is going to be successful, that if he is going to continue with these attempts, sometime he is going to be successful in kidnapping a soldier, bearing in mind that his forces were deployed all along the border, meters away from the border. It is very easy, and that happened.

The other thing that one has to know going to war like that is what did we know about Hizballah. Everybody asks what did the Israelis know about Hizballah. This is very important and it is not a matter of archeological. It is a matter of history because knowing is something that is flexible. And it is a matter of this vision and wisdom that I was talking about. Because at the end of the day, and this was a question of how you define your targets and your goals, we knew very well that Hizballah's political goals, we knew very well what Hizballah had and what it did not have. We knew exactly what kinds of rockets they have. We knew exactly what kind of tactics they are going to employ while they are fighting. We knew exactly that they are not going to

face us face-to-face, but they are going to adopt guerrilla tactics. We knew very well that the enemy that we were facing was well trained, well motivated, well established in the villages. It has spent 6 years working from early in the morning until early in the morning preparing the battleground for war, especially under the underground. We knew about that.

We knew how it was structured. We knew that they have units of all kinds, the antitank units, we knew about the mortars, the rockets units, all of that was known to us at least. I do not know if they knew that we knew that they do not know that we knew. But we knew all of that. There was nothing new in this war. Nothing, no surprise on the operational level.

We also knew what we did not know. We knew that we did not know where exactly are all the rockets. We knew where some of the rockets were, we did not know where all the rockets were, and that is why we knew that it is not going to be possible to wipe off the map all their rockets with an air operation. That was well known. This was explained

to everybody who was involved in the planning of the war, to the political leadership, to the military leadership, to those who were supposed to prepare the home front for such an eventuality. That was known to everybody. Steps were taken to take this into consideration and to prepare for something like that.

There was an intelligence war then that was fought all the time in order to gain more information and to know what were the whereabouts of all those rockets. But in a war like that you can know up to a certain level. Intelligence always does not know more than it knows, or at it is least much more concerned with what it does not know than with what it already knows, and that was an ongoing battle to gain more intelligence.

One of the major lessons learned of this war is the extent to which you have to take, and this is true not only about this war, is the extent to which you have to take into account the intelligence battle as an indivisible part of the overall military battle.

And do not think that knowledge would just come up.  
It refuses to do so.

And there is a difference here that is only on that level of technical intelligence that we had several gaps, important gaps, that should have been taken into account and were taken into account in all our planning of the war. The point is that when you fight a war, planning does not always fit the situation on the ground, the original planning. You have to make all kinds of adjustments, and this is not easy at all because when you have a plan, everybody has already practiced and trained to do what they are supposed to do according to the plan, but then the plan is for some reason or another not exactly as it is exercised.

The question here is what could have been achieved in this war, and not what should have been achieved in this war. Everybody looks and says why didn't we destroy Hizballah. This was not achievable in a war like that. In order to destroy Hizballah, you need a totally different kind of war. That is why

the real realistic goals of the war were more moderate, I would say. First and foremost, to create a new basis upon which the international community will be able to move forward and help the reformists in Lebanon to turn Lebanon into an accountable state. That is why Israel all the time looked during the war at what is happening in the Security Council. People maybe do not understand what was going on over there. Those pragmatists that I mentioned before who sit on the fence and do not decide ever on which side they are, their approach is what is the problem here. You can't win the war against Hizballah, Hizballah can't win the war against you. All you do is endanger the stability, the sacred stability. We pragmatists, we want only one thing, stability. Do not endanger the stability. Please stop fighting. It does not matter how you do that, just stop fighting. And they had a very strong force in the Security Council, called France, and it took a month to get a resolution that would really make it possible, its only a potential, to turn Lebanon into an accountable state because the

French were against it all the time. It is not a matter of the French, it represented a big group of countries. So there was no point in putting an end to the war before there was a strong enough resolution of the United Nations.

But the real target of that was to create a basis that would enable Lebanon to become an accountable state, because if Lebanon becomes an accountable state, this is a major setback to all the radicals. They are fighting in order to keep Lebanon as an unaccountable state.

Here I want to say a word about the point for the future. The efforts that were invested in forming Resolution 1701 on behalf of the people who want to see a different Lebanon were so immense and the prices so big that when they reached finally the resolution they were totally exhausted. If you look today, the war is not over. The war over there on the accountability of Lebanon, of the fate of Lebanon, and through it about the fate of the Middle East, is still going on. This is only one battle, of course, but



this is a very crucial battle. This war is not over. But if you look at who is fighting this war today, it is only those for whom this is a critical and existential matter, Hizballah, Iran, and Syria. Those for whom this is an important matter, although basically they are much stronger, do not attribute the same kind of importance to this battle, and because of that, once a week you hear somebody says something about what should happen in Lebanon, but not more than that. They are not really involved with all their might and all their capabilities in order to make sure that 1701 is implemented on the ground. Because of that, in my mind, the chances that this resolution is going to be implemented are low, unfortunately.

But there I come to vision. If we understand that, we can have an impact on the way things are going to develop. If we decide to ignore it, that is how it is going to happen. If we understand the importance, there is still a chance because in Lebanon, unlike in many other places, reformists are a force to reckon with. They are not

strong enough in order to fight against Hizballah, but they are a force to be reckoned with. As a matter of fact, the war is about to continue because Hizballah threatens to start a new phase in this war on November 13th and to send its people to the streets in order to topple the Siniora government. And we have to understand that this war is not over, and this war is an important war for everybody in the Middle East and everybody who is interested in what is happening in the Middle East.

What did we learn? Finally, just a few words about lessons learned from this war. First of all, as I said about history, a few historical lessons. First, in spite of all his efforts, Nasrallah is not going to be successful in changing history in a way that he would not be remembered as the one person who is responsible for this round of atrocities. He has invested enormous effort in trying to claim that it is not his fault, even when he said, yes, I am responsible, because if I knew that something like that would happen, I wouldn't have done

it, he immediately expanded it, but it is not my mistake. It is Olmert's mistake. You shouldn't have done it. And I am at a good expectation, according to my analysis, he shouldn't have done it. I cannot understand, because as an intelligence person, I know Nasrallah made the biggest and most terrible intelligence mistake that can be done, especially if it is done on such a strategic level, and this is learning about the future from the past. Since we in the six last years did not retaliate heavily on any of his provocations, he saw that this, too, we are not going to do that which means that he is not a poet, and that is the worst mistake.

We did it, too, in 1973. Each one of us, Israelis and Americans, have done this mistake before. At least we do not do it again, I hope we do not do it again. So in the memory of the Middle East, Hizballah will be remembered as the person who is responsible for that.

Secondly, I think that we can say that Hizballah will be remembered in Lebanon as the person

or as the leader of the organization that serves foreign interests, the way in which its reliance on Iranian and Syrian weaponry was exposed during this round, ruins his attempt to claim that he is a Lebanese. No one believes in that anymore, not that too many believed in that beforehand, but right now, nobody believes him.

And the third memory that the Lebanese have is that this national defense theory forced upon them by Hizballah, Syria, and Iran, is not a safeguard against Israeli activities. That they would know. So any attempt of Hizballah right now to force the Lebanese this policy again is bound to fail. There is no way it is going to convince the Lebanese to adopt it again. It can remain a very strong, nobody can disarm Hizballah forcefully, but the justification for its existence as an armed force in Lebanon has suffered a very heavy blow because of these elements that are already embedded in the Middle Eastern and Lebanese memory. At the same time, what Hizballah manage to do, and this is a very important issue, is

to put in the Middle Eastern memory the fact that he was not defeated, and for an organization like his not to be defeated is to be victorious. They don't have to win, they just have not to lose. They have created this aura around the Israeli military that now when they are not totally destroyed by the IFD, it is a wonderful victory. It does not matter what happened on the ground. Hizballah never let anybody to really reach the battles were fought, so nobody knows what happened there exactly. But it doesn't really matter, it is the memory, it is the historic perception, and that is a big problem.

About deterrence, I think what is going to be remembered is not necessarily what public knows about. Public knows mainly about what I said before, about Hizballah not losing, and this has a very negative impact on Israeli deterrence. But at the same time, the other countries around remember the fact that Israel has managed to attack 7,000 targets in 34 days from the air. And we, unlike Hizballah, do not just shoot in the air and see what happens, we

have coordinates for each bomb, and the ability of Israel to combine real-time intelligence with air force fire is immense. I would say that out of the 7,000 targets, maybe give and take, 1,000 were preplanned targets, the rest of them were opportunity targets that were created during the war, and this is amazing. For guys like Assad that have a lot to lose, they must bear that in mind. So the overall balance is not totally clear.

On intelligence repercussions or lessons learned I would say, first of all, do not repeat Nasrallah's mistake. Do not adopt induction as the tools with which you make your intelligence assessment. You are bound to fall one time, and the time you fall is going to be at the muzzle on all fours. So beware not to do that.

But at the same time, we learned how important it is to be able to share with your decision-makers the understandings that you develop about what might and what is necessary to happen and what the intelligence battle itself looks like, what

do you know and what do you do not know, and bearing in mind with that, how the war is going to look like. We knew exactly that throughout the war, hundreds of rockets are going to fall over our heads. I think it was a good decision to go to war in spite of that, knowing that, bearing that in mind, and yet going to war. I think it was a good decision, but you have got to know that this is what is going to happen.

I think one last thing I would mention out of many others is the importance of the understanding by intelligence and by everybody of the different kinds of wars that being fought today, not only that they are infinite in time and space. They are all over. The Lebanese war is only one battle in a war that is much bigger. They are also infinite in the dimensions they have, and one of the most important dimensions is the media damage. We have proved once again, by we I mean the Americans as well, but I point of course mainly at the Israelis, how poorly prepared we are for that war, and we have to finally understand that this is one of the forms in which this war is

being held and to make the necessary preparations intelligence-wise as well in order to be able to fight it. It is not only that you send the spokesperson of the IFD to fight alone. You have to make sure that she has, or not only she, everybody who is involved in that matter, all the information and all the deep understanding of the battlefield when they go to war on that front as well. I will stop here to allow questions.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Yosef. That was terrific. Let me remind everyone that when I call on you to ask your question, please do just give me a high sign up and I will add you to the list. Please identify yourself, give your name and your affiliation. And I am actually going to do that for our first questioner because the first questioner actually is Bruce Riedel, and I just want to introduce Yosef as our new Bronfman Fellow, I want to introduce Bruce. I know that many of you know him already, but I don't know if you know his new incarnation, his latest evolution, Bruce has now joined the Saban



Center as our newest Senior Fellow, and we are absolutely delighted to have him.

MR. RIEDEL: Kuper, it was a pleasure to listen to your poetry again. I have heard it for I think 27 years now, and you get more poetic as time goes on.

My question to you is a loaded political one, but fortunately it is hypothetical, so you can never be taken to task for it. You mentioned Nasrallah's mistake of learning from the past to project the future. I would suggest that he made one big mistake in looking at Israel and the new Prime Minister. The previous Prime Minister we all know, Ariel Sharon, had endured Hizballah's provocations from 2000 on, including attempts to kidnap, killings of Israelis, all kinds of things, and chose never to retaliate on a massive scale. I would suggest that his own peculiar history with the Lebanese morass made him very, very reluctant to do so, and politically very difficult for him to do so. But his prestige

also made it possible for him to get away with that in a way that Olmert could not do.

So my loaded political question for you is, based on your experience with both of them, would Ariel Sharon have waged the war that Prime Minister Olmert ultimately chose to wage?

MR. KUPERWASSER: They told me never to answer a hypothetical question, so I will not answer it the way you put it.

MR. RIEDEL: That is why you are a poet.

MR. POLLACK: And archeologist. The understanding that if a kidnapping of a soldier would occur, we, Israel, would have to do something different than what we have done in the last 6 years was there long before this government came into power. What would have been the steps on the ground that would have been taken, I do not know. This is the hypothetical question. But this understanding was there, and because of that, Israel and the Israeli military was asked to prepare itself to such an

eventuality and to prepare the contingency plans for it.

We had a full set of plans like that until the Syrians left Lebanon, and ever since the Syrians left Lebanon, we had to produce a new set of plans because the situation in Lebanon has changed dramatically. In the last year since the Syrians have left Lebanon, we have developed a new set of plans that took into account everything that I said before. It took into account the political situation in Lebanon, the broader lines of it, how it affects the region in general, the role of Hizballah with the strengths of Hizballah, the weaknesses and the strong points of the reformists, the way Hizballah is dispersed inside Lebanon, and many, many other elements were taken into consideration in preparing those plans.

There were several contingency plans. There was not only one contingency plan that if something happens, there you go and you do not even have to have a government meeting. There were other options.

The decision was effected in my mind also by things that you cannot ask about Sharon, because, for example, there was a kidnapping of an Israeli soldier in Gaza only 2 weeks beforehand, and the feeling was that if you do not do something dramatically, then the message you send is, okay, come on, please kidnap our soldiers. That is of course something that is totally unbearable, and that is why I have to bypass this hypothesis.

Basically, I think that we had a good chance to gain a lot from this war, and we gained a lot from this war. The problems we had are mainly second-level problems, how the forces and how the connection between the strategic and the operational level went and so on and so forth. They are very important questions and have to be looked upon very thoroughly with all the cards needed in order to say in some places difficult things about the way we have performed.

At the same time, strategically, if you look at the kinds of decisions taken, the kind of results

it created, and maybe there was a question of how do you manage it, maybe it could have been managed better, this is also one of the questions that is going to be discussed. But it led to the destruction of the national defense strategy of Hizballah, it forced Hizballah out of its fortifications along the border and actually forced it to lose the kingdom of the South, it enabled Israel to stand today in a very unique positions, and even the United States did not manage to have this position, where it has a sort of legitimacy for preemption. I think if today we will be able to locate a truck of rockets going from Syria to Hizballah and see that the Lebanese army is not going anything in order to stop it and not asking the UNIFIL as it is entitled to do according to 1701, not asking it to help it in preventing this truck from coming in, Israel will be totally understood by everybody in the world why you would not have attacked a truck like that, and that is something we did not have those 6 years when these weapons were coming in.

Moreover, we used this mistake of Nasrallah in order to deprive Iran of one of the major silver bullets they had, keeping that so dearly and investing too much in it, for a totally different situation, and that is a very important achievement. So I do not think that looking in hindsight that this was a mistake to launch the war. We have to make many improvements in the way we fight the war, but it was not a mistake to launch the war.

MR. NIR: I am Ori Nir with Americans for Peace Now. Bruce dragged you into one mind field, and I would like to drag you into another, and ask you a bit about Syria. There was a very interesting discussion here about Syria which you alluded to earlier. I want to ask you both war and peace questions with Syria.

As to war, what kinds of lessons do you think the Syrians are taking with them? You spoke about one, in terms of Israel's susceptibility to rockets and to missiles, what do you think would be the Syrian lesson, taking into account that the

Syrians probably do have the kinds of coordinates that you talked about, they can aim, in other words?

Regarding peace, what do you think are the chances of Syria turning away from the Iranian-led militant camp in the Middle East? What would it take for that to happen? What would it take to drag Syria away from Iran?

And lastly, how instrumental do you think would Syrian-Israeli talks be? In other words, with Israel relaunching the Syrian negotiation track in order to bring that kind of development about?

MR. KUPERWASSER: The Syrians are trying to hint at the possibility that they would start a Hizballah-like war in the Golan Heights. This is only good if it is in the context in which Hizballah did it, which was resistance. That is not working on behalf of the government. As a matter of fact, there is tension between it and the government, because although you want to say that Lebanon is responsible for whatever is happening from Lebanon, you know that this is not the case.

In Syria you know that this is the case, so it is not a real option for the Syrians to declare now about the Establishment of the Front for the Salvation of the Golan Heights and expect us to believe that this is an independent, totally random Syrian organization. They have to bear in mind that if they are going to do something like that, we will act not like they expect us to act, and they are one-hundred times more vulnerable than Lebanon. So they know it. That is why even during the war they were so cautious not to get involved, and I said all during the war that Syria is not going to be dragged into the war in spite of the fact that we were a little bit cautious with all kinds of things that happened.

About peace, I think that the Syrians do not understand that you cannot dance at two weddings simultaneously. That is something that they have to understand. They never have given any assurances, not even during the 1996 and the 2000 Peace Talks, they would really deliver Hizballah, that they would really deliver the Palestinian terror groups. On the



contrary, what they continued to say is that there is not going to be peace between Israel and Syria until there is also a situation where Lebanese and Palestinian demands are being met. Otherwise, no one can understand and can explain why didn't they join Sadat at the time. Sadat was offering to do that back in 1977, and they did not. And this tells me, and let me be frank with you, I was the one in Israeli intelligence in 1991 who said there is a change in the strategic attitude of Syria on the strategy that the Syrians adopt, that is why they are going to come to Madrid, and that is why we can have talks with them. It is not because they want peace with us, it is because they want to be closer to the United States.

But I was also the one who said in recent years that this is not a step in the changing Syrian strategy because the Syrians are not ready to give up their support of terrorism. That is why I think it is very reasonable for Israel and the United States to say to the Syrians, great, you want to have talks? Wonderful. First of all, take off your guns before

you get into the room, we are not going to sit down with somebody pointing a gun at us, and that is something that is clear. If the Syrians would give up their guns and sit in the room bona fide and really want to have peace, that is a political questions I am not going to refer to.

MR. MITCHELL: Gary Mitchell from "The Mitchell Report." Maybe I need to do it again this week, not the same Mitchell report. First, a clarification. I wanted to see if I understood something you said which was that Israel's objective in the Lebanon conflict was to draw in the international community so that Lebanon would become an accountable state.

MR. KUPERWASSER: Not to draw in, but to get the international community that was drawn in anyhow. The international community was the one that adopted 1559, and the international community was the one that established the international committee to investigate the murder of Hariri and other murders that took place in Lebanon in recent years. The international

community is very deeply involved in Lebanon. You don't have to draw them in, but you have to give them a better tool to work with in order to change Lebanon into an accountable state.

MR. MITCHELL: That raises two questions for me. One is, are you saying that we can see Israel's response and conduct of the war in that light? Second, if July 11th had not happened, what would Israel's strategy have been to accomplish that same objective?

MR. KUPERWASSER: First of all, yes, that was the purpose of the war in my mind. The purpose of the war was to enable, it is not only the international community, it is also the reformists in Lebanon. We did not decide that this war is going to happen on July 12th, but once we were faced with the situation where we had to go to war, this was the real target of Israel in this war, to enable the reformists and the international community to have better tools to work with in order to change Lebanon to turn it into an accountable state.

I want to reemphasize the importance of accountability. This is what the war is all about. This is the war in Iraq, this is the war in the Palestinian Authority, this is the war in Lebanon, this is even the war in Egypt where there is not enough accountability of the state, or in Saudi Arabia, or all over the Middle East. There is not enough accountability of the state. Sometimes we turn a blind eye to the fact that there is not enough accountability because what happens is not huge enough to do something about it. Not everything that happens is 9/11, not everything that happens is the kidnapping of a soldier. Sometimes, and this is the mistake of the radicals, they translate that into a sign of weakness, the fact that we do not respond to everything that happens. And they do not understand that what is going on is that more and more straws accumulate on the camel's back and one of them is going to make it break, and this was the kidnapping. So if there were no kidnapping, nothing would have happened on July 13th. Yes, sometimes, many times you

are right, and many times these huge events are the result of an intelligence failure. That is very true.

But intelligence failures are also something that might happen and something that is a necessity, because intelligence is not some sort of insurance company. Sometimes it is mistaken, and you can build on intelligence failures. That will always happen, and because of that, these kinds of events are those that make things happen. In a dialectical way, the biggest achievements of the radicals are the main reasons for which they later on pay a heavy price. The killing of Hariri was the major achievement of the radicals. They got rid of their archenemy in Lebanon, but this was the thing that led to the ousting of Syria from Lebanon. That is the way the world develops.

MR. MAHLE: Melissa Mahle with C&O Resources. You have talked a little bit about Syria. I like you to maybe talk more directly about the Syrian regime. You indicated in your assessment that they are very vulnerable, the government is, to an

Israeli attack. They have tried very hard to stay out of this last war. There was a lot of speculation here why Israel did not choose to broaden the offensive at the time and include it, particularly in hindsight now that we look at how resupply of Hizballah is continuing even more apace.

So looking at the Syrian regime and looking at the Israeli strategic calculations, what do you think if you peer into your poet's crystal ball are going to your option sets and how durable this current ceasefire is?

MR. KUPERWASSER: Basically, I think the ceasefire can be quite durable, because there is no way Hizballah is going to explain to the Lebanese why it is going to resume the fight, and Israel does not have an interest in resuming the fight. So in my mind, this ceasefire can last a certain period of time, not forever. And dealing with the Syrians does not have to be through a military operation. The Syrian regime as you mentioned is weak. It is a minority regime. It has no appealing message to its

people. It relies mainly on importing messages from nearby Lebanon. This is why Assad is so happy to say that Nasrallah is his friend, because if Nasrallah is so successful against the Israelis and he is my friend, I am also successful. That is the logic of Assad. He feels weak. He has there by mistake and he knows that.

This weakness does not necessarily mean that he is going to change his policies. On the other hand, just the opposite is the truth. It is because he is so weak, he is not capable of taking the courageous step of changing his policy, and that is why I think that he is going to continue with this policy.

The main question is, and I asked Abdel Hamid this question when he was speaking with Professor Landis a week or so ago, "What happens when Assad goes?" That is the question. I think that enough pressure can be put on Syria diplomatically, not necessarily militarily. I think that the middle-class in Syria, and that might include quite a

significant part of the Syrian military, would like to see a different Syria, and though there is a chance that is going to fall into the hands of the radicals, there is a bigger chance that if properly organized and it was well thought of and activities will start, Syria will go in the right way, not in the wrong way. That is to be seen and to be analyzed very thoroughly to see what might happen and what is necessary to happen with that. Everything or many things might happen. What is necessary to happen, I think that there are more chances for change for the better for Syria if Assad goes. As long as he is there, nothing will happen.

MR. PHELPS: I am Tim Phelps from Newsday. If, as you say, the goal of the war was to enable the reformists and the international community to change the landscape in Lebanon politically to strengthen them, has that been achieved? It would seem that the opposite has happened, that the Siniora government at least is weaker and, in fact, according to the U.S. government, in danger of being toppled.



Secondly, if Israeli intelligence explained to both the military and the political leadership what could happen and could not happen in this war and that specifically Hizballah could not be destroyed or that Hizballah could not be destroyed, why did they then tell the Israeli people that it could be destroyed?

MR. KUPERWASSER: Regarding the question of whether the targets were achieved, it is a tricky question because it is an ongoing war. There is no point in the war where we can stop and say the targets have been achieved, let's go home. It is not like the old days where the target was really to destroy to take over a certain piece of land where you could have said, yes, we reached this place, we killed the enemy, that's it. This war is not over. It is an ongoing war and there is an ongoing battle about the way 1701 is going to be implemented.

As I said before, right now I agree with you. The feeling is that those elements that were supposed to take care of the implementation of 1701 have neglected their job and that they left Lebanese

reformists on their own, and we all know that with all due respect to them, they are not strong enough in order to do this job alone. They need a lot of support. Many of them, many of these reformists, and I have had some meetings with some right after the war, they have this dream that Israel is going to do all the dirty jobs, Israel will take Syria on, Israel will go up to Beirut, Israel will fight against the Iranians, Israel will do all the dirty jobs and they just sit and watch, and in the end they will even curse us. That is their perception of how things should happen.

We do not volunteer to take this job on ourselves. We took a step in order to enable them to be more capable. If they are going to miss this opportunity, it is terrible, it is painful, it is really frustrating, but they to do something, too. And this is also true about the United States of America, they also have to do something about this issue, because to a large extent they say let the Europeans take care of this problem. The Europeans

never take care of any problem. You have to do it yourself and we have to realize that that is the way that if you want to see a change in Lebanon, that is what you have to do. And right now, as I said, all the elements that were involved in creating 1701 are a little bit exhausted, while the enemies of 1701 are totally committed to the goal of destroying it. We will see how this is going to develop.

Why did they say what they said? I am a politician, as you can already see.

QUESTION: But you retired.

MR. KUPERWASSER: Yes, but that does not make me a politician.

(Laughter)

MR. KUPERWASSER: So I cannot explain that, but from the point of view of an analyst, I can say that if you look at what were the real goals, these were the real goals. And you know that in economics there is a big problem of how do you know what are the preferences of the public, and this approach says revealed preference, look at what they are really

trying to get, and this is what Israel is trying to get.

MR. BRAIZAT: Fares Braizat from the Center for Strategic and International Studies. My question, of course, every war has objectives and you said that there is an infinite war in the region that Israel is fighting, and this is one of them, one battle in that continuous war. I would like you if possible to define what are the political parameters of that war in the regional context. That's one. And second, what qualifies as success in that war, and what qualifies as failure in that war, the long and infinite war, from an Israeli perspective.

MR. KUPERWASSER: First of all, I want to clear we eventually fight this war or finding ourselves fighting this war. This war is a war that is being fought between the Middle Easterners who are not Israelis. Israelis are very much involved in that war because occasionally we get shot at so we have to shoot back, but the war mainly is between the Arabs

and the Iranians, I would say, that live in the Middle East. That is where the war is being fought.

And as I said, this is a war between two philosophies, and just like it took 70 years to decide a certain war between two philosophies, this war, too, can take a very long time. By the way, it is happening while there are many other wars fought in conjunction with that war. There is war about who is the secular pope of the world. Europeans and many other pragmatists would say to say that it is the United Nations. Some people do not accept it. Some people say there is only one superpower, or at least there was one. That is another battle.

There is a battle inside the United States. Brookings just published an interesting book by Hunter and Wolfe asking the question, Is there a culture war? I immediately went to buy it because I thought it was about the Middle East. It turns out it is about the United States of America itself.

(Laughter)

MR. KUPERWASSER: There is a cultural war here, at least some claim.

There are many wars, but the war that is most important for us is the war that is being waged between the reformists and the radicals in the Middle East. It was a very difficult war because the radicals have managed to take control of the most important outpost in this war, and this is the control of the vocabulary. The radicals control the vocabulary. The political vocabulary is totally controlled by them. That is why terrorism is supposed to be something good. We say terrorism is bad, but according to the radicals, terrorism is totally legitimate. Killing civilians for us is something totally unacceptable. For them, killing civilians is totally justified. You could have seen how deep this control of vocabulary is doing this war in Lebanon because when Hizballah deliberately, intentionally launched 4,000 rockets, and according to Nasrallah, 8,000 rockets, toward civilian targets, nobody in the Middle East had anything to say about that. They only

had to say a lot of things about the fact that Israel was attacking Lebanon, but the fact that they did it was not an issue at all.

And it is amazing that they were proud of that. They managed to hit Haifa, so they were dancing in the streets. They managed to hit Haifa. Even the Germans when they were conducting the Final Solution were trying to hide this from their own population, not only from the United States and from the United Kingdom, but only from the German population. There was a big effort to hide it from the German population because they were afraid. Himmler writes in his memoirs that he was afraid that if the Germans would know about it, they would back off from the Nazi Party. Here there is a culture that says that killing civilians is legitimate and you should be proud of killing civilians. The role models of the radical camp of the Middle East are the suicide bombers. We will win this war when suicide bombers will not be considered anymore as role models in the Middle East. Is it going to happen tomorrow? No. Does it take a

huge effort? Yes. Can the reformists do it by themselves? No, right now, no. They need support. Can they rely on the pragmatists, those who do not make up their minds and just want to survive and to make sure that everything is stable? No. These people would rather adopt the vocabulary of the radicals instead of facing them. That is something that we have to understand. That is why this war is so difficult, because if the pragmatists would have adopted the reformists' vocabulary, this would have been a huge achievement. But when President Bush went to meet Mubarak and some of the leaders of the pragmatists right after the war in Iraq, right after Saddam's statue fell down, and was trying to convince them to say that terrorism is something bad, he could not do it. The only person who said something and he immediately ran away was Abu Mazen at Aqaba summit when he said that Israel suffers from terrorism. He did not say that it was bad, he did not say that the Palestinians are carrying it out, but he said Israel



suffers from terrorism, and you cannot imagine how difficult it was for him to say it.

When this vocabulary changes, then we shall know that the situation has gone the way we would like it to go, and we said we are in favor of the reformists in this war. It is not our war, it is not their war, but we are in favor of them and we do not have to be shy about it. Yes, because if they win, the entire world wins. That is the point here, and we have to understand that this is a philosophical war, and the fact that they control the mass media makes it very difficult to change the way this vocabulary outpost is being handled. It is very difficult. Secretary Rumsfeld asked once, How come that we the United States with all the control of the media and the capabilities of the media we cannot make any change in this respect? Of course, because words are so important. I am sure you know Nizar Qabbani's poem called "Words." Words can do everything.

But at the end of the day, that is what some people do not want to accept that these are only

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words, and just like in this poem, at the end of the day when that lady comes back to her table, all she got is words. The people of the Middle East have to decide whether they want to have these words or whether they want to have happiness. That is their decision to make.

MR. POLLACK: I am afraid that our time is drawing very quickly to a close. I still have a number of questions, but I think that we should definitely make room for the next questioner on my list because he represents a country that has been named many times and is important in this discussion, and that is Hadi Semati, our Visiting Fellow from Iran. Hadi, you get the last question of the day.

MR. SEMATI: I thought I would be at the top of the list of another sort.

(Laughter)

MR. SEMATI: With all due respect, of course, Hadi Semati from Brookings and the Saban Center. I do not know what reformists you have talked to that have agreed with the proposition that the

means that Israel has used to support de facto or indirectly what they are looking for. If we accept that the political objective of the operation inside Lebanon was to give a launch pad or at least a basic venue for an ultimate objective of making the State of Lebanon more accountable and helping directly the reformists across the region, and in Lebanon particularly, but in terms of legitimacy and effectiveness I think it is not convincing, your argument, that it has succeeded.

And I think if you go around the region and survey the reformists you will come up with a great majority who will say these are not the means that would help your honorable objective of supporting reformists. You and I have talked about this in the last week or so. So I think in terms about the legitimacy of the use of force in such a way is of course questionable, and the effectiveness of it is questionable, and, of course, these are very much related because if you are successful in doing certain

things using these sorts of means of violence it may actually make it more possible.

But I think you were making the same mistake that the Americans made in Iraq in terms of having the goal of freedom.

QUESTION: Using troops --

MR. SEMATI: No, I think the use of troops would not have achieved the ultimate objective, at least the ad hoc objective, of making freedom and democracy the ultimate priority.

So I think in those terms I do disagree and would like it if you could have any comments whether you can convince me at least as a reformist that it is a winnable proposition to use these sorts of measures to achieve the objective that you laid out. And I think I always under the impression that the Israelis are actually much smarter than the Americans in terms of coming to terms with the balance between the stability and freedom or democracy, and that it was you who suggested you should not shake up the Assad regime so strongly and that their departure from

Lebanon might create chaos and a vacuum, if that is what I understood. So elections and democracy are not necessarily going to bring about the sorts of changes that you want. Therefore, at least the debate within Israel was that you do not want to move such a strategic shift in terms of the discourse of whether you prioritize democracy at the expense of stability or actually a more gradual incremental transmission.

MR. KUPERWASSER: That is a very good question, and I will try to be brief. The point is you do not always get to choose between the things that you would like to do. We did not want to have this kidnapping take place. It was not that we were planning for that to happen. But once it took place, the options we had were not to continue to support the reformists and in other ways create our own MEPE or something. I don't know. Maybe it is a good idea, you kidnap a soldier, we create a MEPE.

(Laughter)

MR. KUPERWASSER: But really, this was not a real option, so we have to choose between the options that are available.

Whether it was successful or not, if you want me convince you, I cannot tell you right now that it was successful because you know the time it takes for something like that to filter through all the kinds of layers that you have to go through before something is embedded in the collective memory of the region and the facts and the way things develop, it takes a while.

MR. SEMATI: But I don't want to be long-term --

MR. KUPERWASSER: But this is not long-term. It is not about you and me, Hadi. We shall be dead by the time this bill is going to be decided. It is a really long one, it is a really long one. Somebody was rushing to decide that the American era in the Middle East has come to an end, although somewhere in the article he says maybe it is not like that, the fact is that there are ups and downs, and as I said,

it is developing in a dialectical way. You move forward, the other side takes a move. You move another move, and the other side takes another move. I do not know if you play chess, it is an Iranian game.

MR. SEMATI: (Off mike)

MR. KUPERWASSER: It takes time before you really position your forces in a way that eventually you are going to have a checkmate. It takes a long time, and we in the West have this culture of now. Ori here represents Peace Now. Everything now. Nothing personal.

(Laughter)

MR. KUPERWASSER: But they want everything now. We are not going to have it now. We have to be persistent, we have to be consistent, we have to make sure that we mean what we say and that we say what we mean, and only then eventually we might get to where we want. There is another player on the other side and he is also trying to do the same thing and reach just the opposite result and we have to remember that.

You cannot just have an attack in chess. You also have to take care of your defense. That is the way this has developed, and because of that, I cannot prove to you that this one move has decided the war. It has not. But has it created a better chance for the reformists and the international community to move in Lebanon towards the end that we want them to move? I think it created this. Are they going to use it? As I stated very clearly, I am quite pessimistic and skeptical about that. So I do not argue for the short-run.

MR. POLLACK: Kuper, thank you. I think that that is a very appropriate place to end this, and, of course, segue for us because at the Saban Center we like to be known as the place where Israelis and Iranians come to play chess and backgammon.

(Laughter)

MR. POLLACK: I hope you will all join me in thanking Kuper for a wonderful presentation today. And thank you all very much. We look forward to seeing you all soon.

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(Applause)

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