

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
A SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY BRIEFING
LEBANESE PUBLIC OPINION AMIDST A NEW CYCLE OF
VIOLENCE

Washington, D.C.
Friday, December 1, 2006

MODERATOR:

MARTIN S. INDYK, Senior Fellow and Director
Saban Center for Middle East Policy, The Brookings Institution

PRESENTER:

SHIBLEY TELHAMI, Nonresident Senior Fellow
Saban Center for Middle East Policy, The Brookings Institution;
Anwar Sadat Professor, University of Maryland

COMMENTATORS:

DAVID IGNATIUS
Columnist, *The Washington Post*

HISHAM MILHEM
Washington Correspondent, *An-Nahar*

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am Martin Indyk, the Director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy here at the Brookings Institution. Thank you for joining us this morning. I am sorry for the slight delay. We seem to have had some confusion about start times. David Ignatius will be joining us shortly. He, like Hisham thought we were starting at 11 o'clock. That is obviously our fault. Therefore, I apologize to you as well as to them. But in the interests of time and not to keep you waiting, we thought we would get started in particular because the first presentation by Shibley Telhami, as he will explain to you, the findings of a poll that he has just taken that has some very interesting data in it about public opinion in Lebanon in particular.

This morning our time, it is afternoon and evening in Beirut, there is a major demonstration going on of opposition people led by Hizballah and the Christian opposition leader Michael Aoun. The numbers different, but we can say I think safely that hundreds of thousands of people are in the streets surrounding the headquarters of the government that is array, and apparently they have vowed to stay there in a continuing "uprising" calling for the resignation of the government and its toppling.

This crisis has been brewing for some time. It happens to coincide with the upcoming issuing on December 15th of the Brammertz report, the report of the investigator into the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, and regional developments in which Iran, Syria and Hizballah feel, I think,

considerably emboldened by the problems that the United States and its friends in the region including the Lebanese government are now confronting.

That is the context in which we decided that we should focus again on Lebanon today. Shibley Telhami, who is the Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland, and a nonresident Senior Fellow here at the Saban Center here at Brookings, is going to speak first about his poll results and what that could mean for the future of Lebanon.

He will be followed by Hisham Milhem. Hisham I think is probably known to all of you. He is a familiar face up here on the podium since we have been dealing with the Lebanese crisis as the Washington-based correspondent for *An-Nahar* which is the leading Lebanese daily, *Al-Qabas*, the Kuwait daily, and currently the host of a weekly talk show called "Across the Ocean" for Al Arabia, the Dubai-based Arab satellite station. I think it is fair to say that Hisham is probably the most astute observer of developments in Lebanon and we are very glad to welcome him to the podium as well.

He will be followed by David Ignatius when David turns up, and David I think is also well known to you for his regular column on global politics in *The Washington Post*, including one this morning. He is a journalist who has had considerable experience in the Middle East as *The Wall Street Journal's* Middle East correspondent, in Lebanon in particular where he is about to go again next week, and as innumerable positions in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *International Herald Tribune*, and now at *The Washington Post*. He is a man who is very familiar with the ways of the Middle East and also a man who is now very

familiar with American policy toward this region, and that is what he will address after we have heard from Shibley and Hisham. Shibley, the floor is yours.

MR. TELHAMI: Thanks, Martin, and thanks to the Saban Center for hosting this release. Let me give you a little bit of background first of all as to this poll.

Many of you know that I have been doing polling in the Arab world in six countries, the same six countries over the past 5 years. In fact, I am in the middle of doing it in other countries as well, so this Lebanon poll is part of the six-country poll. So we are going to have results as well in the next couple of weeks coming from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates.

Some of this research is focused not only on attitudes on issues of foreign policy, domestic policies, regional policies, but also on the impact of the media on opinion for analytical academic study of the relationship between media and opinion in the Middle East. So there are a lot of media questions about which I will not be reporting today because the focus is not the media, but we will be releasing the media results in the next couple of weeks in terms of what people's habits are.

In Lebanon there are some interesting results. For one thing, I could tell you up front before I go through the poll that certainly there are differences within Lebanon's sects in terms of what they watch on television. The Christians tend to watch LBC as the number-one source for news. Muslims in general tend to watch Al-Jazeera, the Shia community particularly tends to watch

Al-Jazeera, but also Al-Manar Television, Hizballah's television, and there are differences in the way they watch the news on television. I will be releasing that within the next couple of weeks, and will also show differences across time.

One of the interesting things about this project is that we are asking some of the same questions every year to see how views are changing. Those of you who know about polling know that this is really important because at any given time, one of the most interesting questions is how opinion has changed over time, so a lot of the questions that we ask are repeat questions from the previous year. But every year we put new questions on the table depending on the issues of the day, and this year, obviously, the Lebanon war was a very important issue, so we introduced new questions about Lebanon and Hizballah, not just in Lebanon, but also in the other countries in and of themselves. Today I will be primarily reporting on some of the most relevant questions that were asked in Lebanon. This is not the entire survey, but a good part of it, on the issues that I think matter most. The first cluster of issues pertains directly with the Lebanese war and then with the relationship with Israel.

If you look at what I am displaying here, one of the questions is, "When you consider the outcome of the Lebanon war, who do you think emerged as the biggest winner of that war?" and they can answer only one. You can see in the total number right there that the biggest winner is seen to be as Hizballah as the total, and the second-biggest winner is the Lebanese, and about 15 percent say Israel. That is true overall. But when you look at the division across the sects, there are differences and important once. Still most people think Hizballah did

pretty well, but among Christians in particular, you can see that even a slightly higher number of Christians say Israel won the war, not Hizballah. So that is interesting. Not to make much of it, it is a polarized opinion there. You can see roughly the same thing, Lebanese people, Hizballah, and Israel winning. The Druze, again, they think Hizballah won this war.

The second question was, "Who was the biggest loser of that war in your opinion?" and there again, if you look at the total numbers, again Israel is seen to be the bigger loser, but interestingly, the Lebanese people are also seen to be a big loser, actually almost roughly the same in the totals, and there the differences across the sects are huge. Look at the differences. The vast majority of the Shia, over 70 percent of the Shia, say essentially Israel is the biggest loser of this war. But if you look at the other sects, all of them, Druze, Christian, and Sunni, they say that the Lebanese people are the biggest loser in this war. So that is really telling I think about the interpretation that is emerging at the level of the public in Lebanon.

"After the Lebanon war, describe your attitudes toward Hizballah. Is it more negative, is it more positive, it has not changed?" Here again, if you look at the totals, more people say their view is more positive than negative, not by a large margin, but that is certainly true in the totals. But if you look at it again across sectarian lines, it is quite telling. Close to 70 percent of the Shia say their opinion of Hizballah improved as a consequent of the war, whereas the other sects, I think plurality in every single case, Druze, Christian, and Sunnis, obviously have a different opinion of Hizballah as a consequence of the war.

I also do not want to make too much of it. That is obviously indicating collective differences, but note also that if you look at the Christian groups, the Druze and the Sunnis, they still have almost a quarter, a quarter of the Sunnis, and a quarter of the Druze have a better opinion of Hizballah as a consequence of this war. If you add "My view has not changed" to that, it is a polarized opinion even among these groups. I do not think it is clear-cut, but a clearly intensifying polarization taking place in relationship to Hizballah.

For the first time we asked direct questions about attitudes toward Israel in ways that I think I have not really probed in the Arab world. When you are doing scientific polling, one of the problems you have is you want to try to put the respondents in an uncomfortable position, and so we have been pushing every time to see how much information we can get. In case we asked a new line of questions, and David Ignatius, welcome. We have only just started, and I know that you have received those packets before. If you look at this issue, the relationship toward Israel, "Looking at the recent violence in Lebanon and Gaza, describe your attitude toward Israel's power." What I was trying to do with that is to have a sense of the deterrence issue that has been discussed so much, has there been more deterrence or less deterrence. I said, "Israel is still powerful and it will continue to use its power to consolidate its position even more. Or Israel is weaker than it looks and it is a matter of time it is defeated. Or no one can tell whether Israel is going to get stronger or weaker down the road."

If you look at the results, actually more people, over 40 percent, a plurality, really say they cannot tell whether it is going to be stronger or weaker,

but clearly a large number of people think Israel is weaker, and more people think Israel is weaker than people think Israel is stronger as a consequence of the war.

If you look at the sectarian divide, there are obviously differences on this issue. A large number, a majority of Shia, think that Israel is weaker and it is a matter of time before it is defeated. Whereas when you look at the Druze in particular or the Christians, those who think that Israel is powerful are more than those who think Israel is weaker, in those two segments of the population at least.

It is interesting actually in a way because while this seems to be reasonable to expect, it is also counterintuitive in some ways because the Shia paid the heaviest price of the war. They are the ones who suffered the most casualties and the most devastation one can argue, and yet actually they are the ones who are taking a position that Israel is actually weaker rather than stronger.

Another question on Israel, "Which if the following statements is closer to your view?" Here I think one of the issues that I am trying to measure not just in Lebanon but elsewhere is the preparedness of the public for a two-state solution, and I specify what it is, based on the 1967 boundaries. I give them three options. One is, "I am prepared for a just solution based in the 1967 boundaries and I think my Arab government should do more to bring it about," so to some of the blame on Arab governments. "I am prepared to do it, but I do not think the Israelis will do it peacefully," and so it is more of a skepticism about the Israeli willingness to do it. And the third is, "Even if the Israelis return the territories peacefully, Arabs should continue to fight."

If you look at the totals, clearly those who say Arabs should continue to fight are less than a quarter of the population, and if you look at the total of people who are prepared to make peace, it is a majority. The blame is mostly pinned on Israel, but also on Arab governments. You can see it on both because you can see the number of people who say Arab governments should do more is pretty high, and that is even more reflected in the sectarian divide. If you look at the Shia, here you have a larger number of people, almost half actually, who believe that Arab should fight Israel no matter what, but you have among the Sunnis the blame is very clearly pinned on Israel, and among Christians the blame is also evenly divided, although they put more of the onus on Arab governments, and so do the Druze.

"What do you believe motivates Israeli policies in the region and U.S. support for these policies?" This is an issue that was really part of the debate in Lebanon, particularly the way Hizballah framed the questions. Nasrallah himself went on the air and said really this is an American war by proxy. He even sort of put the Champsky thesis on the table; Champsky was actually popular in the Lebanese discourse, about what motivates American foreign policy. So I sought to ask the question, "Do you believe that U.S. support for Israel is based on domestic groups that influence American policy, Israel is not just a tool of American policy, or that the U.S. and Israel have mutual and beneficial interests most of the time?" It is interesting actually to me to see that the largest number of people believe, and actually it is overlapping interests, that the domestic lobby thesis has supporters and most among, interestingly, the Druze and the Sunnis, but

that it is not the dominant thesis, and there is some support for the thesis that Israel is a tool of American foreign policy, nearly 18 percent feel that way.

A set of questions about Iraq specifically, attitudes toward Iraq, "Which of the following is your biggest concern about the consequences of the Iraq war?" Here people were given two answers, and not just one, so you they do not add up to 100 percent. But you can see that the top two answers by far are Iraq may be divided, and Iraq will remain unstable, maybe to varying degrees, but clearly across the sects those are the primary issues. The third one that comes up is the fear that the Iraq will take away attention from the Palestinian issue, and that is there as a very important reason as well.

"What do you believe would happen in Iraq if the U.S. withdrew its forces? Is this going to provide an opportunity for Iraqis come together? Is the situation a civil war and it will expand?" There is a debate even now among scholars about how people feel about it in the Arab world. It will be interesting to see how Saudis and Egyptians feel about this. But in Lebanon it is clear that the largest group believes that civil war will expand rapidly, but there is a huge sectarian divide on this. You can see that the Shia have much confidence that Iraqis will come together, whereas the other sects have a different opinion of what might happen with a rapid American withdrawal from Iraq.

"Do you believe that the recent sentencing of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein will provide an opportunity for national reconciliation, increased sectarianism, or not make a difference?" This was sort of one of those timely issues that we put into the mix. You can see that a majority thinks

sectarianism will increase, and next comes it would not make a difference, but very, very few people think that anything good will come out of it across the sects.

Iran. We asked questions that we have been asking over the past few years, actually since last year I should say, about Iran, and it will be interesting actually to see how that changes over time. One of the questions is, "Do you think Iran is pursuing nuclear research for peaceful purposes, or is it trying to develop nuclear weapons?" You can that the majority think they are developing nuclear weapons. Along sectarian lines there are differences, but even among the Shia they are roughly evenly divided on this question. But among the rest of the Lebanese population, most people, the vast majority, believe that Iran is developing nuclear weapons.

What about the international pressure that is being applied on Iran? Do people want to see more pressure or do they think Iran has the right to do it and there should not be pressure? It is interesting because here a majority says Iran has the right to do it, but not put pressure on Iran. This, by the way, was very much similar to the finding last year in the six-state survey that we did. But it is also interesting that when you break it down by sects in Lebanon, you have a completely different attitude. You have over 90 percent of the Shia saying let them have it, and you have almost everybody else saying pressure them to not have it.

The U.S. This question of favorability really is one that we have been asking. It is useful in terms of the change over time, particularly overall in

the Arab world. It is not surprising to have a very unfavorable rating of the U.S., as we have been finding that over and over again. The most interesting thing here is really the sectarian differences on this. Among the Druze particularly, the largest plurality has a somewhat favorable, a very small number of people have a very favorable view of the U.S., but a somewhat favorable view of the U.S. It is interesting that the Christians and Druze do have a somewhat view of the U.S., consistent really with previous surveys.

This question I asked from the beginning about values and policies, and then I break it down into issues, and again it is consistent. When you ask people, "Are your attitudes toward the U.S. based on policies or based on values?" the vast majority consistently say policies, not values across the different sects. Actually, it is interesting to see the widest here is the Shia where it is policies, not values, and you will see in some of the results that that is actually confirmed.

But the more interesting question is really this one. I think in some ways this is stunning. If you look at it in terms of a question which says, "What step by the U.S. would improve your views of the U.S. most?" and here people gave a couple of answers and not one only, and I gave them these options. Look at the six options. They are options that are debated in the Arab discourse and that is why I put them there. One is withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq, the second is withdrawal from the Arabian Peninsula altogether, brokering a comprehensive peace based on the 1967 borders, pushing even more to spread democracy in the Middle East, providing more economic assistance to the region,

or stopping economic and military aid to Israel, which is something you hear about the discourse people calling for.

I think this is remarkable and I can tell you it is surprising to me. I did not expect this lopsided answer. I would expect more people to say stopping economic aid. That is the number two answer, but it is a huge distance between that and brokering an Arab-Israeli peace based in the 1967 borders as the single most important thing over all of these other issues including pushing more for democracy, providing economic aid, pulling out of the Arabian Peninsula. I think this tells the story about Lebanon, and if you look at it across the sects, it is consistent across all the sects, whether it is Shia, Sunni, Druze, Christian, it is consistent. The only different is what is the second most important one there, but it is a telling story in and of itself.

"Considering the recent changes in U.S. policies here," and I was talking about the congressional elections with Democrats winning and the removal of Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, "whether you think these are going to be positive or negative or make no difference in American foreign policy." If you look at that, it is not surprising that most people do not think it will make a difference. I think about half think that it will not make a difference. I think that is the general attitude. But in general, people think it will make a little more of a positive impact than a negative impact, except, interestingly, in the case of the Sunni community who have a slightly negative view of the change. But generally people do not think it will make too much difference.

"When you examine the Middle East policy of U.S. President George W. Bush, do you believe his primary motivation is his strong belief in democracy, his pursuit of U.S. national interests, U.S. domestic politics, or need to spread his Christian religious convictions?" because, again, that is one of the debated issues about how people see President Bush personally. This, by the way, is not inconsistent with what we found last year in other Arab countries, that most people interestingly still view his policies to be a reflection of the American national interests, not so much domestic politics, even though that is talked about a lot, and not so much of his religious belief. Certainly some people believe it is his religious belief, and you can see that more of the Shia believe that it is his religious belief. It is not an insignificant number who believe that, but it is certainly not the most important factor.

"How much confidence do you have in the U.S.?" Again, that is a confidence measure we have and we think it is telling over time, particularly with how it changes. Clearly, the majority have no confidence at all, some people have confidence, but the interesting thing here again is the sectarian divide. The Druze and the Christians have more confidence, the grade you can see, the Shia less confidence, Sunni more confidence, Christian more confidence, and Druze more confidence, and that is interesting. I do not know what to make of that and I would like to hear more about that in the discussion.

"The U.S. has been actively advocating the spread in the Middle East, especially since the Iraq war. Do you believe that it is an important U.S. objective and it will make a difference, or it is an important U.S. objective, but the

U.S. is doing it the wrong way, or democracy is not the real U.S. objective?" In the last one you can see a majority of the people believe it is not the real objective. Again, that is very much in harmony with what we have seen in the Arab world in general in the previous polling, so that is not a surprise at all. But what is again interesting here is the differences in even those who have favorable views of the U.S. like the Druze are still divided between those who think it is not the real objective, or those who think it is a good thing but the U.S. is doing it the wrong way. So you have very few people saying that it is an important objective and it will make a difference, and in the Christian community that percentage is a little bit higher.

"In a world where there is only one superpower, which one the following countries would you prefer more than the others to be that superpower?" Again, that was a measure to see what their opinion of world power is, and this has varied across sects as you can see. Overall though, you can see that France is number one in Lebanon, and that has been consistent. France is number one in many of the Arab countries, actually, and not just in Lebanon. But the interesting thing is Russia is number two. Russia had a very poor showing in last year's survey in the rest of the world. China is number three, and then the U.S. is showing up as number four. Again, when you look at the sects there are huge differences. Russia is number one for the Shia, followed by China. For Sunni Muslims, France is number one. Actually, France and Jacques Chirac are more popular among the Sunnis than among the Christians, slightly more, which

is interesting in this poll as well. But the Christians are divided, and the U.S. does well among the Christians particularly.

"If you had to live in one of the following countries, which would you prefer most?" You can see that China completely drops out.

(Laughter)

MR. TELHAMI: And by the way, Pakistan is in that mix, and it completely drops out. It does not appear there for that. But it is clear whether you are a Shia, Sunni, Christian, or Druze, all of your choices are Western with the exception of Russia, which I guess is Western, and that is the number four choice for the Shia. But you can see the top three choices are all Western, including the U.S., but still France is number one.

"If you want to send a member of your family to study in one of the following countries, which one would you send him or her to?" and you can see France is number one, except, interestingly, for the Druze who prefer Germany. I have yet to understand that. But the U.S. does pretty well even among the Shia. If you look at it, the U.S. is roughly even with Germany and Britain, but France is preferred. So it is clear what their attitudes are on those issues.

Identity questions, and we have already seen how deep the sectarian differences are on some of the foreign policy attitudes. One of the sets of questions that I have been asking regularly pertains to identity, how people see themselves, who they are. Do they see themselves first in terms of their religious identity, their Arab identity, their state identity? I asked this in every country, but

it is very interesting to see for the Lebanese if you are looking at this environment where we have a demonstration today and the Shia are asserting themselves, and not just the Shia, but there are some percentages who support that even within the Sunni, Christian, and Druze communities. They are asserting themselves, and sectarianism is a divide in the opinion, but it is very interesting to see how strongly Lebanese they feel, that this is the number one identity that they are asserting across the board in every single community.

When you look at that in terms of "What is your second most identity?" I push a little bit more to probe, and you see that religious identity is not the second for the Muslims and the Druze, and actually for the Christians it is more important. But for the other groups, Arab is the more important second identity than Muslim, and that is interesting also about Lebanese politics that just as we are focused on the sectarian and religious divide and you look at this focus of identity, and that is true for Shia. The Shia "First I am a Lebanese, second I am an Arab, and third I am a Muslim" or Shia or whatever you want to call it.

World leaders. "Please tell me which leader outside of your own country you admire most." Remember, Nasrallah is not here because I am asking them to avoid answering about their own leaders. I am not worried about it so much in Lebanon, but in other countries it becomes a problem, so I do not want to put them in a position where they have to refer to their leader and I only just look at their world view outside. You can see that Chirac is number one, and this has been consistent. Last year he was number one in three of the six countries. The interesting thing is Chavez is number two, and number three is President

Ahmadinejad of Iran. When you look at the distribution across the sects, you have a very different picture. Chirac is number one and he does not get any support in the Shia community, practically zero support in the Shia community. He is getting most of it from the other sects where he is very popular among the rest. If you look at Chavez, he appears interestingly among the Shia, Sunni, and even Christians he has some support there. Fidel Castro appears on the Shia top three list. George W. Bush appears as a distant third, getting over 7 percent support among the Christians in Lebanon.

But here is the interesting twist on that question that we asked for the first time, "Please tell me which of the following leaders would you prefer to rule over you and your family." Remember that when I asked about superpowers I differentiated between superpower and where you would like to live, and this is a question not about who you admire abstractly, but who you not mind ruling over you. There is a slight change, because I think particularly although Chirac is still number one for everybody else except the Druze, he drops out of the Druze which is interesting, but certainly not for the Shia. But Chavez drops among the Shia, and he drops among the Sunnis, so people may admire him for his stand, but this is not what they envision for themselves, and it is really a policy reaction.

How about the leaders they dislike most? This, too, is very interesting. The fact that George Bush is at the top of the list, that is not a surprise. In previous years he was typically very close to Israeli former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, where Ariel Sharon was number one up until he fell ill. But what is interesting here is who is number two, because typically the Israeli

prime minister is number one, Lebanon had just had a war with Israel and Ehud Olmert was the head of the government that launched that war, and Ehud Olmert is the third most disliked man on this list. That is really interesting, and Bashar Assad is number two on the list. When we look at Bashar Assad along sectarian lines, he is not there on the Shia list, but he is number one for the Druze and the Christians, a close second on the Sunni list, and that too is very telling about the polarization in Lebanon.

"Name two countries that you think pose the biggest threat to you." Israel and the U.S. are the top two. Israel is by far ahead overall, and this is again very much in harmony with the Arab world, in fact, in the rest of the Arab world you get more than that, and the U.S. is second. Syria is third, as you can see, and Iran is fourth. Again, if you look at the sects, only Israel and the U.S. practically are on the Shia list, and everybody else has different prioritizing, although Israel is still number one for every single sect and the Shia actually have the U.S. a little bit ahead of Israel.

"Name two countries where you think there is more freedom and democracy for their own people." I used that as a measure of values to see whether there are differences across the sects in terms of how they view freedom and democracy and, frankly, there are not substantial differences. Some give France, more or less, but you can see that the countries they name, all four of them that are on the top of the list, are Western countries. They do not name China, they do not name Russia, they do not name Pakistan; they name these countries.

"There are various concerns that governments must consider when making decisions. When your government makes its decisions, do you think they should be based mostly on what is good for the country, what is good for the Arabs, what is good for the Muslims, or what is good for the world?" Again, this is more action related and not just identity, another indirect measure of what they focus on. Again, citizenship is number one by far across the divide, what is good for the country, not what is good for Arabs broadly, not what is good for Muslims broadly, and that too is interesting for people who are focused on their religious identity.

Just very quickly, a few other questions pertaining to the role of religion because we have been talking about religion and the religious divide. "When you look at Arab countries today," and I am talking about broadly, this is not just in Lebanon, "and think about government and politics, do you feel that the clergy play too much of a role, too little of a role, or just right?" You can see a plurality believes that the clergy plays too much of a role, a good percentage still say too little, and a few say just right. But you can see the strength of too much of a role particularly among the Christians and the Sunnis, and with the Shia, interestingly, it is divided. In fact, a slight plurality say it is too little, but it is pretty much even with those who say too much.

Let me just go quickly through this one question, "Which do you agree with me, religion must be respected but clergy should not dictate the political system, or the clergy must play a greater role in our political system?" and this is really about Lebanon, "Do you think that the clergy play too much of a

role there, or do you want them to play a greater role?" It is really interesting to see that a majority of every sect including the Shia say that religion must be respected that clergy should not dictate the political system, across Shia, Sunni, Christian, and Druze, and that is telling today.

Let me conclude by saying there are a number of other questions pertaining to al Qaeda and the role of women in politics all of which also indicate that the divide is not so much a religious divide, there is a political divide, but it is sectarian and it is very clear. I will end with that and then open it up for discussion.

MR. INDYK: Thank you very much, Shibley. Because of the late start we are going to go to 12:15, but unfortunately David has to leave at 12:00, so we want to take advantage of your presence here, David.

MR. IGNATIUS: Thank you. Shibley, it is a wonderful poll. There is so much rich material, and I know we will all spend a lot of time thinking about it.

I do want to note that I think you were making yourself a candidate for the *Légion d'honneur* in France. The French when they see these poll results must think "At last, some recognition for our central role in the world."

(Laughter)

MR. IGNATIUS: I thought I just would note a couple of themes that struck me and then make an observation in general about polls and the anomaly in a sense of poll results as we have experienced them here.

Looking at this, I was struck continuously by the theme of Shia triumphalism, this sense that we are winning, that Israel, our key adversary, is weaker, the implication that the United States, or other key adversary rivaling Israel, is weaker, that we are on a roll, and that for that reason we do not need to compromise, we should fight on to victory against Israel, we are not interested in a two-state solution. I think that sense of we are going to win if we keep up the extreme tactics is consistently the most dangerous idea in the Middle East, the belief that victory is possible. I have written that it seems to me that that idea of we can have it all flipped, that Israelis used to feel that 15 or 20 years ago, the Lebanon war changed that and the Israelis began playing for a tie. And on the Arab side there has grown this sense of we can win it if we keep pushing, keep killing our adversaries, keep using these weapons that frighten people.

The second theme that really hit me in the findings was Sunni fear and the willingness among Sunnis to compromise, and it is palpable and it just feels different, their willingness to talk about a two-state solution with Israel, just in general the sense among the Sunnis of the fear that Iraq is perhaps heading toward division, that the civil war in Iraq will spill over threatening Sunnis elsewhere, in contrast to this really interesting view on the Shia side that things will work out in Iraq, it will be okay, we are winning, we have the dominant position in Iraq.

I was struck by I would not say the identity, but the similarity of views among Sunni, Christians, and Druze in Lebanon. The Christians are no longer the outlier. I suspect that if one had taken a poll of this sophistication 20 or

30 years ago, the Christians should have been significantly the outliers with Muslim views different, and has changed. In a way, that is encouraging, although I do not want to draw too much from it.

Your numbers suggest that people are not as sectarian as they appear to be in their behavior, and forgive me; I am going to take their behavior as the more important variable than their responses to your poll.

MR. TELHAMI: I said they are sectarian, but not religious.

MR. IGNATIUS: Yes, but even when you asked them "What is your strongest identification?" the strongest identification is with the nation, it is with Lebanon, it is not with my confessional sect. And yet as we saw in the last parliamentary elections, people do not vote that way. We want to blame that the people were angry at the moment for being sectarian, but in truth, every confessional group voted in a very sectarian way, that is consistent, and that is the base of Lebanese politics.

The second thing I want to talk about is the implications for U.S. policy of these poll results. That is a complicated question and I hope that Hisham and Martin will go into this in more detail, but just for my own quick thoughts.

First, Robin Wright in *The Washington Post* this morning and I also in part of a column I wrote noted that it appears that the administration in its own policy review is moving toward the idea that you have to in effect pick a winner in the Iraq civil war. As I was saying this morning, the polite version of that is you have to accept Iraqi democracy, that the Shia in Iraq are the dominant

group, they are in control, the army that we are working so hard to support is a Shia and Kurdish army, and we just have to accept that and that that is the reality. I think these poll results would make you nervous about that strategy, that they would make you nervous about tilting toward people who however much we have tried to do for them, however straight we have tried to be with the Shia, however much we have helped expand their power through our actions, they do not like us, and they do not believe our motives are credible. The idea that we are going to get anything meaningful out of that either in terms of stability in the region or new friends and allies, I think these results would make you worry.

Second, these results would very much reinforce a view that I think is now prevailing in the administration, that of all of the razzle-dazzle options for getting some strategic momentum in this very difficult period, the best option is to really work hard on the Arab-Israeli peace front and that that is where you could make some progress and also where you could set back the Iranians if you could get some movement, and your results very much reinforce that. That is central; even with all the other issues and problems, that is the thing that people care about, so I think that is a very clear policy implication with that.

I think on the question of a regional peace conference that draws Syria and Iran into some effort to stabilize Iraq, although I continue to think that that is a meritorious idea myself, I think these poll results would make you skeptical about the consequences quite apart from whether Iran and Syria could do very much for you in practice. When you have Sunnis who are very frightened

about Iran power, about Shia influence, is that a good idea? I think there is a red flag of warning.

Certainly, these results would make you think that our efforts at democracy promotion have gotten next to nothing. People do not believe that we are serious, and the people who have been helped most by the effort are the least convinced. In one of your polls, there was not even a Shia bar believe that we are serious about democracy promotion, so few people thought it was for real. That is really striking, and that does not mean that we should not do it in terms of our values, but how hard are you going to work on a policy that gets you absolutely nothing is a question.

On the issue of sectarianism, I am never sure which way this goes, but there is the old phrase, "Think left, drink right" to explain it, or maybe it is "Think right, drink left," I can never remember which it is. But in any event, there is this thing about people saying what they think is the right answer about sectarianism, but behaving in different ways when they vote and in all sorts of ways, and that split, that duality is something that I think emerges from these numbers.

A final quick thought. If you had done polling, and people did do polling, if you went back and reviewed polling about the United States over the last year or two, you would find a picture of a country that was severely divided, and the commonplace analytical point was the ground in the center on which you could make decisions in foreign policy, the ground of governance is disappearing in America, we are a country of extremes, people are angry at each other, the

bases rule the two political parties, and there was an elaborate explanation of our political problem based on poll results and other evidence of that fundamental divide. And yet we saw in the November 7 elections that that in fact was a very incomplete and inaccurate picture of where we were as a country, that in fact in some way that was not clearly grasped by polls or analysts that there was a center that was reemerging and it was reemerging in crisis as people looked at the country's problems and thought we got to get out of this mess, how are we going to do it, and the election results are the sum of all the individual decisions as people confronted that. I do not want to draw any detailed comparison about what people do in crisis; I just would note that sometimes they do not do what you think they are doing from the polling and other examinations that we do.

MR. INDYK: David, thank you. I took full responsibility for your lateness, so I do not want you to feel bad.

MR. IGNATIUS: I apologize, and I am going to be late for the next thing. I will not leave early. That would be too naughty.

MR. INDYK: Shibley, we will give you a chance to respond after Hisham.

MR. MILHEM: I will try to be very brief. I usually have a very jaundiced view of opinion polling everywhere, particularly in the Arab world. We do not have a long tradition of polling. Although I must say that some of the results of Shibley's are in harmony with my own observation of the situation or with the anecdotal changing in attitudes that we have seen in Lebanon specifically during and after the recent Hizballah-Israel war.

What is clear from the poll, and what is clear from any serious observation of the situation in Lebanon, and what is clear from today's demonstration, is to what extent now the Shia-Sunni divide, the Shia-Sunni polarization, the Shia-Sunni cleavage, if you are a social scientist, has become deeper, more pronounced, more salient, and more worrisome in Lebanon. Today as we have seen today in the demonstration and the way Hizballah has been mobilizing the Shia community in particular, although they do not necessarily use "Shia" co-words or even sectarian ones, they use others, sometimes Islamic in general, they are fighting for the "dhouma" (?) whatever that means, but essentially there is a major Shia mobilization that is taking place in Lebanon. On the whole if you are talking about two major camps, the Shia are essentially in one camp with some allies who are with them because of tactical considerations necessarily, and you have a different kind of an opposing camp, if you will, that includes those Lebanese who still believe that the old Lebanon can be resurrected, and I am talking about the remnants of the liberals, the people who believe in a market economy, people who believe that Lebanon should continue its traditional liberal Western orientation. And on every issue that has to do with how one sees himself or herself, the identity issue, who are your friends, who are your enemies, what is your ethos, the differences are deep, fundamental, and worrisome among the plurality that exists in Lebanon today, i.e., the Shia and the other groups, and that is one of the reasons why many Lebanese are concerned that this current political tension could degenerate into not necessarily a full-fledged civil war, but into really a breakdown in civil order and raises questions about the ability of the

Lebanese to coexist and to reach some sort of a social contract that will maintain the country's unity.

The view of Iran is so clear, the clear of the United States, the view of Israel, who are our enemies, even Hugo Chavez. Why would you think Hugh Chavez is popular in the Arab world? Do you think the Arabs know anything about Hugo Chavez, other than the fact that he is sticking it to the Americans and to the Israelis, or even Ahmadinejad, or if you really probed them whether they would like to live under Hugo Chavez or Ahmadinejad, obviously not. I do not mind necessarily this issue that you are identifying yourself with the country that you belong to. The Lebanese system does not treat the Lebanese as citizens, they are not citizens, they are members of a community, and essentially, Lebanese politics is translated into communal attitudes and positions, and David is absolutely right.

So when everybody tells you I am a Lebanese first, yes, vaguely, vaguely, in a kind of ambiguous way, a middle way. But when you really ask them serious questions about their ethos, how they see themselves, how they see their other communities, how they see the world, how they see their culture, their history, their heritage, their alliances, their enemies, their friends, it is different, it is communal. It is communal. Unfortunately, that is how it is. You see it in the polling, you see it in demonstrations, and you see it in their attitudes toward Israel and Hizballah and the Lebanese government during the recent war.

This is a deeply divided country and these attitudes are not only influenced by domestic peculiar local conditions and histories, and we have

different histories in Lebanon, this is "A House of Many Mansions" as Kamal Salibi told us once. These attitudes are also influenced by what is taking place in the region, and in part the Shia ascendancy that we have seen in Lebanon in the late-1960s and still continuing, and now that we are seeing it in Iraq, and of course in Iran, and one cannot analyze the situation in Lebanon without keeping in mind that we have to do it against that kind of a regional and international background.

What is essentially taking place today in part, and I want to stress this, is a confrontation between Iran and its allies, the Syrians, Hizballah, and Hamas and all these people, and the United States and its allies. And that confrontation, to put it bluntly, covers a huge theater, a huge swath of land, which starts from the deserts of Iraq into the boulevards of Beirut and all the way to the narrow alleyways of the Palestinian camps in Gaza. That is coloring the attitudes of the Sunnis and the Shia and the Christians and everybody else in the region, and you see part of that in these results. There is an Iranian ascendancy that we have never seen before in the affairs of the Levant that is also present now because of Hizballah, because of the alliance with Syria, because of the rise of the Islamist movement throughout the region.

What is interesting, too, and I think Shibley will verify this is the diminution of the Arab identity. What we have seen in the recent decades, unfortunately from my own perspective as a secularist is that most people in the Arab world now, and obviously we are all an amalgamation of identities, you are an Arab, you are a Muslim, you are a Christian, you are a Middle Eastener,

whatever, but the Muslim identity has become more and more pronounced at the expense of Arab identity. We are seeing it now among Sunni communities, not only among the Shia, and that again is clear here, maybe it is not as clear as it is really, but that is what we have seen recently in the Arab world that people are more identified with Islam, maybe because Islam is perceived to be under siege, maybe because of the failure of the Arab nationalist movement and the Nasserites and the Baathist parties in Syria and Iraq for a variety of reasons, but definitely there is the diminution of Arab identity.

Iran and Syria, and this has implications obviously for the whole debate that is taking place in the United States now, whether we should engage Iran and Syria to save Iraq. Maybe it is too late to save Iraq from America's blunders, maybe it is too late to save Iraq from the violent nihilisms of the Iraqis themselves, but definitely engaging Iran and Syria today is not a panacea. I say that because obviously there is a perception in Iran and Syria that the Americans are losing, that this is our moment, George Bush is finished, everybody is talking about the America's era in the Middle East, and we are not dealing with democratic governments who are willing to give and take essentially, and I agree with David and we talked about this, I think there is a strong streak of Iranian thinking today that what the heck, why shouldn't we go for total victory?

The other thing is, you do not have to be an expert on civil wars, from Iraq, from Afghanistan to Lebanon, to the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, usually local players who are doing the killing and the dying, and the local players who are going to live with the results on the ground, are usually very adept and

very creative at manipulating their foreign patrons. It was a bunch of small Lebanese groups and personalities that dragged the superpower of the United States into their little political affairs and transformed the American Marines who landed in Lebanon in 1982 into an American militia, a bunch of Lebanese politicians and players on the ground in Lebanon who manipulated America, and all of a sudden Ronald Reagan began to talk about — and this and that, I had never heard of these places. So the local players usually manipulated their foreign patrons, and I would even argue in the case of Iran, and that is the country that probably has the most influence today in Iraq, and not Syria. Iran has a good relationship with the two competing Shia groups, and I will argue that for Muqtada Sadr, if he sees that his own interests are going to be in opposition to what Iran dictates or wishes at a given moment, he can manipulate Iran and the Iranians are going to find it very difficult to influence events. In other words, the issue in Iraq for Iran even is like faucet, you cannot turn it off and you turn it on at will. There are limits to what the neighbors can do in civil wars, and usually the neighbors are better at fomenting civil. Again, to be blunt, in most civil wars, civil wars end up either in the breakup of the country that is the arena of the civil war, or in a victor and a vanquished. You rarely end up with compromise.

In the United States you had a victor and a vanquished, in Spain you had a victor and a vanquished, in Lebanon you did not have a victor and a vanquished and that is why we do not have settlement in Lebanon. And unfortunately, we are probably going to end up either with the breakup of the country or a victor and a vanquished, whether we will side with the Shia or not,

that is another issue. But I mean to think engaging Iran—sometimes the wishful thinking in Washington is breathtaking, "only if we can talk to the Iranians and the Syrians." Also timing. We should have talked to the Iranians and Syrians 3 years ago, not today. And while in theory I am not opposed to diplomacy and there is always room for diplomacy and talking and engagement, I love this word, which is the new vogue in Washington, by the way, engagement. It is magical, engage. But I wouldn't bet the farm on it.

MR. INDYK: Thank you.

MR. TELHAMI: And you actually have a farm to bet.

MR. MILHEM: Damn right.

(Laughter)

MR. INDYK: With horses.

MR. TELHAMI: And horses, too.

MR. INDYK: Shibley, do you want to respond to some of the comments there?

MR. TELHAMI: Yes, let me make just a couple of points.

MR. INDYK: Particularly in David's points on U.S. policy, and leaving aside the obvious issue that we should be more engaged in the Arab-Israeli peace process.

MR. TELHAMI: In terms of David's questions, let me just deal with three quickly. One is the sectarian divide. There is no question there is a sectarian divide. If you want to call it religious that is okay, because it is along religious lines, and the polls show that. It is very clear. Look at the differences in

attitudes on all these other issues, and obviously they are organizing along sectarian lines.

The point of it is that people do not see themselves through a religious prism and their value measures do not differ a great deal based on religious divisions. What is motivating them are still issues, but pertaining to the interests of the sects for sure. So that is the way to look at this, that, yes, there is no question that that is what we witness.

It is important when people say I see myself a Lebanese first, an Arab second, and then a Muslim or Shia. Even if they have differently, it is important. It means it is restraining a little bit, it does not mean they are going to do it, particularly if they think Lebanon is impossible, if we are going to be in a civil war and Lebanon is not possible, then I am going to that identity which I know.

Which brings me to the second question about opinion and behavior. Of course there is a different between opinion and behavior, and typically as a political scientists, actually I mostly behavior and not opinion. Opinion was only a way to confirm hypotheses that I derive out of behavior. But one of the things that we do know from public opinion polling is it really depends on how important the issue is to you. If I am polling you on an issue that is your number one priority or your number two priority, then you are more likely to behave according to your opinion. If it is not, you are not because you trade it off. So that is why a lot of the questions that we ask have to do with how important the issue is to you.

In America I have done public opinion polling, too, and I have written about that before. On attitudes toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, for example, you find most Americans want an "evenhanded approach," the vast majority of Americans. But most of those Americans do not care so much about the Arab-Israeli issue, so when you ask people "How important is this issue to you personally?" those who say it is very important to them have a completely different view from the rest of the public that drives their behavior and, therefore, drives the political behavior. So how important the issue is really does matter.

That brings me to a point that Hisham was making, and I think it is a good point, about when people are asked "Whom among world leaders do you admire most?" of course they are not looking at them in terms of I really know Chavez or I know Ahmadinejad, it is a prism through which they are making an evaluation. What it tells you is what the prism is through which they are using the evaluation. That is what you are using. So their anti-Americanism, that is what is important to them, it is the prism of anti-Americanism, and that is what you are getting at. It is not so much Chavez or Fidel Castro, they know nothing about these people, but it is an anti-American prism that is actually defining their attitudes and is not religiously dependent. All these personalities are certainly not Muslim, not Sunni, and not Shia, they are foreign and — or Marxist or whatever, but it is the prism which is very important to us because it tells us about the mindset about how they do their priorities.

The final comment is about identity. I know that Hisham said that there was a decline in Arab identity, and there is, although it has been really not

very straightforward over the past 5 years. This is something we measuring over time in the rest of the Arab world, not just in Lebanon, and see an evolution. Initially, actually immediately before the Iraq war, Arab identity measured strong. After the Iraq war, Islamic identity measured strong in the Arab world in three or four of the six countries studied. But last year, interestingly, we had a revival of the state. More people in the Arab world in last year's opinions said the state is more important to them even over Muslim and Arab, and actually in this Lebanese poll, state is important. My interpretation of that, although we do not really know the process and that is what I am trying to study, is that the anarchy in Iraq frightened them, the destruction of the state frightened them. You lose a state and you have something you cannot control and it is frightening, and even in the Palestinian areas, the loss of central authority is frightening to them and they rallied behind the state as a mechanism of defense. That is just a hypothesis. I do not get that out of the polls and I am hypothesizing.

Just a final point on the Shia-Sunni divide that Hisham talked about, it is clear on some issues in Lebanon, there is no question, that pertain to Syria, to Israel, to Iran, no question. On other issues, attitudes toward the U.S., they are not huge. There are a number of issues in which the differences are not big. But that is in Lebanon. I will be getting my results from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates in the next couple of weeks, and I suspect that Hizballah is very popular in the Sunni Arab world. I suspect. We have already some preliminary evidence that came out of it, but I do not know yet, I do not know the results. I am surprised always by something in

the results, and I may be surprised, but I am expecting that there will be more for Hizballah in the divide, and that actually the opinion that is expressed by Hizballah on some of the issues is going to be closer to what I am going to see in Jordan than it is maybe to the Sunnis in Lebanon. My hypothesis about that is that the Sunnis of the Arab world who do not have Shia among them who are not facing that as a priority issue is their divide domestically are looking at Hizballah through a different prism of foreign policy, the prism of Israel, the prism of the U.S. Whereas the Lebanese, or the Iraqis for that matter, or the Bahrainis, are looking at it through the prism of the domestic political divide and they make a different assessment, and we have to keep that in mind that this is not a regional divide, it is a localized divide that pertains to countries that have significant Shia minorities.

MR. INDYK: Amongst the people.

MR. TELHAMI: Yes.

MR. MILHEM: That is precisely the point. In those countries where you have the Shia-Sunni dichotomy from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Lebanon, Iraq, and even Syria if you want to consider the Alawis as an offshoot of Shia Islam, that polarization is palpable and it is dangerous and everybody is watching it. Everybody now in the Arab world watches television for the news, and that unfortunately is the source of most of their information, everybody is watching the killing in Iraq. We all know that historically the Shia have always seen themselves as a marginalized, dispossessed community, and when they were a plurality or a majority that is the case in Iraq or in Lebanon, they were on the

margins of society and one would understand that. But essentially because Shia assertiveness in Lebanon and Iraq has had a militant face in terms of practice, that is worrisome to a lot of countries where they do not have military wings or military organizations. That is one.

The other thing is, in some of the polling that was taken in the region after the war of Nasrallah and Ahmadinejad, even the majority Sunni countries like Egypt were popular and, again, this is a function of the alienation of Arabs from the United States, and it is also a sad commentary on the dearth of leadership that exists in the Arab world, and when the Arabs look up to someone nutty like Ahmadinejad that tells you something. I can understand Nasrallah with his charisma and all that. But Ahmadinejad? Only because he is standing up to the Americans, and because they are angry at their own leadership.

MR. INDYK: Thank you. Let's go to the audience. Please wait for the microphone, and identify yourselves.

QUESTION: (Off mike) and I worked for Hariri. I just want to solve a riddle for them. I think Hisham knows it and I think the gentlemen know it also.

MR. MILHEM: Did you say a riddle?

QUESTION: Yes, because you have been saying you did not understand why — now identify themselves as Lebanese, and then when they act sectarian, it is the system. The power-sharing system is based on sectarianism. You cannot really do anything in the Lebanese government unless you are belonging to a sect. You cannot appoint a third-degree employee in any ministry

if — or Jamaya (?) or anybody from any sect chooses that person to be in that sect. Now we have the Shiite ministers are out of the government now for almost 2 weeks and you will not find one Shiite in the Shia community qualified to replace them, not because we do not have good Shiites to replace them, there are lots of qualified Shiites who are not Hizballah, but they were not there because there is a monopoly by these sectarian leaders over their communities. That is why Lebanon will never change and Lebanon will never improve unless this system releases the Lebanese to be able to participate in a new power-sharing formula that really gives the Lebanese as Lebanese and not as members of a sect, that they are owned by the sect, to participate in the system, and that is why I wanted to explain. Thank you.

MR. INDYK: Does anybody want to comment on that?

MR. MILHEM: We agree with that. I agree.

MR. TELHAMI: I agree with that, too.

(Laughter)

MR. IGNATIUS: I am very curious what will happen if Hizballah sticks to its announced purpose of staying in the streets demonstrating peacefully until it has toppled the Siniora government, and in particular whether the other sectarian parts of the March 14th coalition that supports Siniora stay together. In other words, we have poll results that show this very polarized Lebanon and we are now heading into this explosive political situation and you wonder what will happen to these alliances that have built up in this period of confrontation. You know as much about this as anyone outside of Lebanon.

QUESTION: I will try. I think the March 14th people are going now to sit there and watch, that we are not going to do anything. The army now is trying to protect the government buildings where the Prime Minister is staying, he does not go to his home, he is living there, and some ministers are going to be with him living there. They are not going to go down the streets. They are not going to face Hizballah on the streets because we believe this is a mistake.

I think it is also a very dangerous game if you are going to go down the streets and to face each other. So we are going to sit and see what they want to do. The government will not resign, Mr. Siniora will not resign, because the government was elected impractically, and if you want to change the government, you do not change it by force, what they are doing now down the street and trying to force a change, that is not constitutional. So we are going to wait and see.

If anybody resorts to violence, I think the security forces and the army are going to deal with it and we are not interested at all in any sectarian problem in the streets and we are going to be as peaceful as possible. It is their right to demonstrate, but I do not think anybody is going to yield to their demands by this kind of means. I think people have to go back to the Parliament and go back to the dialogue and other means of solving this problem and not by forcing the government through these means, but I do think anybody is interested in going to the streets. The problem is, if something happens, any incident happens, you never know.

MR. WATERS: Marty Waters. Shibley, I wanted to address this question to you. Actually there are two questions. One is a statistical one. I do not think you provided us with a breakdown of the different groups in terms of total population. That would be helpful if we had that.

A question that I would like you to think through is if I interpreted correctly, one poll result indicated that a change in the U.S. elections did not mean that there was going to be any change in the assumption about what the U.S. policy would be with regard to Iraq. What does that mean then? If those who ran against the president and the administration and against the idea of our remaining in Iraq are not accepted as a change, then what does this mean in terms of the interpretation of the American public? Does it mean that we have a national interest in staying on, that we want to adopt a colonialist- imperialist policy regardless of which party is in control? I find that a very distressing result in terms of your data.

MR. TELHAMI: Let me answer the first question, and I did not quite understand the second one. Could you elaborate a little bit more? I am not quite sure I followed.

MR. WATERS: If I understood correctly, the data that you brought to us indicated that with regard to the last election here, the Democrats won, and most of them were opposed to the war, if those who were polled believe that that does not mean any change will occur in U.S. policy, then what does it really mean?

MR. TELHAMI: Now I get that. I think most people in the Arab world as you could see think that American presidents behave in the "national interest" so they think domestic politics is a big factor, most of them. But nonetheless, there are differences, and actually more people thought the change will be positive than people thought would be negative. I do not have the numbers right off the top, but it is maybe around 20 percent or something like that who thought that actually it will make a positive difference. So overall, more people thought it was going to make a positive difference, it was just that the majority of people thought it was not going to make much of a difference because I think people that American presidents behave according to national interests and there is not so much difference between Democratic and Republican administrations. A lot of people around the world think that, actually, it is not so unusual in terms of external interpretation of American foreign policy.

The second one about the breakdown in Lebanon, that is really an important question because there is always a debate about what are the percentages. Part of Hizballah putting out a million people on the streets is to show that they are bigger than people think in terms of size and numbers or their actual power in the political system. As you know, the problem is, 1932 was the last time a census was taken in Lebanon, so we really do not know. The bottom line is we do not know.

There are some indicators from the elections, but those are also troubled because there are people from the outside who vote and it hard to know the distribution. So we use the CIA Fact Book numbers and we just leave it at

that. You could debate with any set of numbers about the divide, but we stick with that as a methodological tool, and no one fully knows. But at least that is going to affect the divisions that we are talking about. It would affect the total numbers, but it certainly would not affect all of the results about the Shia, Sunni, Christian, Druze. Those would be unaffected by those numbers. It does not matter. The only difference it will make is how you are totaling the total.

And in the end, even if you have a 10 percentage point difference, it is not going to be a huge difference on most of these trends. So it is not like it is going to make a shocking big difference if you altered it, and it certainly would not have an impact at all on the absolute reporting about the opinion of the sects.

MR. MOSENI: Abraham Moseni (?). I also had a technical question about the poll. With a sample size of 600, when you break it down among the sects the margin of error that is going to be associated with each of these sects is not going to be same. The Druze are 5 percent of the population and perhaps only 60 people from your poll were Druze, and comparing them among the sects could be somewhat misleading.

MR. TELHAMI: I think really the Druze are the ones who are affected by this. Just to give you a picture, the total size of our poll in the Arab world is closer to 4,000, about 3,900, and we do a lot of the aggregating across the entire Arab world. So in Lebanon it is 600, and obviously I am reporting only the Lebanon one, and we also look at the overall picture in the Arab world.

It is a problem anytime you are going to have anytime you divided it into anything. Even if you take the U.S. and you take a sample of 1,000 and

you are dividing it into the different income levels, you have to take that with some error. But the differences are so big that even if your margin of error goes from 5 percent to 7 percent, the trend lines are not changing. The only community on which this could make a significant difference are the Druze because they are such a small percentage of the population, and I think that is why the Druze numbers overall have to be taken with some care and not look at it as a fact of life about the Druze, but they are a small community.

QUESTION: My old professor, V.O. Key, I remember having a seminar from him when he published the great book "American Democracy and Public Opinion," there is no such thing as public opinion out there which you go out and look for. Public opinion is a process of interaction between rulers and the ruled, leaders and the led. I just wanted to hear what are the elites thinking in this sort of thing? Do elites reflect all of these kinds of communal differences we are talking about or is there a political class among these groups who have dialogue with each other and you could strike some kind of deal? Where do the elite stand on this?

MR. TELHAMI: Actually, we have done elite only public opinion polling particularly in Saudi Arabia, and we have those numbers available. But typically when we do these kinds of surveys, we control for income and education as well as gender, geographic location, and religious affiliation. So we have indicators based on, if you want to call it the elite, education and income which are typically the way you aggregate elites. We have the numbers. We did not

divide them here for Lebanon specifically, but we have them for all of the Arab countries collectively and how they are changing over time.

Surprisingly, I could tell you that on some of the issues that we have looked at, particularly attitudes toward the U.S. where we have done some statistical analysis trying to find out what variables correlated most highly with particular attitudes, we found that education did not have the strongest correlation, and where it did, it was actually slightly negative, the more educated, the more resentful of the U.S. But that income was in fact highly correlated factor toward attitudes of the U.S., so, roughly, the higher your income, the more favorable views of the U.S.

In terms of the international elite, if you traveled or interacted with Americans or studied in the U.S. and so forth, we have done a separate test for that not in this survey, but in previous surveys, in which there was also a high correlation between the density of interactions with Americans and favorable views of the U.S. So there definitely are control variables that you can use for that.

MR. MILHEM: Just briefly on this issue, most elites in a place like Lebanon usually a significant number of them would reflect the views of their communities and the leaders of their communities, but there are exceptions, obviously, for instance now among the Shia. There are a number of Shia religious leaders, intellectuals, columnists, academics, who are critical of Hizballah. On the other hand, you find some Christian columnists or academics who are strong supporters of Hizballah. But on the whole, a significant number of the elites

usually follow their communities. In the Arab world since we are not talking essentially about democracies, again, you see that.

As to income levels, it is fascinating sometimes when you go to the Gulf, businessmen, mostly businessmen, who had even businesses with the United States and who are wealthy are supporters of al-Qaeda, sympathetic with Osama bin Laden, anti-American, some of them have business in this country, and many of them have degrees from American universities.

QUESTION: I appreciate the enthusiasm for the United States way of viewing situations or nonsituations in the Middle East especially with Arab determination and unity as it is apparently seen. The question is whether or not the intent of the person taking the poll is to Americanize the way the discussion is addressed or are we spreading Marshall McLuhan, are we still trying that experiment, or are we attempting to democratize?

The other part of the question is, as far as nuclear issues and the scare is concerned, do they feel narcotics is more an indicator of wealth or do they feel nuclear weapons is an indicator of wealth and influence, or would they say respect would be an indicator of wealth and influence or affluence or influence? In the developed world there is the view that if you have a nuclear weapon or a nuclear warhead as Israel does, as Iran complains, they would be given more respect. That to me is from my experience and exposure on the issue, a Hindi-Pakistani take on that issue. The question is whether or not they sense they would gain more respect if they had nuclear weapons to defuse that issue and also

whether or not you are taking a Marshall McLuhan tact toward democratizing an obviously different political environment.

MR. TELHAMI: First let me say about the polls and how they are done and what is behind them. They are actually mine through the University of Maryland. I have been doing them for 5 years. They are entirely academic. It was actually out of a project, a book that I wrote called "Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East" in which I was initially contemplating that the new media in the Middle East, the fact that you have the satellite media, I noticed that very early on. I had apotheosized that it might actually be having an impact on the way people see themselves and, therefore, changing identities in the region. So the entire project was really a scholarly project trying to study the relationship between media, identity, and opinion. That is the project, and to this day that is the project.

It has never received government funding and it has never received funding from any media source. It was always with the University of Maryland and grant funding from research institutions. There was never any other kind of funding, and there still is not. It is purely academic, purely done out of my project for that purpose. Some of the results that are sort of newsworthy we release because they are interesting in and of themselves, and you can make what you want of them, and sometimes some of it is useful and some of it is not particularly useful. So there is no aim for it other than the scholarly aim.

Sometimes we ask questions that are timely just because are doing it, we are out there, therefore, let's ask stuff that people are interested in hearing

about like the Lebanon war. So it is not really intended to look at through an American prism or a Middle Eastern prism.

As for the Iran nuclear issue, of course there are a lot of ways of measuring it. That was not something we tried actually to do. There were just a couple of questions related to the differences among the sects rather than what it explains attitudes toward the nuclear power of Iran. It is not providing an explanation as it is to identify differences. But, sure, in the explanation you hear it in the Arab world, they talk about the double-standards issue, why are you targeting Iran and why not Israel, for example. But even with that, now there are some people who are fearful of the Iranian nuclear issue, so that is interesting to see the differences. But it is not really designed to look into that specific issue.

MR. INDYK: We are going to have to bring it to an end, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you Shibley, David, and Hisham, for what I think was an enlightening discussion and a disturbing development in terms of the great divide that is emerging, and thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for joining us.

Just one announcement as you go, on December 7th we will be having a briefing on the Baker-Hamilton Report here at Falk in the morning.

* * * * *