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SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY

THINGS FALL APART: CONTAINING THE SPILLOVER
FROM AN IRAQI CIVIL WAR

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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. Thank you very much for braving the cold to join us this morning for what will be a hot topic.

This is the second in a series of programs that the Brookings Institution's Saban Center is organizing. We are calling it the Iraq Project, and we will be doing regular briefings and other events, policy debates, over the next 6 months as we and the nation focuses on the president's surge strategy for a last chance at trying to correct the situation in Iraq. I say last chance because that seems to be the way that not only the administration but its supporters in Congress are referring to this latest effort in Iraq.

Today we are essentially going to look at the situation that some of us at least believe already adheres in Iraq, but certainly is likely to adhere or most definitely will adhere if this last-chance strategy does not work, and that is to look at what the consequences of civil war in Iraq will be for American interests in the broader Middle East. "Things Fall Apart: Containing the Spillover from an Iraqi Civil War" is an analysis published by the Saban Center at Brookings written by Ken Pollack and Dan Byman. As they will explain to you, it looks at the historical precedents for civil wars and the impact that those civil wars have on the neighborhood and what can be done about it. Those in the Congress who talk about a Plan B, talk about a phased redeployment of forces in the pursuit of what

Ken and Dan refer to as a containment strategy, and that is what they are recommending for a situation in which Iraq is clearly in civil war and the United States is no longer able to prevent that decline into sectarian warfare from taking hold. I am going to ask Ken and Dan to present their findings and their recommendations and then we will have a chance to discuss it and debate it.

Ken Pollack is the Director of Research at the Saban Center. He is an expert on Iraq, Iran, and broader Gulf security issues. His books on Iraq and Iran have been bestsellers, and he is one of the leading commentators on policy toward both countries as noted by the fact that he was invited to appear on "Meet the Press" to discuss this publication on Sunday.

Dan Byman is Professor of Security Studies at Georgetown University, and we are very proud to have him as a Senior Fellow as well at the Saban Center where he specializes in counterterrorism issues. He has a long experience in the intelligence community, and Dan brings to this particular study a wealth of experience in the impact of civil wars on foreign policy.

Without further ado, I will ask Dan to do the presentation, then we will hear from Ken, and then we will get into the discussion. Thank you.

MR. BYMAN: Good morning, and thank you all very much for coming. When Ken and I began this work, it was actually a little over a year ago and we were very troubled, needless to say, by the situation in Iraq. But we were also troubled by what we felt was a rather stale and uncreative debate on the options for where the United States should go. It seemed to be divided between those arguing for staying the course at the time, now perhaps a surge, and those

saying get out or get out very soon. Needless to say, for any complex policy issue there should be a range of options.

Ken and I tried to look for an option that we felt avoided the worst of both extremes. We were very concerned that staying the course was having a series of disastrous effects, but on the other hand we were troubled by the idea of getting out because we believe, as we will argue here, that the cost for the United States and for the region are considerable. What we have tried to come up with is something that is somewhat in the middle, if you will, a containment strategy. It is far from perfect, but we believe compared to the alternatives, it has a lot to offer.

Our basic core argument I believe will not surprise many people here who have been following the debate. One point, and a very important one, that for all of our problems in Iraq, our problems are going to be also troubling in the region, that we cannot simply confine this to Iraq the way it stands now; that it is shaking the Persian Gulf region, shaking Iraq's neighbors, and perhaps is going to have effects beyond the region.

Also, the troubles we are experiencing in Iraq are going to be having such a profound effect that U.S. policymakers of any party of any administration are going to be dealing with this we believe for at least the next 10 years perhaps, and will be the primary driver of U.S. policy in the region whether we like it or not.

The third point is, as a result the United States simply will not be able to walk away from Iraq, that the end actions with regard to troops might be to

draw down, but abandoning Iraq is not going to be an option, and a lot of what we are going to talk about today are ways we feel we can stay engaged more effectively in the situation in Iraq. I am going to talk about Iraq today and how spillover from Iraq may affect the region, and then I am going to pass it over to Ken to discuss various ways we can hopefully manage the spillover.

When Ken and I began this study we tried to look for parallels with Iraq, and needless to say, the situation in Iraq is unusual, I would even argue unique, for a variety of reasons. With that said, we have seen a lot of situations where it has had a lot of effects, and this is what Ken and I did. We tried to look for parallels and precedents that could provide insight, and there were two things we were looking for. One is not just a civil war, but a truly massive civil war. For those of you who have looked at this from a scholarly or analytic perspective, there is a lot of work that includes small civil wars, but we are really looking at massive civil wars that involve very high death tolls and refugee counts.

A second thing is civil wars where there is usually a collapse of the central government. So it is not just a problem of violence between different factions, but also a failed-state situation. The examples up here are ones we drew on heavily in our research.

As everyone in this room knows, the situation in Iraq has gone from bad to worse in the last year. When Ken and I began this project, one of the first things you do in this sort of predictive work is you draw up a list of indicators that suggest that the trend you are looking at, in this case chaos and spillover, is going to be manifest, and in the last year we have seen almost every

indicator tripped. If I gave you the list of indicators, you would think we drew it from the headlines in the last 6 months. An obvious reason why is all of the problems Iraq has been facing.

Numerically we have had lots of tolls about death counts and refugee flows. Whatever the figures are, these are estimates by what we consider some of the more credible sources. You could cut these in half and they would still be incredibly troubling, and many people would argue that you could actually double some of these.

It is perhaps the nonquantifiable indicators that are of greatest concern. We see a decline in the legitimacy of the elected government. Everywhere you have political leaders; they seem to be holding sway to lower-level people who control guns, who have power on the street. Neighboring states are getting involved, and the idea that one would be an Iraqi seems to be diminished. There was an excellent story in The New York Times yesterday on exactly that, that people are starting to introduce themselves as a member of the sect when that was not done on the same scale even a year back. The last thing to point out here is that of course there is tremendous talk that the U.S. presence which in our judgment is the glue holding much of the country together may shrink or end, and as that glue comes undone, there could be a real problem.

As a final note here, we are not talking about civil war in a classic American Blue-Gray sense. We are talking about civil war in the sense also of anarchy where you have in different parts of the country different struggles going

on, and lots of factionalism. So it is not just forces fighting each other, it is also the spread of chaos.

Why should the United States care? Needless to say, the humanitarian consequences are staggering, and they are even more painful I would argue because this was initiated and these problems began because of the U.S. invasion. We can revisit lots of issues with regard to the conduct of the U.S. invasion and so on, but nevertheless, I think in American eyes, to say nothing of the eyes of the world or the region or Iraq, this is a problem created by the United States, and as a result the United States has a special responsibility, perhaps in contrast to a place like Darfur where there are tremendous problems but no one is saying they are due to U.S. policies like Iraq.

There are other problems as well, but what we want to talk about in this is the security problems, so let us for a moment be very hardhearted and say we do not really care about the humanitarian consequences which both Ken and I do quite a bit, but really focus on selfishly what it means for the United States and U.S. interests, and we believe U.S. oil interests and the broader U.S. interest in stability are tremendously affected by what we are seeing in Iraq.

One of the biggest forms of spillover we are already seeing comes with regard to refugees. These are UNHCR estimates, and these are actually a couple of months old, where you have both Syria and Jordan having huge numbers of refugees. What is particularly staggering is that the UNHCR estimates that 2,000 a day are coming into Syria, and 1,000 a day are coming into Jordan. Let's be clear from the start that the vast majority of these refugees

simply want safety and better lives for themselves and their families. Historically, refugee flows are tremendously dangerous when they are mixed with civil wars for several reasons. One is that they quickly overwhelm the infrastructure of a state. If you recall Hurricane Katrina in the United States and how difficult it was for the United States to cope with that sudden change in demographics, we are of course an incredibly wealthy state with a largely competent bureaucracy, and you compare this to small and poor countries in the developing world, you have a real problem.

But also mixed in with the refugees are often thousands of armed fighters, and while they come as refugees, they are not abandoning the fight. In the refugee camps they are often the people who make the decisions simply because they have the guns. They are the ones who call the shots, literally, and many of the traditional structures of society based on respecting elders or tribal authorities are disrupted in the camps. We saw this in Congo in 1996 where after the Rwandan genocide and the subsequent exiling of those who committed the genocide, many of whom went to Congo, you had hundreds of thousands of people who were refugees, but also among these refugees were people who were guilty of genocide and who wanted to win Rwanda back. They conducted cross-border attacks from camps in Congo and eventually precipitated a massive conflict that led to the Congolese Civil War in which perhaps 4 million people died. This was not the fault of particular refugees' safety, but that dynamic was at the heart of the conflict. This is again to emphasize that refugees do not leave their troubles behind them, and we should expect to see this in Iraq as well where

people will be going back and forth across the border as part of the overall conflict.

A second point is the potential for international terrorism. Those of you who study international terrorism know that the linkage between civil wars and international terrorism is quite high, and I would say especially in the Muslim world, al-Qaeda has tried deliberately to take over various conflicts that are local civil wars and turn them to its agenda at times with great success, at times with no success at all. To be analytically fair on this issue, if the United States were to withdraw, there are some benefits to the war on terrorism. One of course is freeing up resources to go elsewhere, such as Afghanistan. The other, and perhaps the most important, is the U.S. presence in Iraq is a recruiting poster child for the broader jihadist movement, and by removing the U.S. presence in Iraq we are taking away a major issue.

There are other benefits as well, but what many people miss when they focus on the benefits are the tremendous risks that are also involved if the United States were to withdraw from Iraq. Peter Bergen, in my opinion, one of the best analysts of al-Qaeda, has talked about the potential for Iraq to be a new Afghanistan, to be like Afghanistan was in the 1990s, and we are already seeing that to a certain degree even with U.S. presence there. Operationally we are seeing things like IED technology devised in Iraq showing up in the region, suicide bombers recruited and trained in Iraq have been conducting attacks in Afghanistan, and more broadly, Iraq is a place where people go to network and to be indoctrinated. This is something that right now is a real problem but is limited

to a degree by scale because you cannot have the massive camps you had in Afghanistan with the large U.S. presence there, you cannot have thousands of people literally attending the same camp because it would be vulnerable to disruption.

If U.S. presence is removed or significantly withdrawn, this is a possibility and quite a real possibility, and in a way a much more dangerous one than in Afghanistan because Iraq is much more central to the Arab world in particular than Afghanistan was, it is not in the hinterlands, it is something that many people see as part of the Arab world. We saw the beginning of this perhaps in November 2005 with the hotel bombings in Jordan where the GID in Jordan, a very skilled and impressive security service, had been able to disrupt according to King Abdullah literally hundreds of plots in Jordan before this, but these bombings succeeded in large part because the attackers were trained and organized in Iraq and only at the last minute did they go across the border, making it much more difficult to collect intelligence and disrupt it. We can see this in Iraq where groups there have agendas that include Jordan, that include Syria, that include Saudi Arabia, that include Europe, that include the United States, and we can see that sort of planning there as well.

It is worth pointing out also that although we are understandably focused on the jihadist movement, when we talk about terrorism, the danger goes beyond the Sunni jihadist movements. The PKK has enjoyed somewhat of a rebirth in Iraq already, also the Lebanese Hizballah, there are reports that it is active. I am most concerned that we could see a repeat of what we saw during the

Iran-Iraq war where in the Iran-Iraq war there were attacks by groups like the Lebanese Hizballah on supporters of the Iraqi regime. In this case today, we might see groups like the Lebanese Hizballah or groups that it trains conducting attacks on supporters of Sunni groups in Iraq where you would see that same logic as well.

Another manifestation of spillover we are quite concerned about is the radicalization of neighboring populations. The Middle East of course is famous for having the problems of one state intrude on the politics of another, Arab nationalism, Islamic extremism, things that are not contained simply by state borders. Iraq has this issue as well. We have cross-border communities that are Shia, various Sunni tribes, the Kurds of course, and there is a real potential for politics in Iraq to spill over.

What we are seeing, and often this is spread by refugees or by media reports, already is the spread of atrocity stories where people go to neighboring states and they are simply talking to ordinary people and they talk about some of the horrors we have read about and seen in Iraq, beheadings, torture, as well as mass killing and people being driven out, and needless to say, that excites and angers people.

But there is also another flip side to this what in some ways could be called good news, which is when certain communities in Iraq, let's say the Kurds, enjoy more cultural rights and enjoy more freedoms, that highlights problems in neighboring states. In many of these states you have communal relations that are stable but not equitable, and when you have a situation where

there is agitation and anger and also promise, it threatens to upset that very delicate balance that these states have worked on for decades to try to achieve. This could be the form of Shia in one state seeking more rights in let's say Kuwait or Saudi Arabia where there is a history of some discrimination, and this is the sort of thing that can lead to stability problems in a country. It can also as I will discuss lead to possible intervention to halt or preempt it. Also there is a real possibility of secessionism, not that secession will necessarily occur, but that as a movement takes place in Iraq or elsewhere, it will spread across the border.

The last form of spillover I want to discuss may be the most important for U.S. policy, or certainly one of the most important, which is the possibility that neighboring states may become involved in the conflict. There are numerous strategic reasons that states become involved in these conflicts and many of them pertain to the other manifestations of spillover I talked about. When you have hundreds of thousands of refugees coming across the border, many of whom are involved in armed conflict, that is an incentive to intervene. This is why Rwanda was so active in the Congo conflict, as it was very concerned about refugee flows. At times it is simply to help other people out, that there was a sense in the former Yugoslavia among many Serbs that they should help out Serbs in Bosnia or Serbs in Croatia who they felt were in trouble.

Also important are insurgent groups and terrorists operating in this case from Iraqi territory across the border. Israel faced this in Lebanon in the 1970s where there were constant attacks across the border and over time Israel believed the best solution was to go in and take out the camps, to go in and take

out the presence itself, and this sort of constant provocation is very difficult for states to resist over time.

The dynamic changes as the conflict goes on, what may begin as simply a limited operation to stop terrorism or to stop refugee flows, once the troops are there, you will have a very different dynamic. One thing that often happens is it can devolve into a resource grab, that we saw this in Congo where almost every neighbor was involved often initially for strategic reasons, but over time the goal became to take the diamonds away, to take natural resources away, and in Iraq this might be oil, there might be other concerns, but you can easily have a shift for economic reasons.

Another shift and a very important one is that states may not want to intervene initially, but they may do so because a neighbor is involved. We saw this in Afghanistan where you had Pakistan involved very heavily in the 1990s. As a result you had Iran, India to a degree, and other countries trying to balance Pakistan and offset what they felt was Pakistan's grab for hegemony in Afghanistan. This does not always have to be a battle for the control of the government; it often involves a particular region along the border. So we saw Iran and Afghanistan really concerned about Iraq, and really concerned about the area along its border, and that is understandable.

States also often do this because of the economic costs of this conflict, that we often are understandably concerned about stability concerns and so on, but from the point of view of a state, especially one in the region that has economic problems to begin with, the instability on its border, the draining of the

refugees, the cost in trade and investment, can produce real difficulties for the state. This is something that has a long-term potential for almost all the states in the region which have serious structural problems with their economies.

Another factor that leads to intervention is that many of these states when they first intervene think it is going to be easy. Rwanda thought it would be easy to intervene in Congo and accomplish what it wanted, Israel thought it would be easy in Lebanon, on and on we could go down the list, and that seems logical given the weakness of the opposing forces. But inevitably what these states find is that it is exceptionally costly and difficult and they rarely get what they want, that once they are in, they start to have problems that the United States is having which is they may have defeated the army they went in to wipe out, but occupying and imposing the changes they want, achieving their strategic objectives, is exceptionally difficult.

I will conclude before passing over to Ken to say we are already seeing this to a degree. Iran, as the Bush administration points out, is quite active in Iraq on a variety of fronts. We can discuss ultimate goals in Q and A if you want, but needless to say, I think the level of Iranian involvement is not terribly disputed.

The other states are reacting to this. We have already seen Saudi officials say that they will not stand idly by while Iran consolidates hegemony; King Abdullah of Jordan has talked about this, so the potential for states intervening simply in response to other states intervening is already there,

unfortunately. Now I am going to turn this over to my colleague Ken Pollack to discuss the way we can deal with some of these problems.

MR. POLLACK: Thank you, Dan. Thank you all this morning for coming out.

As always, Dan gets the easy part and I get the hard part. Dan simply had to describe the work that we did, the historical research that we did formulating these different patterns of spillover which was the first step of our research, but of course, that was not the only thing that we were trying to accomplish. The whole point of that was to try to derive lessons for the United States to craft a containment strategy for Iraq, and that is where managing spillover comes in.

We start with this fundamental assumption which is that, as Dan put it before, the president's plan is almost certainly the last chance to stabilize Iraq. It is the last chance to save Iraq would probably be a more accurate way to put it. Therefore, if the president's plan fails, it seems extremely unlikely that we will be able to save Iraq. It seems extremely unlikely that the United States will remain committed in the kind of fashion that we have been over the last 3-1/2 years, and absent that, an all out civil war seems extremely likely. As Dan pointed out, this is kind of the hardhearted first assumption of our work and for us it really does lie behind a great deal of our thinking because as we went through this, there was a constant sense between the two of us that we would at best, even if everything worked out, be consigning the Iraqis to a horrible fate. And since liberating the Iraqis from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein and the miserable

conditions that they were living under then was one of the goals of the U.S. invasion of Iraq back in 2003, that even if our containment strategy worked in the sense of preventing spillover from affecting the rest of the region, we would very clearly as a nation have failed to provide the Iraqis with a better future than they had before we invaded.

As Dan also pointed out, one of the other driving factors in our thinking was that American interests do not end with Iraq. In point of fact, the United States has very significant interests throughout the Middle East, throughout the Persian Gulf, and even if in the end we wind up failing to save Iraq and consigning it to all out civil war, that does not mean that our interests in the region end, they simply change, and they will change to the need to prevent the rest of the region from going in a similar direction as Iraq or experiencing some other perhaps equally painful and problematic instability. As we put it, all out civil war in Iraq would be a tragedy, but allowing the instability from an all out civil war in Iraq to spread beyond it could be a catastrophe.

Of course, the great question that it raises is can we contain a civil war in Iraq. When we thought about this we developed a baker's dozen of different ideas, different steps that the United States could take to try to contain a civil war in Iraq. I will start by saying that while Dan and I began this fairly optimistic, fairly hopeful that we would be able to devise a terrific containment strategy that would really meet our needs, that would allow us to prevent the civil war in Iraq from affecting our larger interests in the region but would not require the same commitment of resources and entail the same pain and humiliation that

we have gone through over the last 3-1/2 years, our end result was not quite as fantastic as we had hoped. I am going to present it, and as Dan said, we do suspect that it will be our least bad option, but that is about the highest praise I can give it. It is not a terrific option. It does not give you everything that you wanted. It is not the Goldilocks solution. But we do believe that it probably will be our least bad option, and for us it really gets to a point that a lot of people but I do not think that too many people have really internalized, which is that our options in Iraq are all truly awful. At this point in time and especially as we think about what will happen in Iraq assuming that the president's plan does fail, there are not any good answers, and anyone who tells you that they have got a good answer is trying to sell you something.

Our options, this baker's dozen of different policy options that we put together and felt that the United States could craft a containment policy out of, fall into a range of different categories, and I am going to go through each one of them. It is important to understand that we developed them based on historical work that we did. We looked at these different historical cases; we looked for instances where one neighboring state or another looked like it had success in preventing the impact of spillover. We looked for instances where the international community or foreign actors far afield from the civil war itself had had some degree of success in containing the civil war and preventing its spillover.

We also obviously looked at the cases of failure, and unfortunately the cases of failure outnumbered the cases of success. But even the cases of

failure can often tell you something, and contained in many of the failures we felt were seeds of things that could have been done differently, things that if the country had had the resources of the United States or a greater degree of foresight or perhaps a little bit more objectivity and perspicacity they might have recognized could have been done differently. As I said, we fashioned those together in these 13 different options. I am not going to lay out all of them for you; I am going to simply hit the high points.

For us they fall into three different broad sets of things that the United States could employ to devise a containment policy. The first is simply things not to do. This is kind of our Hippocratic Oath set, do no harm. Then there is a second category which falls into things that the United States could do which have fairly low risk and fairly low cost, but for obvious reasons also are unlikely to have a major impact on the situation and would be rather weak reads to base containment on. Then finally I will talk about another set with a much greater likelihood to have a much more profound impact on the situation that could forge a much more robust containment regime but come with very high risks and considerable costs attached. As the United States thinks about its involvement in Iraq in the future and how much more it wants to stay engaged and how much longer it wants to devote resources and what kinds of resources it wants to devote to the future of Iraq and the region, the U.S. is going to have to confront some of those choices.

Policies to avoid. The first one is don't pick winners. One of the things that really stands out when you start looking at the history of civil wars is

that it is almost impossible to know at the start of a civil war who is going to win it. Most of the winners are not the groups you would have picked at the beginning. Many of them did not exist. The Taliban did not exist in Afghanistan when that civil war broke out. Hizballah did not exist in Lebanon when that civil war broke out. Nor does demographic weight or organization or other factors seem to play that great a role. Again, when you look at a country like Lebanon, the Druze were a tiny little community that punched far above their weight and were a major factor in the Lebanese civil war. The Sunnis with much greater demographic weight, much greater support, much greater organization, never ever exerted the same degree of influence within that civil war as other groups did of small stature, less support, worse organization. Again, it is something you do see time again

You do here even now within Washington people talking about we ought to just get behind the Shia, back the Shia, let them crush the Sunnis. Or we ought to get behind the Sunnis and have them crush the Shia since the Shia are nothing but stooges of Iran. In and of itself, those are problematic. As I said, the history suggests that who is going to win the Iraqi civil war may be someone we have never heard of, and in large part it is because before the war you tend to focus on the political leaders, people we know, names like Muqtada al-Sadr, Ayatollah Ali Sistani, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim. The problem is, once the civil war really gets rolling, it is military leaders who you have never heard of before who emerge and dominate the fighting. Who would have ever heard of Ahmed Shah Masoud before the Soviets invaded? Who would have ever heard of Samir

Geagea or Michel Aoun before the Syrians invaded before the Lebanese civil war got going? We do not know who the great military commanders are in Iraq right now. Chances are they are majors, they are captains, they are militia band leaders in Basra or Ramadi or somewhere else and they will only emerge over time.

In Iraq today even when we talk about the Shia, the Sunni, that is itself a false set of monikers. There is no unified Sunni group, there is no unified Shia, there are just lots of small- and medium-sized militias and we just do not know in the crucible of civil war who is going to emerge on top.

Avoid supporting partition. Again, an idea that you hear put out by a lot of smart, very well-meaning people, why don't we just partition Iraq?

Typically, people point to the Dayton Accords and the Bosnia example as being a great idea for what we do in Iraq. While Dan and I believe that at some point in time that may actually be a very reasonable solution for Iraq, the problem is that the conditions in Iraq simply do not obtain today and they are not likely to obtain for some period of time. It is worth sticking with the Dayton example.

Remember the three things that made Dayton possible. You had a population that had slaughtered itself for 4 years and was desperate for peace. You had leaders of unified communities who could deliver on all of their militia leaders. And you had a massive international military presence that began with the bombings that brought the parties to Dayton and carried afterwards to a massive deployment that held the peace in place. You do not have any of that in Iraq. Many Iraqis would like to avoid civil war, but they are not as desperate as the Bosnians were, this is not one of William Zartman's moments of ripeness. Iraq is probably going to

have to go through a lot of killing before the militia leaders in Iraq are ready to put down their arms. Nor, as I just pointed out, do you have unified positions on the other side. There is no Sunni leader, there is no Shia leader, there is no Milosevic in Iraq who could liver his party's militias. More important than that, there is certainly if the president's plan fails no foreign force that is going to deploy the kinds of numbers of troops in Iraq that were necessary to nail down the peace in Bosnia.

Let's move on. Low-risk, low-impact options. As I said, this is a series of options that we looked at that are almost cost-free, almost risk-free for the United States. If the United States is looking to form a containment strategy for Iraq, these are in some ways no-brainers. I will just run through them quickly, and then I want to come to the first one about supporting Iraq's neighbors.

Improving regional stability elsewhere — and the main point that you took away or should have taken away from Dan's presentation is that civil wars do have a habit of creating instability in the neighboring states through a whole variety of these different forms of spillover. Therefore, the more that we can increase stability in the rest of the region and the more that we can eliminate other sources of instability in the region, the more able these other states will be to resist the impact of spillover coming from an Iraqi civil war.

Dissuading foreign intervention. Dan talked a lot about just how dangerous foreign intervention is, and here we are simply talking about diplomacy, U.S. diplomats going around to the region and just simply trying to convince all the states to stay out, that is not going to work out to their advantage,

which is one of the other great lessons of civil wars, that no one wins from them. Just about every country that intervened in a civil war found itself much worse off for having done so, even those who in some sense triumphed in the end, but we are going to talk about stronger measures that the U.S. can employ rather than just the charm and brilliance of the arguments that can be deployed by our diplomats.

Establishing a contact group is actually one of those elements. The more that the countries of the region can work in concert, the more that they can deal with some of the problems of the region. Do you want to deal with terrorism? It is going to be very hard for the Sunni states to act against Sunni terrorists in Iraq if the Shia are not there as well, if the Iranians are not present as well and willing to deal with some of the Shia groups that Dan talked about earlier.

In addition, as Dan pointed out, fear and uncertainty is a major force driving these foreign interventions, one state believing that another state is looking to conquer the country, seize its resources, and Iraq's oil wealth looms very large there, or do other things that would change the balance of power and otherwise threaten them, and to some extent, having a contact group where these countries can simply talk about things and find other ways to resolve their concerns can be very useful.

The last one again ought to be a no-brainer, but if we are going to lose Iraq and its 2 million barrels of petroleum production per day and raise the possibility of real disruptions to the other production of other states in the region, it seems pretty obvious that the United States, that the International Energy

Agency, that other major producers and consumers of oil ought to be thinking about how we prepare today for the potential for disruptions in the future.

Let's come to the hard ones, high-risk, high-impact options. As many of you in audience who have government experience have probably sized up immediately, that last list was an interesting list and probably worthwhile doing, but again there was pretty much nothing on it that I think you could have looked at and said this is really going to contain civil war, this is really going to stop all of those problems that Dan talked about earlier. There are things that can help, there are things that can certainly effect change at the margin, there are certainly elements of a containment strategy, but if that is all that our containment strategy is, it may not have a whole lot of success in actually dampening real spillover from Iraq. If spillover from Iraq takes its severest forms, and unfortunately, because of the functions that are seeing in Iraq already today because of many other factors about Iraq, we suspect that Iraq will be on the worst end of the spillover spectrum, it is going to be hard for that previous list to deal with some of those problems of spillover.

So of course we pushed our analysis a little bit further and we said what are some other things that the United States can do if we are willing to bear higher costs and take bigger risks, and these are the four that we came up with. Laying down red lines for Iran and Syria. I forgot the most important one on the last category which is supporting Iraq's neighbors. Let me take care of that while I talk about this. Lay down red lines for Iran, discouraging Kurdish independence, pulling out of Iraq's population centers, and establishing the catch

basins. The reason that supporting Iraq's neighbors is so important is that Dan talked about the problems of refugees; he talked about this ineffable problem of radicalization of populations which actually looms very large when you look at the history.

One of the things that we did find from our historical analysis though is that rising levels of socioeconomic development and improving government capacity are very useful in dampening the impact of both the refugees and the radicalization. Think about it this way: the richer your society is, the easier it is for them to bear or to deal with large numbers of refugees. You may be able to integrate them into your society, integrate them into your economy better, the costs of dealing with them of keeping in housing, their upkeep, their food, everything else that they will need, is going to be less of a burden on your society.

In addition, if there are expectations that the rising tide is going to lift all boats, people tend to feel their grievances less. They may be less angry about this inequitable state of affairs that Dan described. They may believe that there are solutions on the horizon, political solutions or economic solutions, to their problems. So we saw, for example, in the former Yugoslavia that while the wars there spilled over dramatically within the old borders of Yugoslavia, they did not have a profound impact beyond its borders in large part because of the efforts of the E.U. and the United States which provided financial assistance, provided the ultimate goal, the path or the rainbow to the pot of gold of E.U. membership to many of Yugoslavia's neighbors, and those were critical elements

in keeping Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, even Turkey, and Macedonia and Albania as well, from intervening in the Yugoslavian civil wars to the extent that they might have otherwise, to the extent that their domestic politics seemed to be driving things early on. As a result, we felt that providing those levels of support to Iraq's neighbors was a very important aspect of any containment policy.

With some countries like Jordan and Turkey, that is a no-brainer. Jordan and Turkey are American allies. It should be rather straightforward to increase American economic and political assistance to Jordan and Turkey to make it easier for them to deal with the spillover from an Iraqi civil war, but that is kind of where the easy part ends. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are close U.S. allies, but they are also richer than Kresis (?) at least by the terms of the U.S. taxpayer, and it is very hard to imagine the U.S. Congress voting economic assistance to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The fact of the matter is, they have the money, the changes that they need to make are really about their own social compact, their economic affairs, and their political affairs, and it is going to be much harder for the U.S. to affect that.

Harder still is obviously Syria and Iran. This administration has defined itself as being at odds with Syria and Iran, has defined its interests as inimical to those of Syria and Iran. Even a different administration that perhaps had a somewhat more nuanced position toward Iran and Syria I think would have a great deal of difficulty going to the U.S. Congress and asking for economic assistance for either Syria or Iran unless there were revolutionary changes in those two countries. Therefore, the idea of providing some degree of economic and

other support to Iraq's neighbors is a good one and certainly could be helpful for Jordan and Turkey, but that is kind of where it ends. The first of the points up here, laying down red lines, gets at those other two countries, which is we are probably not going to be in a very strong position to buy off Iranian and Syrian intervention, we are probably not going to be in a very strong position to persuade them not to do so or to make it more palatable for their populations to reduce the radicalization that their populations are likely to feel. Therefore, the alternative may be that we have to lay down very clear red lines to Iran and to a lesser extent Syria as to what forms of intervention we will find acceptable and which could trigger a much stronger American response, even an American military response. Even there we have to be careful because Iran has enormous interests in Iraq and tremendous ability to influence events in Iraq, and they do not have to do so overtly. So our ability to actually constrain Iranian behavior in Iraq under a containment policy is going to be limited, but even by limiting it, it may be of value. If we can limit Iran's involvement, we may also be able to limit the counter-response that we expect and which we are already hearing about from Saudi Arabia, from Kuwait, from Jordan, and from Turkey.

The Kurds of course are another important element, and again, Dan touched on this. The danger of secessionism. It is one of these things where at least in my political career you hear governments all the time talking about we cannot let this group secede, because if this group secedes, then every other one will go its way. Interestingly, what we found in the history of civil wars is that that actually does happen at least in the context of these civil wars. You actually

can have dominoes falling when it comes to secessionism. The best example of that is within the former Yugoslavia. The Slavs decided they wanted independence from Yugoslavia and seceded. That forced the Croats to do so. That forced the Bosnians to do so. That then set up the Kosovar Albanians to declare their own independence or at least fight for their own independence, which then prompted the Macedonian Albanians to do the same thing. So you can have these ripple effects, and there are a lot of different groups in the Middle East who are right now watching what the Kurds do, Kurds in Turkey, Kurds in Iran, Azerbaijanis in Iran, perhaps even Baluches in Iran, and other groups elsewhere in the region, all of whom would really like independence. If the Kurds are able to secede from Iran, if they are recognized by foreign governments and they are seen by other groups in the region as having succeeded in their secessionist ambitions, there is a high likelihood that other groups will try to follow suit, and that was a point that Dan emphasized. The problem is not always that they succeed; the problem can be that they fail, and in failing they create a new civil war in the other states. Therefore, what the Kurds do could be very important to the rest of the region.

With the Kurds, there actually is a pretty clear deal that is available, it is just a matter of whether or not the U.S. wants to take the deal. The Kurdish leadership has made it pretty clear that they understand that there are problems associated with their declaring independence. What they have been saying *soto voce* has been if you will help us with our problems from the civil war in Iraq and that Kurdistan will suffer from many of the same problems of spillover

as all the neighboring states. They will have refugees to deal with, they will have terrorism problems to deal with, they will have their own radicalized population to deal with which will no doubt what the Kurdish Peshmerga to go and save their brethren in Kirkuk, in Mosul, even down in Baghdad. They may have their own secessionist problems, they may have economic problems, all of those things are going to be issues that they desperately need help with, and the United States can provide that level of help. If we are willing to provide the Kurds with security guarantees that we will prevent other countries from invading them, diplomatic support, economic support, I think that there is a real likelihood that the Kurds would be willing to refrain from declaring independence at least in the short-term in return for that kind of coverage, military, diplomatic, and economic from the United States.

But there is obviously a cost and a risk. It means that the United States is going to have to provide that aid, and it means that we will remain entangled in the affairs of Iraq and Kurdistan which could bring us into conflict with other groups in Iraq, which could bring us into conflict with Iraq's neighbors.

The last two points are where I want to finish with, and they are actually both related, pulling out of Iraq's population centers, and establishing what we have called catch basins which are basically safe havens which have broader buffer zones attached to them. These catch basins would be designed to deal with several of the problems of spillover that we identified from our historical work. They are about refugees, but they are also about the movement of

militias and terrorists back and forth across borders, and the movement of foreign military forces which seems to follow very frequently upon those.

This is our catch basin schematic. What you see here are refugee points, the circles are the refugee collection points, and these boxes are the buffer zones that we imagine. This reflects one scheme that the United States could adopt if it chooses to do so for how we handle our military forces. We would pull out of the Iraqi population centers. Right now of course they are concentrated in this area and out in Anbar Province, and to a certain extent up in Mosul, and of course the British are down here in Basra. We would be pulling out of the population centers back to the periphery of the country.

The first thing that Dan and I see when we see this map is the center of Iraq going up in flames, and that is the first most obvious drawback of this. But again, the whole purpose of this exercise was to ask this question, if the president's plan fails and we cannot save Iraq, how do we save our broader interests in the region. So I look at this as being at best a recipe for a humanitarian tragedy. To go back to our point before, the question is can we stave off a strategy catastrophe.

The idea would be that we would have a much lower troop presence. As you can see over here, we are talking about a force deployed of about 60,000 to 70,000 troops, and we have actually run this past a number of generals as well and they have concluded that that is probably about the right number with another 20,000 to 30,000 troops as support personnel in the region. The idea is that each one of these refugee collection points, and we are using that

term for lack of a better one, if we actually do it we will probably say something like safe havens, would become a logistical hub. We would build large temporary housing facilities there, but not so temporary that they cannot stand for considerable periods of time to house refugees, to feed them, to provide everything it is that they need so that they do not feel compelled to overflow Iraq's borders and create security problems in the neighboring states.

By the same token though, part of dealing with the refugees as Dan pointed out is also dealing with the security problems that come with them, so you would need coalition forces there to protect the refugees against reprisals from other groups in the civil war, and you would also need coalition forces there to disarm the refugees, again getting back to Dan's point about refugee camps becoming the principal breeding ground for terrorist groups, for militias, for everybody who wants to wage war in the civil war, including the neighboring states who often go into the camps and try to recruit people to send back into the countries. So you try to take the refugees out of the military calculus by both protecting them and disarming them.

Beyond that, you would create these buffer zones to try to control to some degree the movement of forces back and forth between Iraq and the neighboring states. Obviously, you would not get every single person moving across, but the hope is that it would make it much harder for terrorists and militia personnel to move back and forth across Iraq's borders, find safe haven in neighboring states, recruit there, buy weapons there, purchase supplies, et cetera. It would make it much more difficult for support to come whether willingly or

simply absentmindedly from the neighboring states around Iraq and therefore hopefully dampen the civil war. And most importantly, dampen the incentives for the neighboring states to become involved.

Then of course the last point to these buffer zones and these safe havens is that they are also blocks in front of almost any of Iraq's neighbors from invading the country. The Saudis as they are talking about doing want to invade Iraq, they are going to have to drive through American forces, and that is something that the Saudis have proven unwilling to do. There is precedence for this. When we were thinking about this we were thinking about a number of historical precedents. The most obvious was provide comfort where at the end of the Gulf War the United States established a major safe haven up in Iraqi Kurdistan north of the 36th parallel where we prevented Iraqi troops from coming across the border, but we also alleviated any desire and any ability for Turkish troops to do so as well. We provided support for refugees, and we made it more difficult for the PKK and other terrorist groups to flow across the border.

Another example is the camps that we established in Albania and Macedonia. And just to back to this point about preventing our allies from crossing the border, there were also a number of occasions, and I know some in the room were intimately acquainted with them, during Lebanon, when Israeli forces were seeking to do things and U.S. Marines literally interposed themselves between the Israelis and their quarry, and in every case stopped the Israelis from proceeding with their operations. So there is actually quite a bit of historical precedence to suggest that American forces deployed along Iraq's borders actually

would have a fair degree of likelihood of preventing the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, the Jordanians, the Syrians, and the Turks from intervening in Iraq.

Catch basis makes a lot of sense. Some of you are aware that we ran a war game here at Brookings and this was the option that the members of that war game, that the principals committee of that war game chose, because strategically it makes a lot of sense. But it has some real downsides as well, and I would be remiss in not pointing them out even if only briefly. First, as I said before, Iraq will be in flames and there will be American troops, perhaps 80,000 of them, deployed just hundreds maybe even dozens of kilometers away, and that may be very difficult for the American people to stomach.

Beyond that, there is at least one other major flaw which is this border which some of you may have noticed does not have any catch basins along it, and that is because it is logistically too difficult. Logistically you would have to run the support either through Iran or through Iraq's cities, and since the whole point of this is to get the American troops out of the Iraqi cities where the bloodbaths are occurring where we will have failed to save Iraq, that does not make any sense. And of course, I cannot imagine any American administration wanting to count on the kindness of Iranian strangers to allow us to support our refugee catch basins and military forces along this border, which means that it is going to be very difficult for the United States to prevent the Iranians from moving their forces across the border. It is why the catch basin approach has to be married up with the red lines, and they red lines have got to hinder at the very

least, if not prevent, Iran from doing what our forces in the catch basins will be doing for all of Iraq's other neighbors.

Of course, this is going to be difficult to do. The Iranians do not necessarily need to move mainline Revolutionary Guard or Artesh units in, they can simply send in hordes and hordes of volunteers. One of the many down sides of this kind of approach, but it is again one is that inherent in the problems that we will face if the president's plan fails and if we are confronted with an Iraq in all out civil war is the fact that we may simply be keeping all the neighbors out and in many cases saving them long-term, but in the short-term it will like we are simply handing over the center of the country to the Iranians, not something that they are going to take very gently.

I think that that is probably a pretty good introduction to our thinking. As you can see, containment has a lot of down sides to it. The easy options are unlikely to have a significant impact. The options that are likely to have a significant impact could come with serious costs. But again when Dan and I keep going through this and looking at the alternatives if the president's plan fails, I do not see how we stay, but if we walk away from it we could wind up with civil war spreading beyond Iraq's borders or civil war in Iraq devolving into a massive regional war, either of which could destabilize the region, threaten the world's oil supplies, and cause havoc in any number of other ways. For me it really does illustrate just how bad our choices are going to become, that containment will be our least bad option. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

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MR. INDYK: Thank you very much, Ken and Dan. I just want to pose a couple of quick questions before we go to the audience. The first is to Dan. Ken says that the obvious down side is that we are going to have 80,000 American forces on the periphery of Iraq sitting there while a bloodbath unfolds, and in your presentation you said in the worst case, perhaps millions will be dying. How do you see that, particularly given what you have identified as the sense of moral responsibility that we are going to have, how is that going to be a sustainable policy for U.S. armed forces to be sitting and watching while this unfolds?

MR. BYMAN: I will give the optimistic scenario, and then what I feel is the unfortunate more realistic scenario.

Part of the reason so many people die in these civil wars is not just that they are killed directly by being shot or stabbed, but that when they flee their homes they are abandoning themselves to starvation and disease. Congo is a very good and painful example of this where a lot of people died directly from being killed by enemy combatants, but far more died from the indirect costs of war which are things that in a way can be prevented, and they can be prevented by international agencies and by international forces. So by helping take care of the refugees and protect the refugees, you can reduce the body count as well as reduce the number of refugees.

However, by abandoning the center of Iraq, a lot of people are going to die and you can protect some but not all. Some will make it to the safe havens, some will not. This is going to be both a cost to Iraq, but make it

extremely difficult politically in the United States. You could add to that simply the bill of maintaining 60,000 to 80,000 soldiers in Iraq indefinitely, the occasional deaths that will continue, and there will be a political sense that this is happening to no avail because so many people are dying.

What Ken and I are focused on is the broader strategic question of not protecting Iraq per se, but protecting U.S. interests in the region, but it is very hard to divorce that from the politics of what is going on in Iraq and U.S. policy there. This is part of why we would like to form a consensus politically about the necessity of protecting U.S. interests outside Iraq because it is going to be so difficult in the United States to get this consensus. If we can do it now, if we can do it early before things get even more horrific, we will have a better chance, but it will be very difficult and there is no way to put too much sugar on it.

MR. INDYK: Ken, in terms of trying to develop a consensus in this country about what is in effect Plan B, the Bush administration has made a clear decision that there will be no discussion of Plan B. Part of the logic as I understand it is that it would undermine the chance of a success for the already problematic surge strategy. Secondly, that talk about pulling out in the way that you have suggested would have the effect of the Iraqi government breaking apart in the sense would be helping to precipitate the very civil war that we are trying to deal with. So they are not talking about it, and one presumes that they are not planning for it either. Is there a problem with that? Are we going to find that if the surge strategy does not work we are going to be left scrambling again without any planning for the most likely contingency?

MR. POLLACK: Of course. Let me make a few points. First, the administration is not totally wrong to say that if it became well known that the U.S. was thinking about Plan B that this might cause some heart palpitations on the part of many Iraqis. That said, first, there is planning, and there is planning. The Pentagon is a very big building. I assume that most people in this room have been to the Pentagon at some point in time. There are lots of rooms in the Pentagon, and it is not hard to find a few rooms where you can have a small group of people thinking hard about this sort of stuff. There are other places where the U.S. can do planning, and it is not impossible for the U.S. to do this kind of planning without it becoming common knowledge.

By the same token, if planning is presented to the Iraqis the right way, it could actually be helpful. There has been talk of ultimatum in this town for at least 3 years and the way that the administration handled their ultimatum to the Iraqis this time around I think was exactly the right way. They did not say shape up because we are shipping out, what they said is shape up or we will have to ship out. In other words, if you do the right thing, we may be able to stay, if you do not do the right thing, then we are definitely going to leave. And if planning for a Plan B is put to them along the lines of, look, we have been telling you all along that the domestic consensus in the United States has gone. In fact, if there is any kind of a domestic consensus it is for leaving, therefore, we have to do this realistically, therefore it is incumbent upon you to fulfill all of your tasks as part of Plan A in order for us to not have to go down this path that we do not want to. So far the Iraqi government has actually responded well to that form of

ultimatum. Again, it has been words, it has all been politics, but nevertheless, it is better than we have seen it in the past. In the past they were not even willing to say the words or work out the political compromises. Whether they are actually willing to stick to them we have to see, but nevertheless, there is some degree of progress.

Then as a final point, it is obvious or it should be obvious that what Dan and I are laying out here is going to be a very complicated policy especially if you do want to adopt something like the catch basin scheme. You will have to be ready to handle large numbers of refugees, to be able to house them, to feed them, to clothe them, to do everything else that they need so you avoid the starvation and disease that Dan was talking about possibly quite quickly because the problem is that the Iraqis are teetering on the knife's edge and if they believe that the United States is pulling out of the cities, civil war will become a self-fulfilling prophecy, and it could happen very quickly.

So before we actually are ready to occupy the catch basins, they need to be 90-percent ready to handle the people who are going to be coming there. The same is true in terms of redeploying our military forces, et cetera. This is not something that we want the president to wake up tomorrow and say, yes, Plan A did not work, let's go to Plan B, pull back to the catch basins, only to find that when we get to Safwan or Nuhabe (?) or one of these other sites that we have identified as being a good location, there is nothing there because the refugees may only be 24 hours behind our forces.

MR. INDYK: Let's go to questions. Mark Parris, could you wait for the microphone, please, and please make sure to identify yourselves before you ask your question.

MR. PARRIS: Mark Parris, as of Thursday at the Brookings Institution. Ken, your last comment suggests we should deploy FEMA, but that is probably not what you had in mind. For analytical purposes, I understand why you did this, but there was a big sort of set of assumptions involving Iran there, that they would continue to play the role that they have played for the past 3-1/2 years, no major qualitative changes there, perhaps more of the same.

One of your low-cost, low-impact suggestions was preserve the stability or enhance the stability of the region. The administration over the past several weeks has taken a number of discrete steps which seems to me would if not measurably, significantly increase the likelihood over the next year of some kind of a military clash between Iran and the United States, either episodic or over a longer period. My question to you guys is, what impact would something like that have on the dynamics that you were describing, and specifically being able to get to the end state that you described at the end?

MR. BYMAN: I will begin, and then Ken will add his own thoughts. In my judgment, this is not the time to be saber rattling with Iran, especially in Iraq. Iran has an enormous amount of leverage in Iraq and you could put the glass at half-full or half-empty. Let's be clear, Iran is up to a large number of very nasty things in Iraq and in the region, and let's not trivialize that. But Iran has urged the group that it has influence with to cooperate with U.S. elections and

political leaders and endorse the political process. Although Iranian groups are involved in some of the violence, especially some of the anti-Sunni violence, things could be much worse with regard to attacks on U.S. forces.

One thing that surprised most people about civil war is the number of full-time active trained fighters is often relatively limited, and Iran can put lots of people on the street and shift their focus much more against the United States and what it cares about, and it has tremendous leverage as a result. Iranian newspapers openly use the term 140,000 U.S. hostages next door, and I think that there is an unfortunate truth to the statement that we are very vulnerable, we are having enough problems handling the rest of Iraq, and to add to it very pro-Iranian groups or groups that Iran has influence with that are actively against us would be extremely dangerous.

That said, when we handle Iran, it has to be part of a broader strategy and this what I feel has been lacking in the U.S. approach toward Iraq's neighbors, trying to integrate Iran and trying to integrate Syria into a broader strategy — but it has to recognize their influence and we cannot simply wish that away at this time.

MR. POLLACK: Yes, I generally agree with the points that Dan is making, but let me just add a couple. First, the point that Dan is making, really I think the biggest problem is that the administration's kind of overtly hostile pressure on Iran is undermining Plan A. It is making it harder to implement their own current plan which they hope will save Iraq, and at this point in time it is the

only thing that might save Iraq, and whether you think it will or will not is a completely different issue.

Even within Plan B though it can be problematic, again going back to some of our kind of low-cost but low-impact possibilities that you have a contact group, the idea of these countries working in concert to diminish their sense of threat, more that the United States is at war or a state of near war with Iran, but less likelihood that any of that stuff is going to apply.

That said, there is also a very strong sense that if Iraq does devolve into all-out civil war, the United States and Iran are going to increasingly be at loggerheads. Unless the Iranians do show a tremendous amount of restraint where Iraq is concerned, it is going to be hard for that to be stopped. My guess is that the Iranians are going to want to increase, ratchet up their own involvement in Iraq greatly and that is going to transgress a series of American red lines whether it is formal or informal and put us increasingly at odds. In some ways that could actually be a point of leverage with the Iranians, it can be a bargaining chip with the Iranians, not the president's actions per se, but simply going to the Iranians and pointing out to them that if the trend continues and Iraq does devolve into civil war, one of our greatest shared mutual interests will be gone, our mutual interest, whatever it may be in not seeing Iraq devolve into civil war will be gone. If at that point in time the Iranians are actively fighting against our old allies the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, the Jordanians, and the Turks, that is really going to put us at loggerheads. So I would be looking to go back to the Iranians, and as Dan

suggests, I think it is very important to try to bring them into this process, and they need to be part of Plan A if that is going to succeed at all.

I think part of that in a much more sophisticated diplomatic approach would be to say to them if you are willing to cooperate, we are going to be willing to reward you as well, there will be benefits to you as well. On the other hand, if you do not and Plan A fails, you need to recognize that our most important shared interest is going to be gone.

MR. INDYK: Marina?

MS. OTTAWAY: Marina Ottaway with the Carnegie Endowment. You started out by saying that we should not go for a partition, and now you made a pretty strong argument as to why this cannot work. I think one could make an equally strong argument why unity cannot work either, but that is a different issue.

My question is really isn't this idea of establishing the safety areas and the catch basins not really a plan that leads to partition in short order, because it seems to me that the effect of the civil war at the center is going to do two things? One, it is going to destroy any center, so at this point you say what does it mean a united Iraq. I think it increases the incentive for the Kurds to get out of there, once there is no center, what do they remain in, essentially?

And it is also, I think, the effect of the fighting is going to be ethnic cleansing so it is going to be the division of the country into an increasingly homogenous ethnic area. So that it seems to me *de facto* what you are describing is a way to partition.

MR. POLLACK: Yes, Marina, that will likely be the outcome of this. As we said going forward, first, under this scenario we are basically washing our hands of what happens to the bulk of the Iraqi population as long as they stay within their cities. Those who come to the refugee collection points and the safe havens, we are going to protect them, we are going to care for them, et cetera. But you are right, we are going to be divorcing ourselves from by and large what happens in the center of the country. We would agree with you that the likelihood is massive ethnic cleansing, and that is why when I presented the point about partition I said that that may end up being the only stable solution for the country. You may wind up with all of those circumstances that made Dayton possible at some point in the future. The problem is, Iraq is almost certainly going to have to go through that kind of a Bosnia-like civil war. Again, the only way to prevent it is if the president's plan succeeds.

If the president's plan fails and the United States is no longer willing to maintain 150,000 troops in Iraq's population centers in the midst of an all-out civil war, and probably at that point in time it may require an even greater increment of troops to prevent all-out civil war, you are right, that is almost certainly where we are going to wind up. It may be that 5, 6, 10, 15 years down the road there can be a Dayton Accord for Iraq, but the unfortunate reality is to get there, a lot of people are probably going to die.

QUESTION: (Off mike) I wonder in your research in the past year and so on, you have obviously spent a lot of time looking at the neighbors. Saudi Arabia being the world's largest oil producer, the home of Islam, but Sunni

Islam, is potentially, particularly with respect to supporting Plan A, useful. On the other hand, what would you suggest, what would you recommend that Saudi Arabia can do proactively also with respect to its relations across the Gulf with Iran?

MR. INDYK: Dan, do you want to take this?

MR. BYMAN: Proactively is not the Saudi strength, so let me begin by saying that, and anyone who has worked with the Saudis especially as a diplomat I believe would attest to that.

Part of what the Saudis should be doing is sending in my judgment the opposite message of what they are trying to send right now. Right now they are issuing a threat to intervene directly, one that, as someone who has looked hard at the Saudi military forces I question whether that is possible, but even putting that aside, that is not very helpful. In my judgment, Saudi Arabia could not achieve what it wanted militarily even if there were no opposition, which there certainly would be. So rather than sending the message to neighboring states that it is going to be more involved, it should be trying to do the opposite which is trying let's be out of this, let's reduce our involvement, let's try to reduce the stakes for one another.

Part of it is improving its own internal security forces against the terrorist threat. One of the somewhat-spoken truths about terrorism in Iraq is there are huge numbers of Saudis there and many of them have ambitions to go back to Saudi Arabia. We have seen attacks emanating from Iraq in the Kingdom already, and Saudi Arabia has been in a very, very low level state of insurgency

you could argue for the last few years. There has been by Saudi standards quite a lot of civil violence, but nothing remotely at the level of Iraq, so trying to get its own house in order is very important as well.

I think what Saudi Arabia is trying to do right now is to bring the Palestinians together as an important step, playing the role it has often played which is trying to damp down other regional conflicts. I would also commend what Saudi Arabia seems to be doing with regard to oil price stability. These are ways of looking ahead, and I think it is actually surprising, and in my estimate, encouraging that the Saudi government is doing so, but one of the biggest things to me is trying not to encourage its neighbors to scare its neighbors and with that trying not to make kingmaker with various parties in Iraq which I am sure the Saudis are at least considering behind the scenes.

MR. INDYK: Gary?

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks. Gary Mitchell from The Mitchell Report. I am interested in getting your sense of something that I think we have not done yet, and there is a sense of unreality in a way when we talk about a Plan A or a Plan B because it implies that if Plan A works, it works and we are out of there, and if Plan B does not, then we go to Plan B, and Plan B has these 13 possible steps, and I am going to try to ask this in the simplest way possible because I am struck by a parallel which is that when you talked about Dayton you said that the Bosnians sort of had to go through 4 years of hell before they were willing to sit down.

It strikes me that the American public is nearing its boiling point on this issue and probably has no idea how long the commitments are under Plan A working if not maximally, optimally, and/or under Plan B. My question is, if you for the sake of discussion said Plan A under optimal terms works pretty well, more like Petraeus says that it could work, and then Plan B, if we laid them side by side, how long a period of time are we talking about, what level of troop commitment for what period of time, and in round numbers, how much money?

MR. INDYK: Let me add to this one, which is to pick up on Gary's point about the American public, if Plan A fails, I think the American public is assuming that we are out of there and, therefore, by pursuing Plan A now do you make it impossible to move to Plan B because you will not have the public support for it?

MR. POLLACK: Thanks, Dan.

(Laughter)

MR. POLLACK: Let me take Martin's point first because I am going to turn his own words back on him. As Martin has pointed out, most of the Democratic opposition and the Republican opposition has been using the phrase "a strategic redeployment."

MR. INDYK: Phased redeployment.

MR. POLLACK: Phase redeployment, right. I think that it would be possible that containment is that phased redeployment, a point that you yourself have made. And I think that if you had a consensus among Democrats and moderate Republicans that we did want to try for containment, we did want to

see if we could make that work, that that was a better alternative than simply walking away and praying that spillover does not have any real impact on the region, I think that it would be difficult to at least say this is what phased redeployment looks like, we are going to first move to the periphery, if that becomes problematic, we can talk about that, but we are going to see if we can contain it, that will get our troops out of the center of the fighting and we will no longer be in the crossfire.

Now let's come to Gary's question about time and cost. The problem with either Plan A or Plan B is they are both likely to take a long time. One of the reasons why Plan A is more palatable and, again, this is just in theory on paper, is that if Plan A works, if Petraeus and Gates pull a rabbit out of their hat and make it work, and let me say it is not just them, as we have talked about, it is the entire U.S. government and it is the international community as well, if they make it work, there should be a very rough 2 to 5 years after which things get much smoother. Bosnia is the ultimate model where again most Americans do not realize that we still have a small number of troops in Bosnia. In fact, you could have said that I think for most Americans 3 years after we went into Bosnia, and we had a very high commitment of troops in Bosnia initially, but it came down rather rapidly. It will not come down as fast in Iraq because, quite frankly, Iraq is in a different place than Bosnia was, Plan A is something different. But the theory is that after 2 to 5 nasty years, the troop levels would start to come down, the numbers of American casualties would come down, and they might come down very quickly so that 10 years out we may have a much lower level of

troops there suffering much fewer casualties and maybe most Americans might not even know it.

The problem with containment, or one of the many problems with containment, why it is I would say less preferable than making Plan A work and, again, that sets aside the question of can Plan A work, but one of the reasons why it is less preferable is that it is likely that the commitment of troops and the casualties and the costs will remain constant for a very long time because it is about holding the violence in Iraq in check inside Iraq's borders and that means that you are entirely dependent on the course of the war itself.

Civil wars can burn themselves out. The Bosnian war burned itself out in 4 years largely because we intervened. Had we not intervened in decisive fashion, that war might have gone on for 5 or 10 years. That is what happened in Lebanon. Civil wars can go on for 5 years, they can go on for 20 years, and when Dan and I think about the containment of Iraq, what we actually are hoping for is something a little bit like what Marina is suggesting which is that you will get a nasty civil war, but the conditions of ripeness will mature very quickly, reasonably quickly, and that will allow a new international involvement that might get some kind of a Dayton Accord. That in many ways is the best case for containment of Iraq. It may be that you do not get that, that those conditions do not obtain for whatever reason, and we are actually containing it for much longer.

QUESTION: (Off mike) — Jerusalem Reports. You mentioned red lines for Syria and Iran. What kind of red lines do you have in mind? Is the

United States at all in the position that it can make these kinds of demands on Syria and Iran given its weak position now in the Middle East?

MR. POLLACK: I think we certainly can, but it depends on how we set the red lines. There are obviously many different red lines we could choose. The three that Dan and I came up with as being in many cases the clearest and the easiest to enforce are no uniformed Iranian military personnel in Iraq, no seizure or conquest of Iraqi territory, and no pumping of the oil by Iran. Those are reasonably easy to enforce. It is reasonably easy to tell whether there are uniformed personnel, whether the Iranians have actually said this part of Iraq is now ours, or whether they are marketing Iraqi oil, and those kinds of red lines are doable.

But as I suggested before, and as Dan has suggested as well, Iran has so much influence in Iraq, the contacts between the countries are so intimate, that there is probably going to be a lot of Iranian behavior that can go on below those levels. As I said, the Iranians do not have to send in mainline Revolutionary Guard or Artesh units. They can send in thousands of volunteers who will come in mufti and simply join up with whichever militia Tehran favors, or make their own as others have done in other instances, and that is where the red lines start to get hard.

If our intelligence is telling us that 50,000 Iranian volunteers have gone into Iraq but they are not in uniform, have they crossed our red line? Are we willing to lower it? Then you get into a fight over the intelligence, and given our experience with intelligence in Iraq, that may not be a fight that we want to have.

So I think for us, you would want to set the red lines high to make them very clear and enforceable, and the second point of course is, sure we can enforce them. We have lots of planes and ships that are sitting out there doing nothing. That is why we are saber rattling right now. You can coerce the Iranians by saying you cross this red line and we will retaliate at a time and place of our own choosing.

Again, that gets to the question of what is Iran's response. Do they decide we can afford to lose Bushehr, Natadz (?), Iraq, Bandar Abbas, because what is going on in Iraq is so much important to us. Then there is the U.S. question of do we now want to open up a war with Iran where they are likely going to retaliate through terrorism, through other methods against us over whatever it is that they are doing in Iraq? If it is a matter of sending in 50,000 guys in mufti as opposed to 10,000 guys, does that really engage our interest so much that we want to start that kind of a war with Iran? Again, there are ways to do it, but it underlines this point of how much more difficult things become once Plan A has fallen apart.

MR. INDYK: It being 12 o'clock, I am afraid we are going to have to finish our session here, and I apologize to those who had questions. Thank you all very much for coming, and we will be in touch with you announcing our next event which is probably going to be the Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns coming to talk about Iran and Iraq in mid-February. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

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